THE SKEPTIC ARENA

September 26, 2015

America's Largest Christian Bookstore Chain

Files for Bankruptcy

by Morgan Lee

*Family Christian Stores has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.*

Morgan, why do you think Jesus would allow the largest chain of bookstores in America that promotes His book, to go bankrupt? I wonder how many thousands, if not millions of prayers, He must have ignored? I also wonder why they just didn't ask Joel Osteen for help?

Osteen could have bailed them out, just with what he rakes in on a slow Sunday. Yet he didn't.

Or how about that guy who just got his congregation to pay for a brand new 65 million dollar jet? Couldn't he have helped them out?

*Yet the ministry assured customers yesterday that it "does not expect" to close any of its more than 250 stores or lay off any of its approximately 4,000 employees.*

Morgan, if they can't honor their financial obligations, wouldn't the honest thing to do, be to sell off some stores or layoff some staff?

Instead, they decided that the Christian thing to do was to stiff their creditors?

Morgan, why am I not surprised?

*Family Christian Stores president and CEO Chuck Bengochea stated “We strive to serve God in all that we do and trust His guidance in all our decisions, especially this very important one."*

Morgan, it sounds like God's guidance hasn't been working out all that well for those guys. Maybe this would be a good time to check out Allah and see if He can do better. At least the threat of a little competition might spur their God to take them more seriously.

But I'm still curious as to why a God who purports to value honesty would choose to cheat creditors out of the money they are owed. Can't He just make more?

*He added "We have carefully and prayerfully considered every option."*

Morgan, think about it: they begged God for more money. They dedicated their lives to serving Him. And what does He tell them to do: beat feet.

It doesn't sound like God thinks very much of con artists, does it?

*"This action allows us to stay in business and continue to serve our customers, our associates, our vendors and charities around the world.”*

Morgan, that's correct. They get to keep raking in the dough, while those who trusted them with their money are simply out of luck.

*With 266 stores in 36 states, Family Christian Stores is the nation's largest chain of Christian stores as measured by locations, not sales. In 2014, Family Christian Stores generated $216 million in gross revenues. Family Christian Stores bought itself back from private equity owners in 2012 and pledged to donate 100 percent of its profits to widows and orphans. One example: It partnered with Karen Kingsbury to donate 2013 Black Friday sales to help Haiti orphans. Family Christian Stores recently expanded into filmmaking, with 90 Minutes in Heaven to be the first of a planned two movies made each year.*

Hey Morgan, while they are filming on location, during those 90 minutes in Heaven, why don't you see if you can coax Jesus into explaining why He abandoned this outfit and let them go bankrupt?

*In a video message to customers, Bengochea named the recession, the digital revolution, and the company’s debt load as factors leading to Family Christian Stores' bankruptcy.*

Morgan, but how could God be affected by those things? Why can't He just create some money and airdrop it to them?

He sure found a way to help out Creflo Dollar with that brand new jet. I know God helped him because Creflo was thanking God and "praising the Lord" for helping him.

*On its FAQ page, Family Christian Stores stated that "we believe our only two options are to liquidate and shut down our stores or go through the Section 363 sale process and preserve Family Christian Stores. When faced with these two options, we strongly felt that there was only one viable path to take."*

Morgan, what happened to the third option - prayer? Why did Jesus and his Dad just ignore their pleadings?

*Bengochea stated “After the court approves the sale, we can begin to reinvest in our stores and bring our customers products and services that will help us better fulfill our mission—to glorify God by helping people find, grow, share and celebrate their faith in Christ.”*

Morgan, translation: "After we stiff those who trusted us, we will once again, be in a position to keep raking in the moola from all the suckers."

But Morgan, it is so sweet that they want to celebrate faith in Christ ... considering how little He apparently has in them.

Morgan, I see a new company jet on the horizon; perhaps the old one that Creflo Dollar just got rid of.

*Family Christian Stores has no plans to ditch "brick and mortar" stores for an online-only presence. Now quoting from the FAQ page "Some could say that 'brick and mortar' retail is not relevant, but our new management believes differently. Our plan is make the necessary investments to our stores, diversify our product lines and craft a strong retail strategy that properly places the emphasis back on delivering a warm and positive customer experience.*

Morgan, if Jesus refused to help them before ... what makes them think He will help them now?

*Family Christian Stores' restructuring will be completed over the next two months as follows: Through a newly formed subsidiary, Family Christian Ministries will serve as the lead bidder for the Section 363 sale process, putting forward a plan that acquires the streamlined organization’s assets and maintains operation of the chain’s 267 stores in 36 states, as well as its e-commerce site www.familychristian.com. Family Christian Stores is asking the court for a schedule to complete the sale process in about 60 days.*

*After the judge approves the sale, we’ll be immediately cash-flow positive and profitable.*

Well of course they will Morgan, it's their creditors who will be left holding the bag. I guess this is just another fine example of Christian values. Where would we be without them?

And how did the number of stores increase from 266 to 267 just within a couple of paragraphs? Don't you people proofread this crap before you post it?

*This process is similar to the one taken by the automobile and airline industries in recent years.*

Morgan, that only proves that the Christian racquet is just another big business rip-off.

*We see this as the start of a fresh new day for Family Christian Stores and look forward to delighting our customers for many years to come. Among our next steps are to make various capital improvements to our stores, as well as invest in an expanded product line and implement a new retail strategy that will enable us to better serve our customers.*

Morgan, how is that possible if they are:

"*pledged to donate 100 percent of its profits to widows and orphans.*"

Morgan, that sounded really great, but now it's clear that it was just more dishonest bullshit. Obviously, those widows and orphans are going to have to wait awhile, while Family Christian Stores makes capital improvements, expands its product line, and makes a few movies.

*Last June, Family Christian Stores named Bengochea as its new CEO after Cliff Bartow retired after 11 years in leadership.*

Morgan, so it was Bartow who drove the company into bankruptcy. Question Morgan: doesn't that make Bartow more powerful than God?

Or were they working together to bankrupt the company?

*Christian bookstores have experienced conflicting trends in recent years, as an overall sales surge masked mixed results for individual stores.*

Morgan, now the story is getting more interesting. So this bankrupt outfit was actually experiencing a surge in overall sales? Really?

Please, keep going.

*The National Endowment for the Arts reports that in 2014, only 54 percent of Americans read a book (print or digital).*

Morgan, that's probably because only 54% of Americans *can* read a book.

*In 2013, 49 stores closed across the country, according to the Association for Christian Retail. This was an increase from 2012’s 39 store closures, but lower than the all-time high of 63 store closures in 2011. Additionally, 18 new Christian bookstores opened in 2013, an increase from 15 in 2012.*

Morgan, I think I see the problem: maybe a bookstore chain isn't such a great idea in a country that ranks 34th worldwide ...

in literacy.

*While 2013 sales increased by three percent, Christian retail failed to capitalize on Black Friday sales.*

Morgan, does God not work on Black Friday?

*In 2012, Black Friday sales rose 22 percent and a primary reason why the industry saw a 9 percent overall gain that year. Bible and book sales accounted for about 60 percent of the total sales for bookstores last year, according to CBA’s report. Christianity Today has previously noted tensions between Family Christian Stores and the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association in 2005, and editorialized on Family Christian Stores' decision to sell on Sundays, among other coverage of Christian retail news.*

Morgan, now we're starting to get to the bottom of it: God was very clear about not working on His day of rest. That could be what is behind His tantrum, and why He refused to help them during their time of need.

What do you think, Morgan? Did I nail it?

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/february/family-christian-stores-files-bankruptcy-chapter-11-fcs.html>

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

Evidence that Earth's first mass extinction

was caused by critters and not catastrophe:

A powerful analogy for what is happening today

In the popular mind, mass extinctions are associated with catastrophic events, like giant meteorite impacts and volcanic super-eruptions. But the world's first known mass extinction, which took place about 540 million years ago, now appears to have had a more subtle cause: evolution itself.

The earliest life on Earth consisted of various types of single-celled microorganisms. They ruled the Earth for more than 3 billion years. Then some of these microorganisms discovered how to capture the energy in sunlight. The photosynthetic process that they developed had a toxic byproduct: oxygen. Oxygen was poisonous to most microbes that had evolved in an oxygen-free environment, making it the world's first pollutant.

But for the microorganisms that developed methods for protecting themselves, oxygen served as a powerful new energy source. Among a number of other things, it gave them the added energy they needed to adopt multicellular forms.

The Ediacarans arose about 600 million years ago after a long cold period known as "Snowball Earth." In their heyday, Ediacarans spread throughout the planet. They were a largely immobile form of marine life shaped like discs and tubes, fronds and quilted mattresses. The majority were extremely passive, remaining attached in one spot for their entire lives. Many fed by absorbing chemicals from the water through their outer membranes, rather than actively gathering nutrients.

After 60 million years, evolution gave birth to another major innovation: animals. All animals share the characteristics that they can move spontaneously and independently, at least during some point in their lives, and sustain themselves by eating other organisms or what they produce. Animals burst onto the scene in a frenzy of diversification that paleontologists have labeled the Cambrian explosion, a 25-million-year period when most of the modern animal families -- vertebrates, mollusks, arthropods, annelids, sponges and jellyfish -- came into being.

These new species were 'ecological engineers' who changed the environment in ways that made it more and more difficult for the Ediacarans to survive.

This study provides the first quantitative palaeoecological evidence to suggest that evolutionary innovation, ecosystem engineering, and biological interactions may have ultimately caused the first mass extinction of complex life.

There is a powerful analogy between the Earth's first mass extinction and what is happening today. The end-Ediacaran extinction shows that the evolution of new behaviors can fundamentally change the entire planet, and humans are the most powerful 'ecosystem engineers' ever known.

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FAMOUS QUOTES

Steve Buscemi (born 1957) 57 years old (december)

He is an American actor, director, writer, and retired firefighter. Buscemi has starred and worked in successful Hollywood and indie films. He is also known for his appearances in many films by the Coen brothers. Buscemi provides the voice of Randall Boggs in the Monsters, Inc. franchise. He frequently makes appearances in films that star Adam Sandler. And he has also directed numerous episodes of TV shows. He earned two Screen Actors Guild Awards, a Golden Globe, and two Emmy nominations.

"What’s 'God'?

Well, you know, when you want something really bad

and you close your eyes and you wish for it?

God’s the guy who ignores you."