



Point of View

Dear Marketplace Friend,

In the newspaper, they're usually pretty serious about trying to differentiate between "news" and "opinions." Historically, there have been a couple of pages devoted to the "opinion" copy, and included in those column inches were the "editorial cartoons" (for the people who are more prone to look at pictures than to read the "fine print") and the "letters to the editor" (those were the contributions of the readers to the ongoing dialog in the public square). Those lines - between "news" and "opinion" - seem to be more blurred all of the time...

That said, let me confess: in my **Point of View**, every week, I *cite* the news... but, more than anything, I offer my *opinion*. The news can be challenged for validity, while everyone seems to be entitled to their opinion. Count me in, on that one: I feel very free to speak out, when I'm clearly outside the "news."

My opinion: we are living at a paradoxical ("*seemingly absurd or self-contradictory*") time. In 2008, here is the current status report: our "stuff" has never worked better; we've mastered the art of dreaming-up and widely-distributing really amazing products. Watch a movie on your mobile phone? No problem! At the same time, our lives have never been more deficient. Our relationships to our electronics



are stellar; our relationship to ourselves, to other people and to God have never been more challenged.

Everywhere you look, another epidemic offers proof. Chemical addictions? Still firmly entrench the most sophisticated culture in the planet's history. As good as it is to live in 21st Century America, a high percentage of Americans seek a constant escape through legal alcohol or illegal drugs. Suicide? It ought to be illegal, but it's hard to threaten dead people with penalties for breaking that law. Many people from other countries will go to great lengths to get into America; many people who were born here go to great lengths to get out, through self-destruction. Divorce? No one blinks anymore; in fact, it's become another fact of life. One of TV Christianity's rising stars - Paula White - has recently divorced her "co-pastor"/husband Randy, with neither seeing the action as disqualifying for their individual public ministries. "It's happening *to* them,"

they explain (*apparently, neither is responsible for the decision*). The chasm between parents and teen children continues to widen; the disconnect between the generations has not closed, despite the "modern approaches" to family life that have been imposed on the culture.

In a return to Presidential Politics '92, Bill Clinton is auctioning the signs from his campaign office *that year* to *this year's* candidates. Once again, *"It's the Economy, Stupid"* seems to be the message of the moment. Why is the Economy the issue of the day? Blame the "sub-prime mortgage" crisis, but... who - exactly - it responsible for *that one*? At its simplest level: people who should not have borrowed the money were allowed to do so by people who should never have lent them the money, and now the borrowers are stiffing the lenders, walking away from "their" homes. Their signatures on the loan documents were a mere "formality;" they did not establish commitment, unless it was to their benefit to stay in the deal...

At the same time, public surveys are tracking the trend of American "religion" giving way to "spirituality." Just beneath the surface of that "news" item is a story line that goes along with all of the tracking of Sunday morning behavior: *people want to feel some mystical transcendence, but they retain the right to create their own, customized faith philosophy, unburdened by orthodoxy.*

All of that is just "news from the front." I offer my "opinion" regarding that "news." Time - or culture - hasn't changed people. To use Old Testament language: *"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit."* (Judges 21:25) Or, to put it in the words

of the Apostle Paul, in the New Testament: *"Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."* (Romans 1:32)

Bottom line: people, left to themselves, make choices that are harmful to themselves and, ultimately, harmful to the whole of the culture. What we need - what everyone needs - is a **Savior**. Not a silver-tongued political hero, but a **Savior**. *Only one Candidate for that race who can deliver the goods...*

Bob Shank

Bob Shank is Founder and Chief Mentoring Officer of The Master's Program (TMP).

To learn more about TMP visit:

www.mastersprogram.org

To read prior issues of the Point of View visit:

www.mastersprogram.net