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GREAT COMMISSION NEWS

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848 Stewart Dr. Suite 200, Sunnyvale, CA

Email: info@gcciusa.org

Tel: (408) 636-0030

Fax: (408) 636-0033

The Enduring Revolution vs. Modernity

Charles W. Colson

In March 1993 Charles W. Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship, was named recipient of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. On September 2, 1993, as part of the Templeton Award ceremonies at the University of Chicago, he delivered an address on religious liberty. It was largely overlooked by the secular media and unfortunately by many in the Church. Because Charles Colson faced an audience comprised of members of the Parliament of the World's Religions, this historic address is a profound and lasting example of what evangelicals might lovingly proclaim in a pluralistic setting.

We witnessed a pivotal moment in history.... The balance of world power shifted dramatically. Suddenly, remarkably, almost inexplicably, one of history's most sustained assaults on freedom collapsed before our eyes.

This revolution's symbolic moment was May Day 1990. Protesters followed the tanks, missiles, and troops rumbling across Red Square. One, a bearded Orthodox monk, darted under the reviewing stand where Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders stood. He thrust a huge crucifix into the air, shouting above the crowd, "Mikhail Sergeyeovich! Christ is risen!" Gorbachev turned and walked off the platform.

Across a continent the signal went. In defiant hope a spell was broken. The lies of decades were exposed. Fear and terror fled. And millions awoke as from a long nightmare. The world was changed,

not through the militant dialectic of communism, but through the power of unarmed truth. This was one of history's defining moments.

The faults of the West are evident—but equally evident are the extraordinary gifts it has to offer the world. The gift of markets that increase living standards and choices. The gift of political institutions where power flows from the consent of the governed, not the barrel of a gun. The gift of social beliefs that encourage tolerance and individual autonomy.

Free markets. Free governments. Free minds.

But just at this moment, after the struggle of the last century... the culture that fashioned this freedom is being overrun. It has embraced the destructive myths of modernity, which are poisoning its wellspring of justice and virtue and stripping away its most essential humanizing, civilizing influence.

Make no mistake: This humanizing, civilizing influence is the Judeo-Christian heritage. It is a heritage brought to life anew in each generation by men and women whose lives are transformed by the living God and filled with holy conviction.

Despite the failures of some of its followers—the crusades and inquisitions—this heritage has laid the foundations of freedom in the West. It has established a standard of justice over both men

and nations. It has proclaimed a higher law that exposes the pretensions of tyrants. It has taught that every human soul is on a path of immortality, that every man and woman is to be treated as the child of a King.

This muscular faith has motivated excellence in art and discovery in science. It has undergirded an ethic of work and an ethic of service. It has tempered freedom with internal restraint, so our laws could be permissive while our society was not.

Christian conviction inspires public virtue, the moral impulse to do good. It has sent legions into battle against disease, oppression, and bigotry. It ended the slave trade, built hospitals and orphanages, tamed the brutality of mental wards and prisons. In every age it has given divine mercy a human face in the lives of those who follow Christ.

Christian conviction also shapes personal virtue, the moral imperative to be good. It subdues an obstinate will. It ties a tether to self-interest and violence.

Finally, Christian conviction provides a principled belief in human freedom. As Lord Acton [1834-1902] explained, “Liberty is the highest political end of man . . . [But] no country can be free without religion. It creates and strengthens the notion of duty. If men are not kept straight by duty, they must be by fear. The more they are kept by fear, the less they are free. The greater the strength of duty, the greater the liberty.”

The kind of duty to which Acton refers is driven by the most compelling motivation. I and every other Christian have experienced it. It is the duty that flows from gratitude to God that He would send His only Son to die so we might live.

This is the lesson of centuries: that ordered liberty is one of faith’s triumphs. And yet, western cultural and political elites seem blinded by modernity’s myths to the historic civilizing role of Christian faith. And so, in the guise of pluralism and tolerance, they have set about to exile religion from our common life. They use the power of the media and the law like steel wool to scrub public debates and public places bare of religious ideas and symbols. But what is left is sterile and featureless and cold.

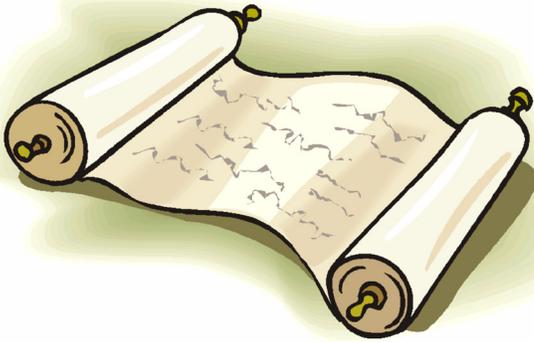
These elites seek freedom without self-restraint, liberty without standards. But they find instead the revenge of offended absolutes. Courts strike down even perfunctory prayers, and we are surprised that schools, bristling with barbed wire, look more like prisons than prisons do. Universities reject the very idea of truth, and we are shocked when the best and the brightest of their graduates loot and betray.

Celebrities mock the traditional family, even revile it as a form of slavery, and we are appalled at the human tragedy of broken homes and millions of unwed mothers. The media celebrate sex without responsibility, and we are horrified by sexual plagues. Our lawmakers justify the taking of innocent life in sterile clinics, and we are terrorized by the disregard for life in blood-soaked streets.

C. S. Lewis described this irony a generation ago. “We laugh at honor,” he said, “and are shocked to find traitors in our midst . . . We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.” A generation of cultural leaders wants to live off the spiritual capital of its inheritance, while denigrating the ideals of its ancestors. It squanders a treasure it no longer values. It celebrates its liberation when it should be trembling for its future.

“Liberty is the highest political end of man... [But] no country can be free without religion. It creates and strengthens the notion of duty.”

Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Religious Leaders Released Manhattan Declaration on Christian Conscience



A group of prominent Christian clergy, ministry leaders and scholars in the USA joined together to release the Manhattan Declaration on November 20, 2009. The 4,700-word Declaration was drafted by Dr. Robert George, Dr. Timothy George and Dr. Chuck Colson and signed by 150 Orthodox, Catholic and evangelical Christian leaders. It issued a clarion call to Christians to adhere to their beliefs and convictions and informed civil authorities that they will not abandon their Christian consciences.

The group held a Press Conference in the Lisager Room at the National Press Club, Washington D.C. at noon of November 20, 2009.

Here is the Summary of the Declaration:

MANHATTAN DECLARATION

A Summary

Christians, when they have lived up to the highest ideals of their faith, have defended the weak and vulnerable and worked tirelessly to protect and strengthen vital institutions of civil society, beginning with the family. We are Orthodox, Catholic, and evangelical Christians who have united at this hour to reaffirm fundamental truths about justice and the common good, and to call upon our fellow citizens, believers and non-believers alike, to join us in defending them. These truths are (1) the sanctity of human life, (2) the dignity of marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife, and (3) the rights of conscience and religious liberty. Inasmuch as these truths are foundational to human dignity and the well-being of society, they are inviolable and non-negotiable. Because they are increasingly under assault from powerful forces in our culture, we are compelled today to speak out forcefully in their defense, and to commit ourselves to honoring them fully no matter what pressures are brought upon us and our institutions to abandon or compromise them. We make this commitment not as partisans of any political group but as followers of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Human Life

The lives of the unborn, the disabled, and the elderly are ever more threatened. While public opinion has moved in a pro-life direction, powerful and determined forces are working to expand abortion, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide, and euthanasia. Although the protection of the weak and vulnerable is the first

obligation of government, the power of government is today often enlisted in the cause of promoting what Pope John Paul II called “the culture of death.” We pledge to work unceasingly for the equal protection of every innocent human being at every stage of development and in every condition. We will refuse to permit ourselves or our institutions to be implicated in the taking of human life and we will support in every possible way those who, in conscience, take the same stand.

Marriage

The institution of marriage, already wounded by promiscuity, infidelity and divorce, is at risk of being redefined and thus subverted. Marriage is the original and most important institution for sustaining the health, education, and welfare of all. Where marriage erodes, social pathologies rise. The impulse to redefine marriage is a symptom, rather than the cause, of the erosion of the marriage culture. It reflects a loss of understanding of the meaning of marriage as embodied in our civil law as well as our religious traditions. Yet it is critical that the impulse be resisted, for yielding to it would mean abandoning the possibility of restoring a sound understanding of marriage and, with it, the hope of rebuilding a healthy marriage culture. It would lock into place the false and destructive belief that marriage is all about romance and other adult satisfactions, and -more not, in any intrinsic way, about the unique character and value of acts and relationships whose meaning is shaped by their aptness for the generation, promotion and protection of life. Marriage is not a “social construction,” but is rather an objective reality—the covenantal union of husband and wife—that it is the duty of the law to recognize, honor, and protect.

Religious Liberty

Freedom of religion and the rights of conscience are gravely jeopardized. The threat to these fundamental principles of justice is evident in efforts to weaken or eliminate conscience protections for healthcare institutions and professionals, and in antidiscrimination statutes that are used as weapons to force religious institutions, charities, businesses, and service providers either to accept (and even facilitate) activities and relationships they judge to be immoral, or go out of business. Attacks on religious liberty are dire threats not only to individuals, but also to the institutions of civil society including families, charities, and religious communities. The health and well-being of such institutions provide an indispensable buffer against the overweening power of government and is essential to the flourishing of every other institution—including government itself—on which society depends.

Unjust Laws

As Christians, we believe in law and we respect the authority of earthly rulers. We count it as a special privilege to live in a democratic society where the moral claims of the law on us are even stronger in virtue of the rights of all citizens to participate in the political process. Yet even in a democratic regime, laws can be unjust. And from the beginning, our faith has taught that civil disobedience is required in the face of gravely unjust laws or laws that purport to require us to do what is unjust or otherwise immoral. Such laws lack the power to bind in conscience because they can claim no authority beyond that of sheer human will.

Therefore, let it be known that we will not comply with any edict that compels us or the institutions we lead to

participate in or facilitate abortions, embryo-destructive research, assisted suicide, euthanasia, or any other act that violates the principle of the profound, inherent, and equal dignity of every member of the human family.

Further, let it be known that we will not bend to any rule forcing us to bless immoral sexual partnerships, treat them as marriages or the equivalent, or refrain from proclaiming the truth, as we know it, about morality, marriage, and the family.

Further, let it be known that we will not be intimidated into silence or acquiescence or the violation of our consciences by any power on earth, be it cultural or political, regardless of the consequences to ourselves.

We will fully and ungrudgingly render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But under no circumstances will we render to Caesar what is God's.

As of January 10, 2010, they have gathered about 350,000 signers. It is their goal to get as many as 1,00,000 signatures. The organizers encourage those who have signed to continue supporting this movement by working in every possible arena to advance the sanctity of life, rebuild and revitalize the marriage culture, and protect religious liberty. It is their conviction that when Christians jointly determine to be uncompromisingly faithful to the gospel, and to become effective advocates of godly principles in life, great changes will happen to their country. For more up-to-date information please visit their website, www.manhattandeclaration.org.

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Where does this stampede lead us? Only one place: tyranny. A new kind of cultural tyranny that finds minds, uninformed by traditions and standards, easy to shape.

Philosopher Hannah Arendt described totalitarianism as a process where lonely, rootless individuals, deprived of meaning and community, welcome the captivity of ideology. To escape their inner emptiness, they seek out new forms of servitude. Trading independence for security, they blend into faceless conformity. The lonely crowd always finds a leader. It submits to the party line and calls it freedom. America is filled with willing recruits to follow a new Grand Inquisitor.

This coming cultural tyranny already casts its shadow across university campuses where repressive speech codes stifle free debate; across court houses and legislatures where officials hunt down and purge every religious symbol; across network newsrooms and board rooms where nothing is censored except traditional belief. Our modern elites speak of enlightened tolerance while preparing

shackles for those who disagree.

Disdaining the past and its values, we flee the judgment of the dead. We tear down memory's monuments—removing every guidepost and landmark—and wander in unfamiliar country. But it is a sterile wasteland in which men and women are left with carefully furnished lives and utterly barren souls.

This is irony without humor—farce without joy. Western elites are carefully separating the wheat from the chaff and keeping the chaff. They are performing a modern miracle of turning wine into water.

This crisis is not only alarming, it is also urgent.

Printed by permission, the article was excerpted from the intercessors for America First Friday Prayer Letter, Dec. 2009 issue; for more information visit www.ifapray.org.

WORLD MISSION NEWS

Compiled by Samuel C. Y. Ling

Microfinance: Since two Christians in 2005 set up a website allowing people to make donations of \$25 to \$200 with credit cards, they will have made loans totaling \$110 million through field partners in 49 countries by the end of 2009. They have systems of accountability, ratings and assessment for its loan partners as well as partners' faith backgrounds for donors to examine. Some ministries have also partnered with them to raise loan funds through its site.

<Christianity Today, December/09>

USA: More and more campus student Christian leaders realize that the gospel is both personal evangelism and justice. Besides the concerts and pizza parties for outreach, students are just likely now to encounter the homeless, discuss human trafficking or some other social issues. Students now want to see the gospel in action, love of God demonstrated.

<Christianity Today, December/09>

Gospel Broadcast: Restriction by one of the two Arab-operated satellite systems to be used by Christian broadcast has been relaxed recently. This allows them to secure two channels and opens up to 80 millions more Arabs to hear the gospel, more than doubling their previous potential viewing audience overnight. News has come in already of people finding them, sometimes accidentally, and the impact on their lives.

<SAT-7, www.sat7.org, 10/8/09>

10/40 Window: After a decade of evangelistic focus and effort, churches have been planted throughout this region of 2/3 of world population and half of them unreached. These new churches are sending back missionaries to Europe and USA though still facing fierce opposition at home.

<Global Advance, www.globaladvance.org, 4/17/09>

India: A Christian couple was bitterly angry against God after they lost their entire family including a son and two daughters in the tsunami 5 years ago. But having compassion on many orphans, they began to adopt and care for them first with 4 now up to 20. They also have now 2 sons born after the tsunami. All their children have personal relationship with Christ presenting a great testimony to others.

<International Mission Board, imb.org, 12/1/09>

India: To combat illiteracy, an agency in India hosts 10-day training of indigenous women in biblical storytelling, small group formation, and ministry outreach. These women have amazing storytelling ability, and they are very enthusiastic, putting their training into action right away and encourage others to follow them. They even ask for training in discipleship. In one province this has become a movement spreading like wild fire.

6 <Partners international, www.partnersintl.org, 12/11/09/09>

China: A mega-church in Shanxi province with 50,000 worshippers was shut down by hundreds of police and hired thugs who smashed doors and windows, seized Bibles and sent dozens of people to hospitals with serious injuries. The co-pastors are in jail. The church complex is locked and guarded by police armored personnel vehicle. It appeared that the officials are responding to rapid house church growth in cities and rural areas by harsh crackdowns particularly aimed at large churches. In October, they locked out 2 churches in Beijing each over 1,000 members.

<Associated Press, 12/10/09>

China: Henan province has a population of 100 million with 14 million Christians today, more than any other provinces in China.

<Asia Harvest, www.asiaharvest.org, September 2009>

Algeria: Despite an anti-conversion law in 2008 prohibiting efforts to convert Muslims to another religion, the church is growing incredibly, especially in the Kabylie region where all 2,000+ towns and villages have Christians and churches. Many are baptizing 120-150 every year, and are packed 2 1/2 hours before meetings. In one town there are more churches than mosques. They still face persecution by Muslim fundamentalists. And they need training.

<Operation Mobilization, www.omusa.org, 12/10/09>

Pakistan: On October 9, 2008 a father and daughter pair were arrested under the "blasphemy law" of tearing pages out of the Koran. The law can charge Christians for crimes committed against Islam and held for extended period without evidence or a trial. After dozens of rescheduled hearings, the case finally went to trial. The judge dropped all charges, declared them innocent and set them free. Often this law is used for people to lash out against Christians to settle personal disputes. There has been some recent talk of reforming the law, but, so far, it is only talk.

<Voice of the Martyrs, www.persecution.com, 12/15/09>

Peru: Ten year ago, a missionary couple started an evangelistic ministry and saw great success. Sensing the need, they began a discipleship program that has 2,600 people enrolled now, 8 years later. Their "Kid's Club" ministry has 850 children every week with 48 leaders leading 12 groups in parks/open fields all over the nation. They host many short-term mission teams. Last month, 16 members from an US church helped with a medical campaign in a small town deep in the jungle. In 3 days 1,008 people were served, 182 came to the Lord, and 25 recommitted their lives.

<The Mission Society, www.themissionsociety.org, 10/14/09>

Mission to the Jews Conference in Hong Kong

GCCI Hong Kong Office, in cooperation with Chosen People Ministries (HK), Christian Witness to Israel (HK) and Chinese Christian On Watch, held a city-wide “Mission to the Jews Conference” on November 7-9, 2009 at the Yan Fok Evangelical Free Church in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Over 1,000 people, from age 15 to 80, attended the two public meetings on Friday and Saturday.

Rev. Lawrence Hirsh and Elder David Zadok, two Messianic Jews, spoke on the Conference Theme -- “Thinking the Source of Water – Salvation is from the Jews”. All participants were encouraged to see that God has not and will not abandon the Jews. We, as the wild olive shoot, should remember the root that supports us.

About 100 pastors and seminarians came to the seminar on Monday, November 9. The topics were: The Development of Anti-Semitism and Replacement Theology, and Jews in the Diaspora.



GCCI Ministry Sharing Meetings Held in San Francisco Bay Area

A ministry sharing meeting, with the theme of “From Mount Heaven (Tian Shan) to Mount Zion – Mission to Chinese, Muslims and Jews” was held on November 21, 2009. About 100 church leaders attended the meeting and dinner.

Reverend Dr. Thomas Wang, Founder and President Emeritus of GCCI shared with the congregation on the mission challenge of the 21st century – that is, from China to the Middle East through a DVD. Then, Dr. Sharon Chan, current president of GCCI shared how GCCI will help and equip churches to respond to the great challenge.



GCCI Ministries in 2010

GCCI is a mission mobilization organization – informing, equipping and ushering the Chinese churches into global missions.

A. Global Missions

Reaching the Jews with the gospel.

Engaging in the Muslim World.

Calling the Post-Christian World to return to God.

Training workers for China.

B. Mission Mobilization

GCCI is participating in the preparation of the Fourth International Consultation of the Back To Jerusalem Movement, which will be held in June 1-4, 2010 in the Middle East. All participants are by invitation only.

GCCI is cooperating with churches in Macao to conduct a Mission to the Jews Conference on May 11-13, 2010.

C. Local Church Mission Education

Conduct teacher's training in both Cantonese and Mandarin for World Mission Course (Level I).

Publish World Mission Course (Level II) in both traditional and simplified Chinese.

Publish teaching aids (power point and DVD) for World Mission Courses.

D. Missiology Course

In cooperation with three Chinese mission organizations GCCI will offer master's level Missiology Courses in the San Francisco Bay Area. These courses will be recognized by Columbia International University/ Seminary (CIU) as "credit in reserve". Several Chinese seminaries also encourage their students to take these courses as regular classes. The four courses that we will offer in 2010 are:

Globalization and Mission Strategy (January),

Introduction of Missiology (April),

Comparative Religions (July)

Mission History (December).

E. Missionary Pre-field Training

In view of the lack of pre-field training for Chinese missionary candidates in North America, GCCI has invited Dr and Mrs. Titus Loong to come to San Francisco Bay Area on July 5-9, 2010 to conduct training for missionary candidates.

Dr. and Mrs. Loong have over 20 years of experience in training Asian missionaries in Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

F. Mission Publications

Great Commission Bi-Monthly (in Chinese, 6 issues)

Great Commission News Quarterly (in English, 4 issues)

Revision of "From Eternity to Eternity" (Chinese and English) chart – World History, Church History and Chinese History combined chart.

We do covet your prayer for our ministries and financial needs for the year 2010. For more information please contact us at info@gcciusa.org.