

AlbertMohler.com

“Paying For Its Sins?” Charlotte Allen on Liberal Christianity

Monday, July 10, 2006

Charlotte Allen, an editor at Beliefnet, offers a very insightful (and intentionally controversial) opinion column in Sunday's edition of *The Los Angeles Times*. From her essay:

You want to have gay sex? Be a female bishop? Change God's name to Sophia? Go ahead. The just-elected Episcopal presiding bishop, Katharine Jefferts Schori, is a one-woman combination of all these things, having voted for Robinson, blessed same-sex couples in her Nevada diocese, prayed to a female Jesus at the Columbus convention and invited former Newark, N.J., bishop John Shelby Spong, famous for denying Christ's divinity, to address her priests.

When a church doesn't take itself seriously, neither do its members. It is hard to believe that as recently as 1960, members of mainline churches — Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans and the like — accounted for 40% of all American Protestants. Today, it's more like 12% (17 million out of 135 million). Some of the precipitous decline is due to lower birthrates among the generally blue-state mainliners, but it also is clear that millions of mainline adherents (and especially their children) have simply walked out of the pews never to return. According to the Hartford Institute for Religious Research, in 1965, there were 3.4 million Episcopalians; now, there are 2.3 million.

More:

When your religion says “whatever” on doctrinal matters, regards Jesus as just another wise teacher, refuses on principle to evangelize and lets you do pretty much what you want, it's a short step to deciding that one of the things you don't want to do is get up on Sunday morning and go to church.

It doesn't help matters that the mainline churches were pioneers in ordaining women to the clergy, to the point that 25% of all Episcopal priests these days are female, as are 29% of all Presbyterian pastors, according to the two churches. A causal connection between a critical mass of female clergy and a mass exodus from the churches, especially among men, would be difficult to establish, but is it entirely a coincidence? Sociologist Rodney Stark (“The Rise of Christianity”) and historian Philip Jenkins (“The Next Christendom”) contend that the more demands, ethical and doctrinal, that a faith places upon its adherents, the deeper the adherents' commitment to that faith. Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, which preach biblical morality, have no trouble saying that Jesus is Lord, and they generally eschew women's ordination. The churches are growing robustly, both in the United States and around the world.

Finally:

So this is the liberal Christianity that was supposed to be the Christianity of the future: disarray, schism, rapidly falling numbers of adherents, a collapse of Christology and national meetings that rival those of the Modern Language Assn. for their potential for cheap laughs. And they keep telling the Catholic Church that it had better get with the liberal program — ordain women, bless gay unions and so forth — or die. Sure.

Her entire essay is well worth reading.

Content Copyright © 2002-2010, R. Albert Mohler, Jr.