

2009: Out with the Old

Michael Sean Winters | Dec. 31, 2009 NCR Today

New Year's is a time for looking back, as the various "lists" of the most important news stories or interesting people attest. And, for looking forward as the "predictions" being floated abound. I am not so good at predictions, and my memory is not what it once was. But, in the spirit of the holiday, today I offer some of the things from the past decade that we most hope not to see again and, tomorrow, things we hope to see more of.

First, I hope to see fewer government lies. Surely one of the most memorable moments in the decade just past was when Secretary of State Colin Powell testified before the U.N. Security Council about the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq. And, Powell was one of the good guys. He fell into a trap of cognitive deceit, and it doesn't matter whether people knew they were lying or were so convinced by their own propaganda that they could not recognize a lie when they saw it. There were other lies, such as the canard that we can cut taxes without harming the long-term fiscal health of the nation, but that has moved beyond a simple lie to the status of a pernicious myth. Let's hope there are less of them too.

Second, I hope to see fewer "safe" congressional districts. With the advent of precision computer programs, Congress can now create districts that virtually guarantee the outcome of the election. I know the districts in Connecticut best, and there is no way a Republican can win the first or third congressional districts in that state. In the South, black congressmen colluded with Republicans to make majority-minority districts in which black incumbents were guaranteed re-election, but by draining minorities into one or two districts, the rest of the congressional delegation was almost guaranteed to be Republican. Bipartisan, non-political blue ribbon panels should draw the redistricting lines in 2011 so that we might move away from the horrifically undemocratic fact that nearly 98% of congressional incumbents win re-election.

Third, I want to see fewer mistresses of Tiger Woods. "Nuff said.

Fourth, I hope there will be fewer "reality television" shows. These are about as unreal as anything imaginable, and I have a vivid imagination. You don't need much of an imagination when watching these horrific shows however, in which emotions best kept private are, instead, made the central part of the show's plot. The banality of evil is not just about genocide.

Fifth, I hope there will be fewer preachers of the "prosperity Gospel" and that the ones who preach that distorted understanding of the Christian Scriptures will find themselves in all manner of difficulties, especially financial difficulties, especially financial difficulties that betray gross moral failings. Remember the air-conditioned dog house of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, or their penchant for purchasing freshly baked cinnamon rolls for their bedroom, not to eat but because they liked the smell? It is good to see the mighty cast down from their thrones, especially when the mighty are hypocrites who abuse the Word of God.

That's my top five. What are yours?

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