

Quote of Day

If you were to put a shadow on the globe where there is heathenism, and light where there is Christianity, even in its nominal forms, the shadow to the light would be as a little finger to the rest of the hand. There have been six thousand years—six thousand years of dispensation; six thousand years of advancement ... six thousand years of successive civilization—and it seems as though the parts of the globe where there is civilization, compared with the whole globe, were as the wick or flame of a torch to the torch itself.

Henry Ward Beecher, from “The Long-suffering God,” preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, February 23, 1862, in *Sermons by Henry Ward Beecher* (NY: Harper, 1968, vol. II), 210.

Pope Retiring?

Michael G. Maness

As you know, the Pope Benedict XVI of the Roman Catholic Church is retiring, effective February 28, 2012. Some say he will be more influential in that role than as Pope, and there will be a conclave to replace him, perhaps with a replacement by Easter.

What does that mean for Baptists?

What does that mean for Christianity, worldwide?

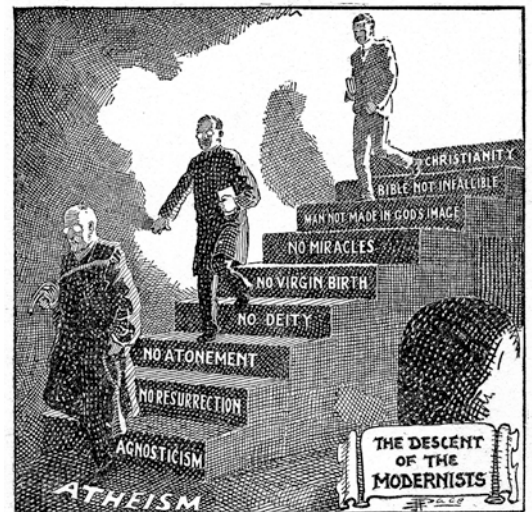
What does that mean for you and I as Christians?

It is the first time in 600 years, I am told, that such has happened, so there is no precedent that we in the 21st century can fully relate to.

At New Bethel, we all know how hard it is for a new pastor to fill the shoes of a retiring minister who, say, held the pulpit for 50 years. Much of the new pastor’s success depends upon the departing pastor’s wisdom and good wishes and even ability to “let go” the reigns of the hearts of people who loved him and whom he loved.

Regardless of our doctrinal differences with the RCC, as Baptists, the critical point of salvation comes with what one does with Jesus, and any person who accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord upon confession of sin can be saved, even Catholics. That being so, we are confident there are many “Christian” Catholics. So, with 6.7 billion people and 33% or 2.2 billion calling themselves “Christian”, 1.1 billion calling themselves Catholic, hmmm?, that means Catholicism is the largest denomination on earth. With 1.6 billion calling themselves Muslim, that means there are more Muslims than Protestant Christians, a humbling note, especially when we Baptists lead the world in missionary enterprises.

To me, anyway, respecting the RCC and my RCC friends as “Christian” allies in a fragile, dangerous, and often religiously hostile world is something we should do not only out of Christian love and fellowship with whom we share a lot – like a Triune God, Jesus’ divinity and sacrifice and intercession, and heaven – but something we should also do as allies in moral progress in an increasingly immoral world that prides itself as “modern” while having no compunction whatsoever on jettisoning our roots.





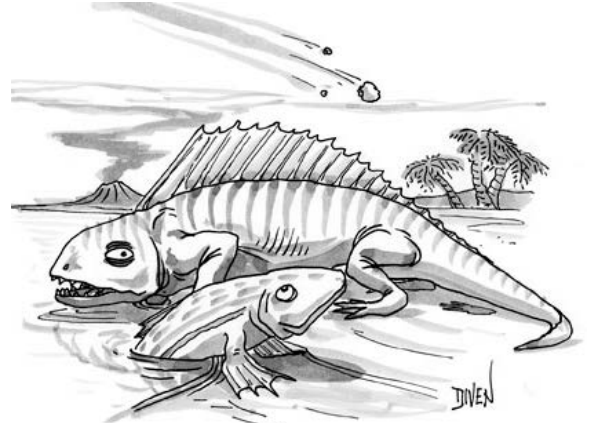
'A Sun of the Nineteenth Century,' a cartoon from an 1882 Puck magazine showing Charles Darwin as a shining sun, chasing the clouds of religion and superstition from the sky.

Gap between Faith, Science Can Be Bridged, Study Says

Bob Allen, Associated Baptist Press, February 13, 2013,¹ **bold** by M.G. Maness

An MIT study published Feb. 12 in honor of naturalist Charles Darwin's 204th birthday suggests the gap between faith and scientific beliefs is **not as large as most people think**, and that part of the controversy might be defused by people learning more about their own religious doctrine and the science it endorses. While Gallup has reported that 46 percent of Americans believe that God created humans in their present form less than 10,000 years ago, the MIT Survey on Science, Religion and Origins found that just **11 percent belong to religions that openly reject evolution or the Big Bang theory.**

MIT physicist Max Tegmark said in a Huffington Post blog that the main divide over human origins isn't between science and religion but rather between "a small fundamentalist minority and mainstream religious communities who embrace science." The study divided U.S. faith communities into 101 categories ranked by membership size and any officially stated position on the science of human origins. It contrasted Catholics, who comprise about 24 percent of the U.S. population – whose dogma finds "no conflict between evolution and the doctrine of faith" – with evangelical Protestants like the Southern Baptist Convention, representing just over 6 percent of the population – which is on record in a 1982 resolution favoring the teaching of scientific creationism in public schools and stating that students are being "indoctrinated in evolution-science."



You can have it: I'm goin' back in...

Summarizing publicly available material, the MIT study found that 62 percent of Americans are aligned with a faith group that sees **no conflict between faith and science**. Just 11 percent belong to faith communities that **openly reject origins science**, and 30 percent belong to faith communities that haven't released enough public information to fit into one of the categories.... Groups finding conflict tend to believe Scripture should be interpreted literally and that Scripture must take ultimate authority over scientific inquiry. They believe Christians have a duty to oppose the teaching of evolution as scientific fact, and find the idea that humans evolved from lower animals as incompatible with the Bible's teaching....

¹ See www.BaptistStandard.com/news/faith-culture/14776-gap-between-faith-science-can-be-bridged-study-says.