

Tale of Two Christianities: Taken from a book by Marcus Borg I am "re reading," this title best describes part of the Haitian culture we encounter. First reading I generally agreed with Borg, but in Haiti, I stand in defense of a theology of divine authority that is literally stated in the bible.

In the US where the majority are literate and educated beyond 5th grade; where libraries, Borders and Barnes and Noble Stores are favorite hang outs for youth and media buffs; and, where small children are exposed to scientific discoveries in animated form, Marcus Borg's way of understanding the Christian faith may be controversial, but not generally heretical!

This week we have attended meetings and services at Pastor Abners annual assembly of Nazarene and Community Churches on La Gonave. The L'Eglise Methodiste D'Haiti, has been represented although services at EMH are more sacramental and less evangelical. The theology for both puts full divine authority and authorship in Bib La. "God said it, the Bible recorded it, I believe it, and it is so."

Faithful attendance in worship, properly dressed in unaffordable clothing, alert to preaching encouraged by a two foot club; scripture memorized, physical response to music and prayers will bring God's reward and blessing. God's punishment and retribution is the result of non-attendance, improper clothing and not trusting in God to do all Bib La says God will do for the faithful.

Next time I preach in the US, I will not only identify my prayer warriors early, but find the neat, heavy set lady with the club and watchful eye. She even encourages the "amens"!

My description sounds negative, I admit, but in this culture the theology behind the action is understandable. Scripture describes the way "life in a third world country" is experienced.

The Bible literally offers the only promise for a future different from the past 200 years. As one who preaches a certain responsibility for "personal response" to mercy and grace, I am not surprised by belief in a system of reward and punishment for personal action.

The main problem with this "Christianity" is the ethic of God's retribution and reward becomes the ethic of the people. If belief goes unrewarded it is "God's fault" not a personal poor choice. It may then be "the fault" of whomever is the dominate leader or those in power. To live with two Christianities, calls for the greatest of discernment.

Psalms 143 began my day, "Enter not into judgment...no one living is righteous before you." vs 3

Today we meet with a community that believes we were sent to "save them," and we may have failed them.

143:10 "Teach me..your will..let your good Spirit lead me..".

May the Spirit lead us to live and work, understanding the two Christianities.

Shirley, La Gonave, July 28, 2008

