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Christians... STAND UP!!!

By Mariann Cooper

The world is gaining Christians, but in America Christians are declining. We must stick together and support our churches. Many churches are closing their doors and going up for sale. Don't let this happen! You can help by:

- * finding a church that follows the Bible and supports your beliefs
- take young children to learn about the Bible and encourage older ones to participate
- take an active role in church and become a leader
- don't expect perfection in other Christians, but try to be a good example yourself (All are sinners and we must be patient with one another.)
- be a Peace-Maker and love others
- invite your neighbors and friends to join you for a Bible study or another activity at your church.
- listen to your local Christian radio stations and contribute when you can

It is really scary what is happening in the world today: right is wrong and wrong is right. It doesn't make sense, but we must stand together and be strengthened by the Word of God. One day you will need it more than you could imagine. Gather together in His name now and be blessed.

May God Bless America!!!

Say what?

By Al Schneider

Maybe it's my bizarre sense of humor, but I was thoroughly amused recently while reading of a "cultural exchange" between Eskimo and Nicaraguan students. The Eskimo youth were flown into a remote area of the Central American county, there to learn of the ways of their Central American counterparts. I'm sure it was an eye opener for both cultures, and a worthwhile exchange.

What amused me was the likely language barriers. I speak neither language, finding both of them challenging. The Spanish speaking persons I know, rattle off their words in machine gun rapidity, leaving me, and I'm sure others, aghast. I'm sure the more laid back Eskimo youth were dumbfounded at such speech.

Even more challenging may have been the reverse. The Intuit language is strictly for Eskimos. I have been around a few Eskimos and I can state categorically that our attempts at communication were hopeless. I was once on an airplane nearly filled with Eskimo children on their way to Juneau to attend school. Not one word of their chatter was distinguishable.

To their credit, the students gave it their best shot. They tried Miskito, Spanish, English, and Inuktitut. I would have paid good money to be there. But kids are resourceful and they found ways to make it work. I have only admiration for those who conceived of the idea.

There are lots of languages in our world. Recent estimates range as high as 6,000. Linguists agree that many of these languages are rapidly becoming extinct,

Contemplating the cross

By Reverend R. A. Shackles

There are so many insights and impacts that contemplating the cross in fullness of faith opens up to us, something this long-standing series of contemplations surely illustrates. Considering this, it comes to us that indeed the Cross, seen in all its fullness of meaning, carries a power in it to draw us all into a powerful unity — a community. The great theologian Teilhard de Chardin, in his many writings, taught an idea he called cosmogenesis in which, through thought, he saw all mankind is coming into a superb unity. In this, he focused on Christ as Himself — that ultimate focus in whom all mankind will come together. He saw the cross as the symbol, the central gathering point of this movement to that ultimate unity.

This is indeed the impact of the cross. In all that it means, it brings all manner and sort of believers into a living community of people; individuals who, despite any and all the factions separating us, can look at the same cross of Christ and see it with a unity that unerringly leads us to say, "In the cross of Christ I glory," or, with St. Paul, proclaim, "I preach Christ and Him crucified." Of course, the cross opens us then into Easter and the resurrection, and we surely do not forget that.

Consider that the one symbol that quintessentially defines a congregation, through their sacred building, is a cross. Whether a plain cross or a crucifix or a Christus Rex (with a figure of Christ reigning as King), every parish church has their form of the cross. As recent events suggest, when a former Christian parish removed the cross as an "offense," public opinion simply questioned whether they could be called Christians! Rightly so, for, as an old familiar hymn asks, "Jesus, and shall it ever be, a mortal man ashamed of Thee?" And it answers, "Ashamed of Jesus! Empty pride! I'll boast a Savior crucified!"

Quite simply, to reject the cross is to announce that we are ashamed of Jesus. And that is to break unity — community known through the sacred symbol that draws every sincere Christian into the Lord who is our Savior risen from that cross to call us into that ultimate unity, our rescue, salvation in him. The cross is our mark that we are of his body, the church. •

Maranatha hosts writers' conference

(Submitted by Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference)

Prayer, inspiration, camaraderie, and mentorship are in store for this year's participants at the 34th annual Maranatha Christian Writers' Conference, scheduled for September 26 to 30 on the scenic grounds of Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference, beautifully nestled among Lake Michigan dunes. An array of accomplished writers, editors and publishers will be on hand and accessible. Participants range from the novice writer who may simply want to hone their church newsletter skills, to seasoned writers looking to break into the Christian publishing industry.

More than 50 workshops and seminars filled with inspiration and instruction will be conducted by featured authors, editors and speakers. Award-winning spiritual suspense author and filmmaker Bill Myers will be joined by Tim Beals, owner of Credo Communications; ESPN sports writer and non-fiction author Ted Kluck; author Angela Hunt; performer, director and improvisation instructor Mary Jane Pories; Bob Hudson, Zondervan's senior editor-at-large; and Sally Stuart, marketing expert

and that soon we may be left with approximately 600. Of these, Mandarin is used by the greatest number, more than 800,000,000 people. English is second, spoken by approximately 325,000,000 people.

These numbers concern me. China and America might need quite a number of cultural exchanges to make our languages compatible, particularly in their written forms. It strikes me that one must be somewhat of an artist to write as they (the Chinese) do. At best, it would slow me down, limiting myself to perhaps a sentence a day. My attempt at such an exchange would be every bit as difficult as an Eskimo-Nicaraguan standoff.

But we have another language crisis to contend with. Imagine being in a room filled with individuals from our emerging generation who speak a version of English language all their own. It might come as a surprise to them, for instance, that "yo" and "bro" are not good English words. Well, all right, yo does appear in my dictionary, but its meaning is unclear. What part of speech is it? The difficulty in learning the English language cannot be overstated. Schools seem no longer able to teach the language in 12 years as evidenced by the high rate of remedial training required for gaining college entrance. We're talking basics here. There seems to be almost no effort to teach such refinements as the subjective mood or the proper use of gerunds. We are becoming a society of mumbling philistines.

But all is not lost. We can always find ways to communicate, even with recent high school graduates. Consider this brief exchange.

"You is old," the grad tells me.

To which I respond, "Yo, man." •

Some day everyone will submit

By Walter Soderstrom

This article is being written about the subject of God's omnipotence versus man's limited significance. We all can see the manifestation of the power of God all around us, even though many people today refuse to acknowledge the existence of God, and would rather put their faith and hope in some ridiculously bizarre notion called evolution. Evolution teaching claims that all human existence was formed incrementally, beginning with tiny organisms, and progressing to where we are today.

In Genesis, chapter 1, the Bible tells us that, in the beginning, God created the Heaven and the earth. In spite of all the visible evidence of creation by God, people are determined to refuse to submit to God and his teaching contained in the Holy Scriptures. The Bible says that some day everyone will submit to God, either as friend and Savior, or as a terrifying judge: Phlippians 2:9-11, Romans 14:11, Hebrews 10:13, Revelation 20:11-15.

In Psalms 2:1-5 the Scripture tells the futility of fighting against God. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us, ... but, ... he that sits in the Heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

In Isaiah 51, verses 12 and 13, the prophet asks, "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man, which shall be made of grass, and forget the Lord, your maker, that has stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?"

In Revelation 6:15-17, God tells of the time coming, when all unbelievers will, in trying to hide from the wrath of God, hope for the mountains to collapse on them.

Today, people can accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, not as a cruel tyrannical taskmaster, but as a loving Savior, who loved mankind so much that he died for all who would accept him, even though we were still sinners — Romans 5:8.

If you have not accepted Jesus as Savior, do so before it is too late! •

and former longtime author of the *Christian Writer's Market*, a market guide with more than 23 editions.

Although Maranatha's writers' conference continues to grow, the size remains intimate enough to enjoy prayer, conversation and live music, which is this year provided by author and musician David Teems. Relationships are established and attendees often experience one-on-one sessions with industry experts. New sessions this year are photography instruction and improvisational storytelling. The conference also features contests and awards with cash prizes.

The conference takes place at Maranatha Bible and Missionary Conference, 4759 Lake Harbor in Norton Shores. Tuition packages vary from \$663 for the total experience complete with lodging and meals, to daily rates of \$110 tuition and meals, and a student rate of \$60, lunch and dinner included. Workshop details, tuition and scholarship information are available at the conference website, www.writewithpurpose.org. To register, or for more information, call (231) 798-2161. •