

2015: The Year of Pushback

As we enter this new year, I offer some prayerful reflections on trends that we could see developing in the months ahead, not as a prophet but as an observer seeking to follow in the footsteps of the ancient sons of Issachar, who “understood the meaning of the times to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron. 12:32; my translation of the Hebrew).

While it is possible that I am simply projecting what I am seeing in my own work and ministry, I am hopeful that these represent larger trends in the nation in general and the believing church in particular.

Time, of course, will tell.

1) The gay revolution will continue to overlay its hand. As those who were once bullied now bully others, this will produce an increasing backlash, as seen with the “Houston Five” last year. And as gay activists win more and more battles in the courts and the society, that will actually work against them, and their goals will continue to become more and more extreme. (I address this at length in a book scheduled for publication later this year.)

2) Young people in the church will awaken more and more. I’m aware that many young people are dropping out of “religion” and that the children of evangelicals are often more liberal in their social beliefs than their parents (although not so much when it comes to abortion, thankfully). Yet the emptiness of today’s society and the dysfunctional, broken nature of so many of the homes in which these kids are being raised has created a great void, and I expect more and more young people to turn to God earnestly. As for those who are already serious, they will get more serious.

3) The LGBT harvest will continue to increase. For many years, I have believed that, just as God saved a multitude of

hippies, radicals and rebels in the late 60s and early 70s—I was one of them—so too he will save a multitude of those who identify as LGBT. Over the years, I have been blessed to hear from a number of other leaders who have this same conviction.

Recently, after speaking on “Can You Be Gay and Christian?” a former lesbian came up to greet me, thanking me for addressing the issue with sensitivity and love. (I often ask churches if we will be ready and welcoming as LGBT people come to our services, as they hold hands during worship, with some dressing differently than their biology would seem to call for.) She told me that she has recently met 6 other former lesbians, all committed to local churches now, and she too sees this increasing.

Of course, it is negative that many are claiming to be committed followers of Jesus while practicing homosexuality at the same time. But it is positive that many gays and lesbians want to follow Jesus and want to attend church after feeling rejected by God and the church all of their lives. Let us prepare our hearts with love and compassion for this coming harvest.

4) God’s people will start to get desperate and pray. Although there have been powerful prayer movements birthed in the last 25 years, for the most part, American Christians have been very complacent, tending to get more exercised in prayer during the presidential elections or during times of economic crisis. Otherwise, we have been asleep in the light, to use the proverbial phrase.

But last year, I began to notice a growing call to prayer and fasting and awakening in the American church, and I expect that to increase in 2015. May it be so!

5) Race relations will improve through dialogue, with God’s people leading the way. The painful events of the last few

years (from Trayvon Martin to Eric Garner) have brought the deep divide in our nation to the surface, and as difficult and divisive as this season has been, it has forced many of us to confront these issues head on.

As much as the racial divide seems to be widening—and I'm not pointing fingers at either "side" in saying this—I believe that more and more constructive dialogue is taking place, with Christian leaders playing a leading role in this.

Again, I could simply be projecting what I'm witnessing personally—we have had many hours of excellent, enlightening dialogue on my radio show—but I'm hopeful again that this is part of a positive, national trend.

6) The war on the Word and on the faith will continue to increase, but with more and more of a hardy response. The new atheism is not going to disappear any time soon, and through social media and the internet, the attacks on our faith will only multiply. But this too can be turned for the good, as more and more solid responses to the attacks are being written and posted and recorded and disseminated, and with more and more young people learning to stand up for the faith as well.

Of course, the new atheism (and skepticism and cynicism and the like) will totally disappear one day, while the Word of God will stand forever (see Is. 40:7-8; Matt. 24:35), but for the short term, expect the increasing attacks to be greeted with increasingly solid rebuttals. There is much intellectual and theological ground that we must retake.

Regardless, though, of how all this plays out—again, I am not saying, "Thus saith the Lord"—we know that in Jesus, we are overcomers and more than conquerors. And so no matter what comes our way, we move forward not backwards.

On with it in 2015!

(You can hear more of this on the "Line of Fire" broadcast for

January 5th.)

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