

INDULGENCES

It's a little after 4:00 a.m. this Thanksgiving morning. Looking out the window into the northern sky, a small meteorite flashes ever so quickly as it burns out. (That's two mornings in a row...) It's bittersweet to turn the light on to write.

The subjects of Babylon (confusion), 500-year cycles and the uncovering of overprints have continued to bounce around my head like a blue ball in a racquetball court. Yesterday morning's reverie by the window in the dark brought somewhat of an intercept of the bouncing ball.

I had requested of the LORD His thoughts and pursuits; as the moments passed, there came an intensified awareness that the geologic ideas with which I was dealing went hand in hand with the Babylon/500 year cycles/overprint thoughts.



My struggle has not been the insight into the Secrets of the Deep, nor with the surety of their being; it has been the problem of presentation to convince the moneyed people to invest large amounts of capital. Most of the exploration done by large companies in the last twenty years has devolved into buying existing production, increasing the density of the wells, and in most cases, re-selling the "developed" property. In other words, the tendency has been towards lesser and lesser risk. In reality, the trend has been towards what the capital holders *can see*. This has been a boon for the service companies, drilling contractors and landowners.

But the exploitation of the visible and the pursuit of the superficial have about run their courses. There is just so much "easy" stuff out there to repackage, just so many "suckers born every minute," as P.T. Barnum used to say.

So here comes this concept of a very large exploration play for oil and gas which, once "seen" in my mind, becomes a problem in getting capitalists to "see." What exacerbates the problem is that for the most part, capitalists are not scientists. Moreover, they have not spent much time gazing at the northern skies, in silence, much less at 4:00 in the morning. Their minds largely are cauterized by the last super huckster.

But yesterday's silence ushered in the solution; *it is the perspective from which one views a thing that allows one to "see."* What was needed was not a map of the area itself, but one which encompassed an area from Eastern New Mexico to Louisiana, and from Oklahoma to South Texas. In doing this, the capitalist viewer "sees" the big picture in a single 18" frame. Essentially, what on one scale appears to be confusion is on another scale mentally manageable. A mirror image of what occurs in adjoining states at a shallower depth brings mental comprehension to my prospective area.

As the above unfolded, the parallel to the spiritual realm came into focus. There was an immediate resolution as to why so much "confusion" reigns in things Divine, and why there is so little Life in the Body. This tiara of Babylon, 500-year cycles and lifelessness in the current expression of the church has continued to demand answers. In my reading, I came across a reference to Martin Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Catholic Church*.

Quote:

“The third (Babylonian) captivity of this (cup and bread) sacrament is by far the most wicked of all, in consequence of which there is no opinion more generally held or more firmly believed in the church today....than that the mass is a “good work and a sacrifice.” This abuse has bought an endless host of other abuses in its train, so that the faith of this sacrament has become utterly extinct and the holy sacrament has been turned into merchandise, a market, and a profit-making business. Hence “participations” (en ausencia taking the cup and bread), “brotherhoods” “intercessions”, “merits”, “anniversaries” (masses said on behalf of a deceased person), and the like wares are bought and sold, traded and bartered, in the church.”
(Confraternities/sodalities were lay brotherhoods devoted to some religious or charitable service; they paid to have the masses said for them; does this sound like Masons/Shriners to you?)

“I am attacking a difficult matter, an abuse perhaps impossible to uproot, since through century-long custom and the common consent of men it has become so firmly entrenched that it would be necessary to abolish most of the books now in vogue, and to alter almost the entire external form of the churches and introduce, or rather re-introduce, a totally different kind of ceremony. But my Christ lives, and we must be careful to give more heed to the Word of God than to all the thoughts of men and angels.”

“...we must be particularly careful to put aside whatever has been added to its original simple institution by the zeal and devotion of men; such things as vestments, ornaments, chants, prayers, organs, candles, and the whole pageantry of outward things.”

Martin Luther, 1520, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church. Written at the height of the conflict between Luther and the Catholic “church.”

In plowing through all this, there was a tendency to put it down, as being time-sensitive to the 16th century. Then it dawned on me that the human, Adamic nature does not change, but simply morphs, or self-accommodates to the times. Several questions then arose;

- what is the modern-day, “Protestant” version of Luther’s indulgences?
- where is the modern-day equivalent of Martin Luther?

To the latter I could find no counterpart; however, to the former, more insight came. Webster’s (1828) dictionary defines *indulgence* as being without restraint, free permission to the appetite, humor, desires, passions or will to act or operate; gratification, liberality; in the Rome church, the remission of punishment due to sins; yielding to the wishes, not opposing or restraining.

Roget’s Thesaurus adds these synonyms to its meaning; gluttony, luxury, sensuality, carnality, pleasure, pampered, full-fed.

Distilling all this led me to understand that *indulgence* refers to the inherent bent of mankind to the most pleasurable path, the path of least resistance and the easiest way around Divine requirements. Luther addressed the latter, with scriptural accuracy.

In Luther's quote about attacking a subject difficult to uproot or change, he is reflecting a typical situation involving traditions verses reason and facts.

It is an historical fact that as a culture progresses toward maturity, the people drift toward indulgences, sensuality, ease of living, the eschewing of discipline, and the loss of Divine reverence. As these evolve and progress, there is a clamor for the Easy Way Out, and a mass spirit voting for the Lowest Common Denominator; Womb to Tomb welfare and health care; Chinese buffets and all you can eat restaurants; quick stops and drive-thrus; French fries and pastas; low-risk everything.

The historical and scriptural attributes inherent of the Divine such as:

honor		forwardness
social graces		grunge
perseverance		give up at first resistance, divorce
self-discipline	are replaced by	gluttony, doing what you want
justice		situational ethics
mercy		me first
obedience		rebellion

Ergo, American society has now devolved into the modern-day equivalent of the Catholic apostasy of 1517, as well as numerous others in human history. The list is enormous.

So what is the modern-day equivalent of the Catholic church's money-based indulgences for sins? (By the way, this practice is still operative.) Now where money and ignorance allowed such in 1517, those would be too obvious for the "sophistication" and "awareness" of 2006 Protestants. In following this theme, I asked several what they perceived to be the Protestant version of indulgences. Their answers were both emphatic and immediate;

"Once saved, always saved."

"I belong to the church." (Which one?)

Now why would my varied respondents home in on these? Simply expressed, these answers reflect the path of least resistance, the easy way out, a fire insurance policy, a guarantee with little investment or effort, Greasy Grace, offering a sense of security. Proponents can then go about their business in pursuit of their source of happiness; however that form of sensuality and indulgence can be defined.

Just dress up, sit in a padded pew; listen, but don't retain over 10% from what is blathered from a pulpit for over a half hour. Go gorge yourself at a Chinese buffet until your belly protrudes, be absolved of seeking God for yourself (as the children of Israel said, "You go talk to God, Moses; He's too hot for us). Divorce your spouse, she's too fat, too bossy, too ignorant, too, too, too....that vow didn't mean anything. Give your kids what they want, TV, video games, access to the Web and all its filth. Let the schools do your job of teaching, training and disciplining your kids. If conditions change, that contract didn't mean what it said. Why, you've got to go on with life.

Just do what the Status Quo does; after all, we won't be noticed. We can buy all the CDs we want and play them in the privacy of our homes. We can drink all the Diet Cokes we want, eat out whenever, carelessly gulping down the poisons that Avarice chooses to feed us. Destroy our human "temples"; why, it feels good, this tastes good, this little bit won't hurt us; why, we're saved! Once we're saved, we're always saved!!

A lack of discretion or scrutiny in practical religious and moral issues crosses all tiers of society. A West Texas cattle rancher of immense strength and experience responds to a cursory probe of spiritual truths by saying, "Oh, I'm not that smart." Yet, this same rancher at a glance can spot even the slightest discoloration in a calf's eyes and suspect pinkeye in its incipient stages. He then will check the whole herd; a case of selective application and discernment, not a case of intelligence.

A mature mother and housewife will say the same thing, or a variation thereof, "Oh, I'm not that smart; I don't get into deep things." Yet that same mother can and does detect the smallest deviation of physical and emotional behavior in her child and go right to the root.

An accomplished welder responds to the mildest of comments about moral or spiritual anomalies by saying, "Oh, I don't know about those things--they're too deep for me." Yet again, that same welder can spot a defective weld in a pressure tank or pipeline that if not corrected will cause an explosion.

Bill O'Reilly can immediately spot when an interviewee is spinning a particular topic, and pounce on him or her with his notorious fervor. Yet, yet, that same intense scrutiny dissolves into verbal mush when matters Catholic or scriptural appear before him. When presented with Ted Kennedy's pernicious and blasphemous behavior, O'Reilly responds by saying Kennedy is a "practicing Catholic." What in blue blazes has that got to do with anything?!

All of this is to prove a point; we are acute to whatever we apply ourselves. *Our scrutiny is selective.* We are as "smart" as we want to be, and in those things with which we are most comfortable. OK, so you're not educated in astrophysics; does that mean you are incapable of reading? So you're not trained in Greek or Hebrew; neither was I. I didn't know English very well. There are dictionaries that define things.

This example of the evolution of ideas and words applies to the issue at hand; namely, that of the attitude of our hearts as it relates to whether we want to know, or whether we choose to hide behind a worn-out adage, "I'm not that smart." As is the case distinguishing between prosperity and complacency (indulgence), there is no apparent physical difference; *it is a matter of the heart.*

Truth is a funny thing; it is simultaneously liberating, scary, a mystery, and a challenge. By and large mankind will choose the easy route, the path of least resistance, "the broad way," as Jesus said. Confidence in oneself seems to be the lynchpin, with fear of the unknown a close second.

This thing of ignoring discrepancies in scriptural and Christian matters is no different than sensing your car slipping on the gravel into a bar ditch. Nor is it any different than the calf with pinkeye, or the baby with a temperature. How is it that we can smell a dirty diaper, detect a manipulative guest, and yet hide behind "Oh, I'm not that smart," when confronted with what the Bible says?

This is an astonishing posture found in all walks of life. Our refusal, abdication and deflection all say the same thing; I don't want to rock the boat, nor take the trouble, nor make the effort.

Please, don't tell me you're "not that smart." This numbskull approach to scrutiny at any level is deadly. Moreover, when another does scrutinize the aberrant, this numbskull attitude becomes angry, resentful, defensive, and even murderous as was the case with the Catholic church towards Luther.

I believe the root of all this resistance to scrutiny is self-indulgence. Second is the challenge to money and power. "Read your Bible," is a revelation to those who have been so-called Christians for 40 years! For this bit of advice, the "preacher" gets a million bucks a year?! Sitting in a padded pew being entertained isn't indulgence?

What the Basilica in Rome is to the Catholic church, the podium is to the typical Protestant church; they both act as a shield to dissent and/or challenges to their traditions and practices; more precisely, they prevent any interference by the Holy Spirit.

Just as the secretary is a buffer to any who would get to the executive, so these two shields act as buffers to any and all dissent. Therefore as a result, the hierarchies remain in their ivory towers. As time waxes, position and prominence arrogate to a polished form. Nothing can touch the leaders.

Because of a lack of scrutiny or attention:

- your daughter is going from man to man and you don't want to know what's wrong?
- your pastor allows a woman wearing tank tops and shorts to "testify" and you go with the flow?!
- the divorce/abortion rate in your denomination exceeds the norm, and you defend it?! -or worse, you condone and approve it by your silence, attendance and money ?!
- there are dozens of conflicting "denominations" in the realm of Protestantism, and yet you say there is a Body of Christ?
- the Body of Christ is a joke to the heathen, and yet you say Christianity is the way to fly?!
- your family is slipping into the bar ditch of worldliness, obesity, and divorce, and yet you say, "I'm not that smart?"
- you sport bastards in your leadership, pedophiles in your bishops, ignorance in your masses, and yet you say, "We are the Church?!"

Jesus came, gave all, is all, and yet you say, "I'll do what I want; He's very loving."

Jesus is Life, the Healer, the Restorer, the Head; and yet you say your abominable "church" and diabolical traditions take precedence?!

Protestants, what are you protesting? "Methinks thou dost protest too much," as the Seducer said to the protesting maiden. But then again, methinks thou hast atrophied to the point where thou wilt not protest at all. Thou certainly dost not scrutinize at all. Therefore thou shalt be gobbled up with the rest of the indulgent.

Ezekiel 36:16-27.

Thanksgiving Day, 2006 One of the Sons of Issachar