



NEWS & NOTES

■ On Thursday, David Daleiden of the Center for Medical Progress turned himself in to law enforcement officials in Houston following his indictment by a Harris County grand jury. Prior to turning himself in, Daleiden thanked his supporters and stated, "I firmly believe that if we stay the course and stay together, we can bring about a day when there is no longer a price tag put on human life." Meanwhile, the Harris County District Attorney's office received a LifeSiteNews petition signed by 106,000 people demanding that charges against David Daleiden and fellow co-worker Sandra Merritt be dropped. FACT, 2/5; Brietbart, 2/4

■ Tuesday's 241-186 vote to override Obama's veto fell short of the necessary two-thirds majority, so Planned Parenthood will continue to get federal funding and key provisions in

Obamacare, which include the employer and individual mandates. Planned Parenthood received \$553.7 million from taxpayers in 2014 alone, according to its most recent annual report. The president sternly opposed the bill in part because it would have repealed several of the defining provisions of ObamaCare. FACT, 2/5; Lifeweek, 2/2

■ On Thursday David Fowler, an attorney with the Constitutional Government Defense Fund, filed a second declaratory judgment lawsuit related to the legal, constitutional issues created by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on marriage June 26, 2015 in Obergefell v. Hodges. The second lawsuit was filed in the Circuit Court in Bradley County, Tenn., on behalf of a minister and commissioner residing in Bradley County. FACT, 2/5

■ Last Friday, the Texas Supreme Court ruled in favor of the religious liberty of high school cheerleaders who had been prohibited by their school district from displaying banners with Bible verses at football games. Even though the school district later changed its policy to allow the banners, the justices still determined the ruling was necessary to protect future religious-themed signs. The Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a complaint in 2012 that sought to have the banners banned. Various state offi-

cials, including Gov. Greg Abbott, have supported the cheerleaders and filed court papers seeking to intervene on their behalf. FACT, 2/5

■ Little Sisters of the Poor, represented by the Becket Fund, is challenging the Obamacare mandate that their health insurance for employees cover contraceptives and abortifacients, a fact that goes against their strongly held religious beliefs and violates Catholic teaching. The U.S. Supreme Court will weigh in on the case through oral arguments on March 23. "If this appeal is lost, the government becomes the head of every religious denomination in the country by its assumed authority to determine what is in fact a sin," notes a friend-of-the-court brief filed by the Thomas More Law Center. FACT, 2/5

■ An elite panel of scientists and bioethicists commissioned by the FDA offered guarded approval Wednesday of a novel form of genetic engineering that could prevent congenital diseases but would result in babies with genetic material from three parents, loosely referred to as "three-parent babies." British officials have already approved investigatory experiments involving the technique, but 2016 U.S. budget bill prohibits funding of experiments that genetically alter human embryos. Two months ago, sci-

entists from around the globe gathered in the same building to hash out guidelines for the use of another revolutionary technique, known as CRISPR, which can be used to efficiently edit nuclear DNA genes. Earlier this week, British officials approved publicly funded research that will use CRISPR to study the development of early-stage human embryos, but the embryos will not be implanted in women. Washington Post, 2/3

■ Nashville's Metro Council unanimously approved a resolution on Tuesday asking the Davidson County state delegation to comply with the 2015 Supreme marriage decision and oppose any state legislation that does not comply with that ruling. Lead sponsors for the bill include two openly gay council members. FACT, 2/5

■ A principal in Saint Paul, Minn., is tossing out the "dominant holidays" of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and more for fear of disrupting the culture of inclusiveness and tolerance at Bruce Vento Elementary School. Saint Paul Public Schools agrees with him and released a statement of how their "diverse district" strove "to respect all cultures and students." FACT, 2/5

■ A new Pew Research survey finds that Republicans and Democrats divide sharply over views on Islam, Muslims and how a U.S.

president should label violent extremists. But the January survey of 2,009 U.S. adults also reveals that Americans overall agree (76%) that there is "a lot" of discrimination against Muslims living in the U.S. "For Republicans, 65 percent want a blunt-talking president, even if that means the president is critical of Islam. Whereas, for Democrats, 70 percent say the next president should be careful not to criticize Islam as a whole," a surveyor said. Pew finds that most Americans say religion doesn't cause violence, but rather violent people use religion to justify their actions. The new findings come on the heels of a separate Pew Research Center survey conducted in December 2015, which found that 46% of Americans think Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence and that a similar share (49%) say they are "very concerned" about the rise of

Islamic extremism in the U.S. USA Today, 2/4

■ The spread of the Zika virus is putting pressure on the Catholic Church in Latin America to relax its strict policies toward artificial contraception. The Catholic Church is faced with a huge issue with the spread of the Zika virus, especially since women in some Latin American countries have been told not to get pregnant for two years in order to halt the spread of the virus. Nearly 40 percent of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics live in Latin America. Christian Headlines, 2/5

■ On Wednesday, President Obama made his first visit to an American mosque in order to counter recent rhetoric against Muslims. Obama stated that terrorism cannot be blamed on Muslims and condemned recent Republican presidential candidates' attacks on Muslims. "We've heard inexcusable political rhetoric against

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Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." — DIETRICH BONHOEFFER
Seventy years ago, on February 7, 1945, Bonhoeffer was sent to the terrible Buchenwald Concentration Camp where many thousands of prisoners died, some under cruel medical experiments. Three months later Bonhoeffer corpse was added to the list of dead. He was hanged days before the allies freed the camp.
' Safe in exile in America, he abruptly returned to Germany, saying, "I must share in the trials of this time with my people." In Germany Bonhoeffer worked with the underground resistance. He helped guide Jews to safety. Believing that Hitler was like a madman he joined a plot to kill the Führer. After he was arrested for his aid to the Jews, his role in the plot was discovered. Nonetheless Bonhoeffer was personally at peace. Suffering, he said, had become a better key for understanding the world than happiness had ever been.

Muslim Americans that has no place in our country. We have to reject a politics that seeks to manipulate prejudice or bias and targets people because of religion,” he said. *Christian Headlines, 2/4*

■ The next day, in his last National Prayer Breakfast speech while in office, President Obama gave an introspective talk about how his faith overcomes his fears. “For me, and I know for so many of you, faith is the great cure for fear,” Obama said at the Washington Hilton event Thursday. “Jesus is a good cure for fear.”

Obama’s speech to several thousand mostly evangelical listeners came a day after he spoke at a Baltimore mosque and gave a history lesson on Muslim Americans’ contributions to the country. The National Prayer Breakfast, held for the 64th time, is chaired each year by members of Congress who meet weekly for prayer when Congress is in session. It draws politicians, diplomats and prominent evangelical Christian leaders. Obama said he joins the continuing prayers for Christians and other people of faith around the world who are perse-

cuted for their beliefs, and he expressed gratitude for the safe return of Iranian-American pastor Saeed Abedini, who was released in January from Iran after being imprisoned since 2012. *RNS, 2/5*

■ The European Parliament has declared the violent campaign by the so-called Islamic State against Christians and other religious minorities to be genocide. “Daesh commits genocide,” according to the resolution passed 4 Feb. by a show of hands from representatives of the 28-nation European Union. Daesh is an English representation of the Arabic acronym for Islamic State. Religious-freedom advocates have been lobbying Western governments to formally apply the term genocide to Islamic State’s 21-month drive to impose a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam upon northern Iraq and Syria. *World Watch Monitor, 2/4*

■ The Evangelical Alliance United Kingdom is asking the government to cancel requirements from the prime minister that force religious groups to register children’s activities. The policies stem from British government investigations that found radi-

cal Muslims had allegedly tried to take over the Birmingham public school system. *RT, 2/2*

■ Members of India’s lowest class, the dalits or “untouchables,” are organizing rallies to protest their unfair treatment by the government. The government offers benefits to those of the lowest caste mainly if they are Hindu. Those who identify as Christian or other faiths thus feel they are being discriminated against. In 2014, International Christian Concern reported that nearly 25 million Christian dalits are being forced to choose between receiving government benefits and their faith. *Christian Headlines, 2/2*

■ Three Egyptian Christian high school students are on trial for allegedly insulting Islam. Their teacher was sentenced to three years in prison, also for insulting Islam. Egypt’s president has vowed to get rid of harsh blasphemy laws, but blasphemy charges have increased in recent months. *Christian Headlines, 2/1*

■ Authorities in China have now detained the pastor of the country’s largest official Protestant church, who publicly objected to a government drive to demolish crosses on church buildings, in what rights groups say is part of a larger crackdown on religious freedom in the communist nation. Gu, who headed Hangzhou’s prominent Chongyi Church, was removed from his post by China’s 10 days prior to his detention. *Time, 1/31*

Jesus vs. the Bible

by John Stonestreet

Not getting what you need from the Bible? Well, just listen for God’s voice elsewhere, we’re told. But here’s a fair warning, we often do a convincing impersonation.

A page torn from an inspirational daily calendar of Bible verses is making rounds these days on social media. It features a pretty purple flower and a quote from Luke 4:7: “If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.” It’s meant to inspire—until you realize who said it: Satan.

Now whether this was an oversight by the calendar designer, or a clever Photoshop job, the takeaway is the same: Context matters when it comes to Scripture. But today, there’s an even deeper problem with how we use Bible verses, and a recent article in the Huffington Post offers a sad example of why.

Brandon Robertson, a young Bible institute graduate, recounts how his faith was shaken. “Every time I found myself in turmoil,” he wrote, “I would reach for the Bible...[but] I was most often coming back empty handed.” That disappointment left him “radically disinterested” in God’s word.

Describing a moment of a particular personal crisis, Brandon looked to the Bible looking for comfort. “With tears in my eyes,” he writes, “I opened up the Scriptures and landed on Isaiah 3—a chapter about God judging and destroying his enemies... not exactly the encouragement I was looking for,” he said. “I turned to the typical ‘encouragement’ passages like Romans 8 and Philippians 3, but they didn’t seem to be working.”

Brandon recounts that his disappointment continued into college, until, during a lecture by biblical critic Peter Enns, he had an epiphany: “We need to be training our children to cultivate a relationship with God, not a relationship with the Bible.”

Now at face value, of course, this statement is true. The purpose of the Bible is to reveal God. But for a growing number of progressive Christians, the God they want

LOOKING FOR GOD OUTSIDE SCRIPTURE

can’t be found in the pages of Scripture. So they look for Him elsewhere—in personal experience, through relationships with other people, and through private interpretations of when they say God “speaks into” their life.

Effectively, this approach untethers God from the Bible. For example, the United Church of Christ recently insisted that “God is still speaking.” Another true-at-face-value statement, until you realize they’re actually suggesting that God’s changed His mind on issues like morality and marriage, and that their ideas of who God should be trumps the God His word reveals.

Many point to Jesus Himself as their alternative to Scripture. For example, Enns writes that “for Christians, Jesus, not the Bible, has the final word.” But in response, Christian blogger Derek Rishmawy asked a very important question: to which “Jesus” are these folks referring? “[T]he only real Jesus we have intellectual access to,” observes Derek, “is the Jesus revealed to us in the Bible.” That Jesus reaffirmed the exclusivity of natural marriage, endorsed every “jot and tittle” of the Old Testament, and talked as much about hell and judgment as He did the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Jesus that progressive Christians claim has no source other than, well, themselves, their own feelings, beliefs, and preferences. J. Gresham Machen wrote back in 1924, “The real authority, for liberalism, can only be...individual experience; truth can only be that which ‘helps’ the individual man. Such an authority is obviously no authority at all.”

Our approach to the Bible is vitally important. God’s inspired word is not a calendar of inspirational, therapeutic quotes. When we open the Bible, we are stepping into God’s story, understanding our place in His design, and encountering Him on His terms. When we don’t find what we’re looking for, we should ask whether we’re looking for the real God—or remaking a god in our image.?

Breakpoint, 2/3/2016.

ENTERTAINMENT NOTES

★★NEW MOVIES

| | Quality | Moral | Age |
|--|----------|-------|-----|
| <i>Hail, Caesar!</i> | PG-13 +4 | -1 | T/A |
| <i>Pride and Prejudice and Zombies</i> | PG-13 +4 | -2 | T/A |
| <i>The Choice</i> | PG-13 +2 | -2 | T/A |

A- Adult, T-Teen, OT- Older Teen

Film “Quality” is an estimate (+1 to +4) of appeal for the *intended* audience or age group. “Moral” rating ranges from extremely objectionable (-4) to very good (+4). movieguide.org