

## Irrational Fear

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Michael Crichton wrote a story for *Parade* magazine last Sunday entitled, "Let's Stop Scaring Ourselves." Mr. Crichton quoted a scientist from 1972 as follows:

"We cannot risk inaction. Those scientists who [disagree] are acting irresponsibly. The indications that our climate can soon change for the worse are too strong to be reasonably ignored."

The scientist was not writing about global warming; rather he was issuing warnings about global *cooling* and the onset of another ice age.

From Y2K hysteria to influenza pandemics to straying asteroids to mad cow disease "there is a perennial market for dire predictions of resource depletion. Human beings never tire of discussing the latest report that tells us the end is near" (*Parade*, 12/5/04, p. 7). Simply put, doom sells, and it sells because any generation without God in its worldview is vulnerable to fear.

Christians believe by faith (based on evidence) that Jesus rules over the entire universe. In Jesus "*all things consist*" (Col 1:17). This word means "to stand with or fall together, to be constituted ... it is said of the universe as upheld by the Lord, Col 1:17" (Vine, p. 124). Jesus "*uphold(s) all things by the word of His power*" (Heb 1:3). Thus, rather than seeing ourselves as hapless victims of mindless forces or intended evil, Christians place their trust in a God who governs the world within the scope of His will, allowing that which fosters His purposes.

But at the same time, Christians are not naïve about God's rule, for history is replete with examples of catastrophes that reflect God's judgment or natural processes from which His people are not exempt. Christians die; their houses are hit by hurricanes; they get fired; they suffer from disease. If that is the case, what then is the advantage of being a Christian?

First, Christians have the advantage of seeing history through God's eyes and is thus better equipped to understand the ebb and flow of human existence. For example, the preservation of Israel through centuries of imminent disaster bears witness to the unalterable purpose of God. When Judah was threatened by a confederation of enemies, King Jehoshaphat frets: "*O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you?*" (2 Chr 20:6). God's answer through the prophet Jahaziel: "*Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's'*" (20:15).

Truly, it has been God's battle all along, and the fact that we believe Jesus now reigns in heaven is a testament to our faith in the ultimate triumph of God's will. We are content to leave all things in His hands with the quiet prayer, "Your will be done."

Second, the Christian's confident relationship with God allows him to keep a balanced view of prospective disaster. Nothing can happen that God doesn't know about; nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35-37). Even if we die, it's ok, because we do not measure our existence by earthly life. Jesus said, "*Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things... Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things*" (Mt 6:32, 34).

Irrational fear is one of the many things from which the truth sets us free.