

February 25th, 2009

Dear Friends

I recently had the opportunity to take a walk on Plymouth Hoe, the headland upon which Sir Francis Drake is reputed to have played Bowls despite the threat of the Spanish fleet.

A distinguished commemorative monument suggests that England's victory was in the provenance of God's grace, and that as a consequence England should expect every man to do his duty. How noble it is, to appropriate God's favour in this way!

An hour or so later I discovered a book entitled '*The Time Paradox*' in which eminent Psychologists reflect on various cultural concepts of time. Those who have a glorious view of the past, will have a completely different world view from those whose view of History is regret filled. In the setting, I wondered how Protestants, Catholics and the sons of Slave's would each reflect on England's sea faring prowess. I wondered too, how these orientations would play out in ones acceptance of the Gospel?

The authors, Zimabardo and Boyd are interested in explaining the behaviour of suicide bombers. Why is it, that people with such a rich view of heaven are capable of being so destructive on earth? Why such high respect for Allah, and such disregard for people?

It seems that whether one views the past, the present, the future and the transcendent in positive or negative terms has a bearing. In this regard Protestants, Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists and Secularists have measurably contrasting profiles.

The Buddhist with no life after death must find transcendence in the present, the Catholic who believes in the immortality of the Soul is neutral in his balance of past and future. Protestants are by contrast on the other end of the scale. Our strong belief in heaven and the second coming frames our thinking. Culturally we tend to view our past with pride, this being modified by our personal failings and the forgiveness thereof. Hope, is to embrace the positive future transcendent.

Of the options available, the Adventist perspective comes out as the most rewarding. It is difficult not to ask whether our faith is indeed a mere opiate? For some it may well be, for those with tragic past's the future must be better. Yet our message is greater than the Paradox of Time, it is founded in the Paradox of Jesus' perfect life and the rhythm of our association with him each day and each Sabbath. Our history is not based on our exploits but His.

Thank you once again for your monumental contribution, the exercise of duty, and your place in God's provenance. May God continue to bless your ministry as a reflector of Hope.

Yours truly

Victor