

Blogs and Allegiances

The Church is not a business, though some aspects of business experience are helpful when managing earthly aspects of the Church.

Because of that, a Christian congregation is also not a business. Likewise, a synod or larger church body is not a business.

The business world is a bit like the military world. Decisions are made by a few, and everyone else has to follow them. Dissent is not tolerated. The leader(s) determine the principles of the organization, and anyone who contradicts them is terminated or disciplined.

This has been extended to publications. If an employee writes a book or blog that somehow comes against the principles or interests of his company, then he is in trouble. His allegiance, even in his privately published writings, is to his company. Personally, I think some companies have taken this way too far, but it's a free country. They have the right to be wrong, just like the rest of us.

In the Church, our primary allegiance is not to our own congregation, nor to our synod, per se. That would be a kind of idolatry. It would be denominationalism, like backing the Red Sox only because you live near Boston, rather than because they have any particular virtue or skill. Applied to baseball, that approach is fine. Applied to churches, it's wrong. Some churches and synods *are* more virtuous than others, because they hold to the Word of God in doctrine and practice better than others.

In the Church, our allegiance is to the Word of God. Certainly, a Christians' first allegiance should *always* be to the Word of God, even when working in a business setting. However, I'm not surprised when a business fails to respect that. As a manifestation of the Church, a Christian congregation or synod should never demand allegiance or obedience to itself before God's Word. We should know what *Sola Scriptura* means.

The issue of personal publications is also different in the Church than in the world of business. Here, we are governed by God Himself, through the Holy Scriptures. Our "ecclesiastical supervisors" may only evaluate what we write on that basis. Some may think that our allegiance to congregation or synod is not what it should be. I'm more concerned about my allegiance to God's Word.

Some may think that the words we write lack love. John wrote, "whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" His point also applies to those who see that something should be said for benefit of others, but do not step up and say it. Love should *compel* us to write, if we can, "teaching and admonishing one another," as the epistle lesson for Visitation said.

I grant that the *de facto* situation has been different. Back when widely-disseminated publications were only in print, they were still controlled by the decision-makers in synods, because only a publishing house had the ability to print a book. There were exceptions, of course, and [they were often controversial](#).

But now, anyone with an Internet connection can publish for wide dissemination. This is a double-edged sword, because the staggering volume of online publications has devalued, or at least deemphasized, what each contributor has to say. However, the fact remains that any pastor or layman of moderate means can now publish his own church-related writings for the world to see.

When someone writes about spiritual matters on a blog to which only his name is affixed, he is writing a personal editorial. The writing exists in connection with his vocation as a Christian. I write here not because I am a pastor, nor because I am a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (despite this blog's obscure name), nor because I am a father, nor because I am a husband. I write here because I am a Christian, somewhat capable of expressing myself on matters important to me. My other vocations influence what I write, but their significance ends there.

The Internet is a big quasi-place. What I may write here should be taken for what it's worth. (Comments are welcome and encouraged.) If I contribute to other [web sites](#), [projects](#), or [discussions](#), or if I have a presence on a social networking site, or even if I have specific responsibilities [elsewhere](#), that should not really make my words any more or less credible. I hope they will be evaluated on the basis of God's Word, the Lutheran Confessions, and plain reason. Use any other criteria of evaluation at your own risk.

Posted by Jesse Jacobsen in Doctrine, Technology at 18:42

Shaking the foundation of Christianity?

[This article](#), linked from the Drudge Report, makes some claims meant to disturb Christians. The discovery it describes is interesting, and I'd like to hear more about how it pans out. However, some of the application is sensational, to say the least. Here's a bit quoting Israel Knohl, described as "an iconoclastic professor of Bible studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem:"

"This should shake our basic view of Christianity," he said as he sat in his office of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem where he is a senior fellow in addition to being the Yehezkel Kaufman Professor of Biblical Studies at Hebrew University. "Resurrection after three days becomes a motif developed before Jesus, which runs contrary to nearly all scholarship. What happens in the New Testament was adopted by Jesus and his followers based on an earlier messiah story."

That's about all you need to understand what someone is trying to do with this story.

The news here is that a stone with writing on it is supposed to date from the first century before Christ. It was discovered in connection with the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have provided many ancient writings, including the oldest known OT manuscripts in existence. The Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed the accuracy of the OT manuscripts extant at the time of their discovery.

This stone is being promoted as a challenge to the basic tenet of Christianity: that Jesus died and rose again the third day (counting the day He died). That's more or less what this article seems to claim, though it may not actually say so explicitly.

The key point is that the writing on the stone says something about a savior dying and rising again on the third day.

Toward the end of the article, we learn what Mr. Knohl considers the important aspect: "the fact that it strongly suggested that a savior who died and rose after three days was an established concept at the time of Jesus." This is important, he says, because "in the Gospels, Jesus makes numerous predictions of his suffering and New Testament scholars say such predictions must have been written in by later followers because there was no such idea present in his day."

I don't know who these NT scholars are, but they're wrong. My guess is that they consider the NT in isolation from the OT. That's always a bad idea. The Bible, though not homogenous in terms of human origin or style, is completely united in divine origin and purpose. These NT scholars may also consider the NT *not* to have a divine origin, especially in the sense of plenary inspiration. In any case, Mr. Knohl would be correct that an artifact like this stone, referring to a salvific death and resurrection, should help to set those NT scholars straight.

The article ends with a supposedly-devastating application of this discovery: "To shed blood is not for the sins of people but to bring redemption to Israel." Huh? I don't see how that's even a challenge for Christianity.

The Church of the NT *is* Israel. As horrible as it may sound to some Jews, the believing Gentiles have been grafted into the olive tree of Israel (see Romans 11), while the unbelieving Jews have rejected their own honor and glory. Jesus *is* a Jew. The OT Scriptures, the Tanakh, is all about the Messiah in one way or another. That means it's all about Jesus, including His death and resurrection. Read the letter to the Hebrews

once or twice, and the pattern begins to emerge.

What does redemption mean? A lot of Jews had it wrong, including Jesus' disciples from time to time (Luke 24:21, Acts 1:6), and possibly including the person who wrote on this stone. But Isaiah had it right (44:22), as well as Hosea (13:14), both being OT prophets to Israel.

Posted by Jesse Jacobsen in Doctrine at 23:05

Gem from Loescher

How's this for putting it delicately?

May [God] keep us from ever again falling into the folly of extorting for dim verdicts a credulous Amen.

(p. 103, *The Complete Timotheus Verinus*)

Posted by Jesse Jacobsen in Doctrine at 10:20

Friday, July 4, 2008

Happy Birthday, United States of America

May you honor your fathers and their wisdom, that you may live long in the land where God has established you.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. -- That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, -- That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. -- Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative

Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. -- And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Posted by Jesse Jacobsen in Life at 07:38

Linux and the Canon ir2230 Copier

At one of the churches I serve, there is a Canon iR 2230 digital copier, called an "ImageRunner." It's a nice monochrome copier, especially nice for a small congregation. This one has a network interface, and can function as a network printer with Canon's proprietary UFR II printer language. Canon also reportedly offers a network interface that supports PCL, but I haven't had any success in getting one. It's probably expensive anyway.

For almost 2.5 years now, I've been trying to figure out how to print to the ir2230 from Linux, without success. There were drivers from some European web site that didn't work, and suggestions from a local tech to try drivers for similar machines --- that also didn't work.

Today, I did another search, and stumbled upon a Japanese web site that has drivers available for CUPS, in both rpm and debian packages. Holding my breath, I installed the debs. I can happily report that the CUPS test page printed flawlessly. The driver includes a PPD that uses Ghostscript to process the Postscript job before sending it. The driver seems to support duplexing, as well as collating, stapling, and hole punching. There's also a little GTK+ program for sending jobs through CUPS, which supports the device's features more explicitly.

The place to get that driver is [here](#). Just scroll down until you see the links for RPMs or Debs.

Posted by Jesse Jacobsen in Technology at 07:38