BLOG OF THE YEAR

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Categories: Observations, Reviews

Is it just me, or has blogdom become rather boring of late? There are lots of blogs out there, but very rarely do I come across anything that makes me leap out of my seat in sheer joy and wonderment. More and more I come across Christian blogs which fall into one or more of the following three categories:

- Dyspeptic criticism of anyone that the blogger disagrees with - generally everyone but themselves.
- Continual drip feed advertising about why their denomination is the best. (Or why their denomination is not actually a denomination, but is still the best).
- Deep scholarly discussions about the minutiae of Scripture and theology.

I tend to ignore the first category and rapidly delete them from my Google reader. I feel that the second category are legitimate. If you believe in your denomination or church stream, why not promote it. That being said, I tend to find this sort of thing boring and navigate away rather quickly. However, when it is done with humour and generosity of spirit this sort of thing can be readable.Â The third category, scholarly discussion, is one of the great benefits of blogging. It is wonderful that scholars can interact with each other and with a wider public in this platform. There are a number of excellent Biblical studies blogs (take a look here for a list). However, I rarely have the time, or the expertise to get involved in the debates on these blogs and even then, I'm more interested in communicating with non-academics. I see much of my role as popularising what more gifted people are saying in complicated language.

I suspect that I drift into each of these categories from time to time and I pray for your indulgence.

So, on with the show:

As in previous years, the criteria for my blog of the year are:

1. They must post regularly
2. They must be consistently interesting
3. I must like them more than other blogs for whatever subjective reasons I choose.

New Blogs

These blogs are new to me - they may have been around for years.

Bishop Alan's Blog. Alan is our local Bishop, though I've not managed to bump into him in High Wycombe Sainsbury's yet. His blog is a divergent collection of reflection on culture, art and the Church. Well worth a read.

Philip Blue's Blog. Every subject seems simple to the outsider. However, once you start listening to experts you begin to grasp the complications that are inherent in any human endeavour. Philip does

a great job of exploring some of the complexities of international aid and development. His piece on Fairtrade makes rather disturbing reading.

(Philip's father, George Blue, was a good friend of ours. It is safe to say that our careers would have been very different without George's patient and wise advice to us when we were trying to work out what God wanted us to do with our lives back in the early 1980s. George, sadly, passed away this year. He will be greatly missed.)

The Church Mouse. What can one say? Mouse has received accolades and national awards. His blog is amusing and informative. Sadly, Mouse seems to be unaware that there are expressions of the Church in the UK apart from Anglicanism. However, if you are interested in the CofE or the wider church scene in the UK, Mouse is a must read.

God Didn't Say That. Fascinating discussions on Bible translations, some of which I've picked up on over the last year. The articles are short, thought provoking and scholarly yet accessible. Great stuff.

Bible and Mission. Tim Davy of Redcliffe College produces an excellent blog but only posts rarely, which is a great shame. This is one of the blogs which I feel occupies a similar space to Kouya Chronicle, so it is good to have some company. I will be working with Tim over the next year to help develop an MA in Bible and Mission at Redcliffe.

Christian2Do. I first came across Tom on Twitter, and now follow his blog which is a good source of information on a wide range of mission subjects, most particularly Bible translation.

These are the most notable of my discoveries over the last year.

Near Misses

Over the last year, some of the best things I've read in the blogsphere have come from Tim Chester's blog. His articles on planning, the Trinity and community have all been highlighted and commented upon here over the last few months. Most of Tim's stuff is absolutely excellent and his blog is well worth reading.

Iain Dale is a political blogger who is a member of the Conservative party. I generally don't agree with his politics, but I thoroughly enjoy his blog. There are a couple of things that really make Iain Dale's Diary stand out. Firstly, he writes really well. It does help when a blogger is a professional writer. Secondly, he shows a generosity of spirit towards political opponents which is exemplary. He makes no apology for being a Tory, but he will disagree with his party if need be and will praise his opponents if he feels they warrant it. Westminster would be a better place if all our politicians acted like this (and some Christian bloggers could learn some lessons).

Blog of The Year

Brian's **Real Meal Ministries** has long been one of my favourite blogs, but he doesn't post often enough to fulfil my three criteria. So, I've decided to ignore my criteria for the year and to make Brian's blog my blog of the year this year. Real Meal Ministries gives an excellent insight into how to read the Scriptures from a missiological perspective. Quite simply, everything he posts is worth reading. I can hardly wait for Brian's book to be published.

Twit of the Year

In the year of Twitter, it is only fair that I should mention my favourite twitterer. @RobinsonS is consistently funny, sometimes profound and well worth following. He has a blog, but hasn't really found his voice yet, but on twitter, he is hilarious.

There are no badges, large cheques or other such frippery associated with these awards and the points of view are purely personal. Please feel free to disagree, agree or ignore my thoughts.