

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

March 15, 2012

A Biblical Perspective

Like most people, sometimes I like to do a little belly-aching. Sure, I have lots of blessings in my life and I count them regularly. I am fortunate in so many ways and I thank God, He from whom all blessings flow, for His Grace.

I am working on two different Bible study courses and reading the Bible on my own every day. It seems to imbue me with equanimity even when I don't take note of any particularly profound passages in my reading. For instance, Revelations seems to me to be a highly symbolic vision about the 7 churches which existed at the time it was written. There are a couple of nice passages but for the most part, it makes no sense to me and I can't see its relevance. Comments like this are heresy to devout Christians who regard the entire Bible as the inspired word of God, beyond reproach.

I'm not so sure. We are each able to receive the Holy Spirit and receive God's message for us directly through prayer, meditation and Bible study. The more we establish our connection to God, the more He can fill us with His spiritual wisdom. Perhaps others are further along the path than I and that's why they see the relevance of Revelations while I can't. If so, then through further prayer and study I, too, will come to know God's message for me in Revelations.

One thing the Bible warns us of is false prophets bearing false teachings. We can't merely let our spiritual leaders or Biblical scholars tell us what to think or believe. We must come to our own awareness and understanding through our own efforts. Getting help and guidance from others is very helpful, but we still have a duty to do the tough spiritual work to feel the truth in our hearts of what God wants us to know.

I have been attending Christian worship services for a few months and am gaining a lot of insight - more from the singing and worshipping with fellow Christians than from the sermonizers. Each sermonizer has his (or her) own truth to share. Sometimes it does not ring true for me.

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For one thing, espousing creationism, i.e., that God created everything whole and completely evolved 6,000 years ago, does not seem plausible. The same scientific principles that establish how old earth is, when dinosaurs lived, etc., are the same principles which permitted the technological advances we currently enjoy. To repudiate one is to deny the existence of the other. Yet creationists use cell phones, computers, autos and have no problem accepting state of the art medical attention when they need it.

In my opinion, the Bible does not have to be exact, literal truth to be the inspired word of God. Evolution is more compelling evidence of God as Creator of the universe than the Genesis story. I think the beginning parts of Genesis were written so long ago - when people had very little understanding of anything - that they simplified the message to make it comprehensible.

My scepticism about the historical accuracy of early Genesis in no way diminishes my devotion for, and belief in, God. I have given my life to God. He is the source of all I am, all I have and all I'll ever be. It only makes sense to return to Him my love and my allegiance, fulfilling His commands to the best of my ability. As I grow and learn through my devotion to God I am better able to serve Him.

I pray that all who read this make progress and find fulfillment on their own spiritual journey - whatever it may be.

By the way, when I sat down to write this blog I was planning to make it a gripe session about all the petty things that annoy me about Stanley. But it seems that the Holy Spirit guided my pen to contribute something a bit more meaningful and a little less vitriolic.