

Voter ID and the Supreme Court

January 21, 2008

In an [earlier commentary](#) I talked about the importance of a voter ID. That case out of Indiana has gone before the Supreme Court, and we will hear their verdict in the next few months.

Although the case shouldn't be that controversial, it centers on the requirement in Indiana that voters show photo identification when they cast their ballot. Given the simple fact that we have to show photo IDs for so many routine actions, you wouldn't think that requirement would be that controversial.

Opponents argue that this imposes an unconstitutional burden on voters. Yet the law allows those few citizens without a driver's license (estimated to be around one percent) to obtain a free, state-sponsored picture ID. And even if someone arrives at the polling place unprepared, they are given a provisional ballot that they can validate later.

Opponents also argue that this law will disenfranchise low-income voters, minorities, or seniors. Yet a statistical analysis by the Heritage Foundation demonstrated that voter ID laws in other states do not depress voter turnout. It does however limit the number of dogs, cats, or deceased people who try to vote in an election.

One critic suggested that this voter ID law would move us closer to a national ID. But if you are concerned about that, you might want to have the government rethink the use of a photo ID in so many other areas of life. After all, most people vote once every two years or once every four years. But they are required to show a photo ID every time they board a plane or every time they cash a check.

How the Supreme Court rules on this case will not only affect Indiana, but may have an impact on 24 other states that have various kinds of laws on the books to prevent voter fraud. Former president Jimmy Carter pointed out that the United States is merely attempting to do what most countries already do. He said: "Voters in nearly 100 democracies use a photo identification card without fear of infringement on their rights."

Let's hope the Supreme Court takes that into account.

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Throw Out the Maps

March 13, 2008

Michael Barone says it is time to throw out the old electoral maps, and he should know. Many people have called him the most knowledgeable person in U.S. politics. He is the co-author of the *Almanac of American Politics*. He has been watching the electoral scene for decades and sees some significant shifts.

The old map with red states and blue states served us well for the last two presidential elections, but there is good evidence that it is now out-of-date. In 2000 and 2004, the Republicans nominated the same man, and the Democrats nominated men with similar views and backgrounds. All of that has changed in 2008.

This time the Republicans will probably nominate John McCain, and the Democrats will probably nominate Barack Obama. There is always the possibility of a change between now and the convention, but that is unlikely. If these two men are the nominees, it changes everything.

It is clear that some of the states that went Democratic in 2004 are available to John McCain. And it is also clear that some of the states that went Republican that same year are possibilities for Barack Obama. And let's not forget the surge of new voters coming into the electoral process that are potentially available to either candidate.

The potential changes in the electorate shouldn't surprise us. Twenty years ago it seemed like Republicans had a lock on the presidency while the Democrats had a lock on the House of Representatives. At the time it seemed reasonable since Republicans had won five of the last six presidential elections, and Democrats had held the House for thirty-six years. But in 1992, Bill Clinton was elected president. Two years later, the Republicans won the House. Electoral trends change, sometimes quickly.

It looks to me that it is time to throw out the maps, and it may be time for the candidates to rethink their strategy and not write off states lost by their party's nominee four or eight years ago. It's a new day.

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Superdelegates

February 27, 2008

In a [previous commentary](#) I talked about how the current Democratic Party rules made it possible for Barack Obama to do so well in the primaries. There are another set of rules that might cause him to lose at the Democratic Convention.

Back in 1982, the Democratic Party created a special role for party leaders. They were designated as superdelegates and were

created to prevent the party from nominating an unelectable candidate like George McGovern. At first, they provided a necessary boost to a candidate already headed for the nomination. This boost helped push Walter Mondale over Gary Hart in 1984. And the superdelegates helped confirm Michael Dukakis as the Democratic nominee in 1988.

But this year's Democratic race is so close that the superdelegates may decide the outcome. There are nearly 800 superdelegates, and that represents 19 percent of all the delegates. In the past, these superdelegates were able to bring closure to the nominating process. This time they could decide who the Democratic nominee might be, and that would most likely be the establishment candidate Hillary Clinton.

If they become the king-makers, it is easy to see that there will be lots of anger and frustration. This primary season has already begun to show the fault lines of race, gender, and generation. The animosity between the Clinton and Obama campaigns is well known. If the Democratic establishment decides the winner through the superdelegates, you have to wonder if the 2008 Denver Democratic Convention might start to look like the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention.

Like the rules I talked about earlier, no one saw this coming. The Democratic Party rules for delegates has helped Barack Obama in the primaries. If the delegate count is close then it is possible that the Democratic Party rules for superdelegates could help Hillary Clinton. At the moment, Barack Obama is building a lead so this concern may evaporate. But the party may still reconsider the rules they enacted years ago.

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Presidential Experience

March 4, 2008

As once again citizens in four states go to the polls today, it has been interesting to see how the presidential campaign has unfolded. While many political pundits have made note of the number of times the words “change” and “hope” have been used in the campaign, I would like to highlight another word. That word is “experience.”

On the Republican side, John McCain talked about his experience in Washington while Mitt Romney talked about his experience running a business. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton has made a big issue of her years of experience compared to Barack Obama. My feeling is that experience is important, but character and values are even more important. Obviously, you don't want someone in the Oval Office who doesn't know his or her way around Washington. At the same time, the American people haven't exactly felt that experience is always a major prerequisite to the office.

In the last few decades, American voters have often put the less experienced candidate in office. President Gerald Ford was certainly more experienced than Governor Jimmy Carter. And after four years as president, Jimmy Carter was more experienced than former governor Ronald Reagan. But the American people put the less experienced candidate in office.

In 1992, you could certainly say that George H.W. Bush was experienced. He had served eight years as vice-president and four years as president. Before that he had been ambassador to China and the head of the CIA. But in spite of all of that experience, the voters elected Governor Bill Clinton.

Sometimes experience is all that it's supposed to be. One president came into office with tremendous experience. He served ten years in the House of Representatives, was minister

to Russia, then served ten years in the Senate, and four years as Secretary of State. James Buchanan was elected in 1856 but served only one term because he became one of America's worst presidents. In 1860, he was defeated by an inexperienced one-term congressman by the name of Abraham Lincoln.

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Dismantling the Electoral College

January 28, 2008

New Jersey recently became the second state to enter a compact that would effectively eliminate the power of the Electoral College to select a president. In December, the New Jersey legislature approved a measure that would deliver the state's 15 electoral votes for president to the winner of the national popular vote. Two weeks ago, Governor Corzine signed the bill which has now become law.

Maryland (with 10 electoral votes) is the only other state to pass the compact into law, but others have considered it. Governors in California and Hawaii vetoed bills to join the compact. The Colorado Senate approved the proposal, but a House committee rejected it.

Sponsors of these measures argue that the compact would ensure that all states are competitive in presidential elections and would make all votes important. A spokesman for the governor said that New Jersey "has long been on the sidelines of presidential races and this measure would help put the Garden State back into competition during a presidential campaign."

But consider that this bill now may require electors from New Jersey to vote against their constituents. So who are they representing? Certainly they are not representing the voters of their state.

Because of third parties, our last four presidential elections haven't had any candidate with a popular vote majority. The Electoral College gives them that majority. It might be worth remembering that Abraham Lincoln won less than 40 percent of the popular vote and relied on the Electoral College majority for his authority.

And with problems of election fraud, we narrow the number of states where a recount can take place. Consider the 2000 Florida recount and multiply that by 50 and you can see the problem.

Even if you are convinced that the Electoral College is a bad idea, you should go about amending the Constitution. But what is happening is a surreptitious way for some states to do so without constitutional support.

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Democratic Delegate Count

February 26, 2008

For weeks commentators have been talking about the close delegate count between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. But anyone looking at the Democratic Party's rules for delegates probably would have predicted such a situation. In fact you could say that Barack Obama's sizable delegate count is due to a decision forced on the party 20 years ago by Jesse Jackson.

Columnist Ruth Marcus writes: "The stage was set for the current stalemate over five marathon days of negotiations in June 1988. In the fifth-floor conference room of a Washington law firm, representatives of Michael Dukakis, the party's nominee, and Jesse Jackson, his unsuccessful challenger, hashed out a new set of delegate selection rules." Jackson was upset that he did not have as many delegates as his popular vote would have indicated.

Jesse Jackson's assistant was Harold M. Ickes. He argued for "proportional representation rules that would award insurgent candidates a bigger share of delegates in future contests." Twenty years later, the rules Ickes proposed have been working against his friend, Hillary Clinton. She has won delegate-rich states like New York, New Jersey, and California. But Barack Obama has managed to stay close in those contests and pick up delegates in other contests to take the lead.

The Democratic rules give lots of weight to the losing candidate. Under the rules, three-fourths of the pledged delegates are allocated by congressional district, the remaining one-quarter according to the vote statewide. In California Hillary Clinton won 43 of the state's 53 congressional districts but only received 207 delegates to Obama's 163. If the Democrats used the Republican rules, Hillary Clinton would have received 316 delegates. Barack Obama would have received just 54.

It is quite possible that both parties will revisit their delegate rules in the next few years. The Democrats' rules hurt Hillary Clinton and the Republicans' rules helped John McCain. Now that we have seen the results, it's time for the parties to reconsider their rules.

Candidates and Character

January 24, 2008

How important is it to elect people with character to public office? The founders of this country thought it was very important.

Over the years, I have collected various quotes from the founders about the importance of character but recently ran across a quote from Samuel Adams. He is considered by many to be the father of the American Revolution. Certainly he understood why patriots fought and died for their freedom. He was also convinced we should elect people of character to public office.

He said: "If men of wisdom and knowledge, of moderation and temperance, of patience, fortitude and perseverance, of sobriety and true republican simplicity of manners, of zeal for the honor of the Supreme Being and the welfare of the commonwealth; if men possessed of these other excellent qualities are chosen to fill the seats of government, we may expect that our affairs will rest on a solid and permanent foundation."

These are wise words to consider during this political season. So often my conversations with listeners revolve around whether they can vote for someone who doesn't match their positions on key issues. I suggest they merely vote for the person who most reflects their values unless they cannot in good conscience vote for any of the candidates for that office. We are always going to have some disagreement with a candidate on some issues.

This year I am on the ballot as precinct chairman. So when I

vote for myself, I will be voting for someone that I agree with 100 percent of the time. But I will probably have some disagreement with the candidates for other offices. But I will still vote for the person who most reflects my values, and you should do the same.

Samuel Adams reminds us that being right on the issues is important, but so is character. Consider the character of the candidates when you cast your vote.

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Marriage, Family, and Political Views

Does our view of marriage and family affect our worldview? Obviously it does. But most people have probably never thought about the fact that marriage and family also affect voting patterns.

We are a year away from the November 2008 elections, but some trend watchers are starting to see interesting patterns that will affect elections in the next few decades. In particular, they are finding a marriage gap and a fertility gap.

Marriage Gap

An article in *USA Today* pointed out how a wedding band could be crucial in future elections. House districts held by Republicans are full of married people. Democratic districts are stacked with people who have never married.[\[1\]](#)

Consider that before the 2006 Congressional elections, Republicans controlled 49 of the 50 districts with the highest

rates of married people. On the other hand, Democrats represented all 50 districts that had the highest rates of adults who have never married.

If you go back to the 2004 presidential election, you see a similar pattern. President George Bush beat Senator John Kerry by 15 percentage points among married people. However, Senator Kerry beat President Bush by 18 percentage points among unmarried people.

Married people not only vote differently from unmarried people, they tend to define words like family differently as well. And they tend to perceive government differently. But an even more significant gap in politics involves not just marriage but fertility.

Fertility Gap

When you look at the various congressional districts, you not only see a difference in marriage but in fertility. Consider these two extremes. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, a Catholic mother of five from San Francisco, has fewer children in her district than any other member of Congress: 87,727. Rep. Chris Cannon, R-Utah, a Mormon father of eight, represents the most children: 278,398. [\[2\]](#)

This stark demographic divide illustrates the difference in perspectives found in Congress. Republican members of Congress represented 39 million children younger than 18. This is 7 million more children than are represented in districts with Democratic members of Congress. And it is also true that children in Democratic districts are far more likely to live in poverty and more likely to have a single parent than children in Republican districts.

This fertility gap explains the differences in worldview and political perspective. When you consider the many political issues before Congress that affect children and families, you

can begin to see why there are often stark differences in perspectives on topics ranging from education to welfare to childcare to child health insurance.

Future of the Fertility Gap

So far we have been looking at the past and the present. What about the future? Arthur Brooks wrote about the fertility gap last year in the *Wall Street Journal*. He concluded that liberals have a big baby problem: They're not having enough of them . . . and their pool of potential new voters is suffering as a result.[\[3\]](#)

He noted that, if you picked 100 unrelated politically liberal adults at random, you would find that they had, between them, 147 children. If you picked 100 conservatives, you would find 208 kids. That is a fertility gap of 41 percent.

We know that about 80 percent of people with an identifiable party preference grow up to vote essentially the same way as their parents. This fertility gap translates into lots more little conservatives than little liberals who will vote in future elections.

So what could this mean for future presidential elections? Consider the key swing state of Ohio which is currently split 50-50 between left and right. If current patterns continue, Brooks estimates that Ohio will swing to the right. By 2012 it will be 54 percent to 46 percent. And by 2020, it will be solidly conservative by a margin of 59 percent to 41 percent.

Now look at the state of California that tilts in favor of liberals by 55 percent to 45 percent. By the year 2020, it will swing conservative by a percentage of 54 percent to 46 percent. The reason is due to the fertility gap.

Of course most people vote for politicians, personalities, and issues not parties. But the general trend of the fertility gap cannot be ignored. I think we can see the impact that marriage

and family have on worldview and political views. And as we can see from these numbers, they will have an even more profound impact in the future.

Notes

1. Dennis Cauchon, Marriage gap could sway elections, *USA Today*, 27 September 2006.
2. Dennis Cauchon, Fertility gap helps explain political divide, *USA Today*, 27 September 2006.
3. Arthur Brooks, The Fertility Gap, *Wall Street Journal*, 22 August 2006.

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High Tech Witchcraft

April 26, 2007

Mention witchcraft and most people will think of Harry Potter. And while these books and movies have certainly been incredibly successful in promoting witchcraft, they represent only part of a larger campaign to spread the ideas of Wicca, witchcraft, and Neopaganism throughout our society.

In a recent article in *SCP Newsletter*, Marcia Montenegro talked about how witchcraft has gone “high tech.” Parents should not only pay attention to books and movies. They should also pay attention to the impact that computers and the Internet are having in the promoting of witchcraft. Here are just a few examples.

1. [Dungeons and Dragons](#) – has been a popular fantasy role playing game for many years. Now kids can play it on the

Internet or in video or computer games. The player begins by choosing a character to role-play. Each of these characters have different traits and abilities. The game is supervised by an experienced player known as the Dungeon Master. The game uses a number of occult terms. These include: spell casting, invocation, evocation, and summon. And there are spells such as the death spell and the finger of death.

There are several books about Dungeons and Dragons that also give information and suggestions for spell casting. In one book, there is a warning of "The Cost of Magic." It says, "Wizards may have to make terrible pacts with dark powers for the knowledge they seek, priests may have to sacrifice something dear to them to invoke their deity's favor, or the spell-caster may pay an immediate price in terms of fatigue, illness, or even a loss of sanity."

2. Magic: The Gathering – is a fantasy trading card game created in the early 1990s. The cards are linked to one of five kinds of paranormal magic: red, blue, green, white or black. Players assume the role of wizards or mages (magicians) and use their cards to defeat other players in the game. A key term that shows up in this game as well as in movies like "The Craft" is the term *mana*. It refers to a magical force or power which is essentially a vital life force.

This card game is challenging and requires intricate strategy. It also introduces the players to scary and repulsive images. There is the Bone Shaman or the Necrite (shown licking blood off a dagger) or the Soul Drinker or the Sorceress Queen. Parents should be concerned about the occult and macabre images that players in the game will see as well as the desensitization towards the occult and witchcraft.

3. Yu Gi Oh – was originally a comic created in Japan about a boy playing a card game called "Dueling Monsters." This comic eventually gave rise to a card game, movies, and video games.

The story centers around Yugi who is possessed by a 5000-year-old pharaoh, Yama Yugi, who is trying to solve an ancient puzzle. One Internet site suggests that Yugi is taken over by “dark Yugi” when it needs to work on the puzzle. Others point out that during duels, Yugi seems possessed by the spirit which deepens his voice and shadows him.

4. The Vampire Games – is another role playing game that introduces the players to the world of vampires. This includes the live action role playing games such as *Vampire: The Masquerade* and *Vampire: the Requiem*.

As you might imagine, these games involve dark and macabre situations, including drinking blood and killing innocent people. The vampires are predators on humans and described as killing machines who struggle with their baser instincts. The vampires also have certain powers such as telepathy, psychic projection, and bodily possession.

Players often form clubs in order to play the game. Some players even imitate vampires in real life by wearing razor-sharp artificial fangs. The popularity of these games have spawned others: *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, *Mage: The Awakening*, and *Sword & Sorcery*.

5. World of Warcraft – is an online computer war game. It includes the typical action games strategies but also adds elements of the occult and New Age. There are four main races of beings: humans (one of the youngest races), Orcs (part of a Shamanistic society), Night Elves (who misuse magic), and the Undead Scourge (thousands of walking corpses and extra-dimensional entities).

As with many of the other games already mentioned, strategy and the use of the occult and paranormal magic are key to success in this game. Powers are summoned and spells are cast.

These various forms of “high tech” spell casting are a doorway into the occult and witchcraft. The Bible warns of the dangers

of divination, sorcery, and witchcraft (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19-20; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Kings 23:24; 1 Chronicles 10:13; Isaiah 2:6; 8:19-20; 47:13-14; Ezekiel 13:20-23; Daniel 2:27-28; 5:15-17; Acts 13:7-10; 16:16-18; Galatians 5:19-20; Revelation 22:15). We should not focus our minds and attention on what is dark and dangerous. We are called to let our minds dwell on what is true, honorable, pure, and lovely (Philippians 4:8).

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Tales From the Crypt: Do We Have the Bones of Jesus?

February 26, 2008

The last week in February started out with an incredible announcement. James Cameron (director of the film Titanic) and Simcha Jacobovici announced that they have found the bones of Jesus! At their news conference, they promoted their Discovery Channel special The “Lost Tomb of Jesus” that will air on March 4th and also promoted the book by Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino entitled *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History* released by Harper-Collins.

If proved reliable, these findings would call into question the very cornerstone of Christianity: the resurrection of Jesus. But are they true?

The foundational claim is that they have discovered the family

tomb of Jesus Christ. Is this really the tomb of Jesus or his family? There are many good reasons to believe this tomb has no relationship at all to Jesus and his family. Many are asking what to think about these claims. Therefore, I put together a quick two-page summary of some of the criticisms and concerns that surfaced in the first few hours after the announcement. Before we look at those criticisms, let's first review the history of this tomb.

We have known about this tomb since it was discovered in 1980. Back then, Israeli construction workers were digging the foundation for a new building in a Jerusalem suburb. Their digging revealed a cave with ten limestone ossuaries. Archeologists removed the limestone caskets for examination.

When they were able to decipher the names on the ten ossuaries, they found: Jesua, son of Joseph, Mary, Mary, Mathew, Jofa and Judah, son of Jesua. At the time, one of Israel's most prominent archeologists (Professor Amos Kloner) didn't associate the crypt with Jesus. He rightly argued that the father of Jesus was a humble carpenter who couldn't afford a luxury crypt for his family. Moreover, the names on the crypt were common Jewish names.

None of this has stopped Cameron and Jacobovici from promoting the tomb as the family tomb of Jesus. They claim to have evidence (through DNA tests, archeological evidence, and Biblical studies) to prove that the ten ossuaries belong to Jesus and his family. They also argue that Jesus and Mary Magdalene might have produced a son named Judah. However, a number of biblical scholars say this is really just an old story now being recycled in an effort to create a media phenomenon that will sell books and guarantee a large audience for the television special.

First, does it really make sense that this would be the family tomb of Jesus? Remember that Jesus was in Jerusalem as a pilgrim and was not a resident of the city. How would his

family be able to buy this tomb? As we already mentioned, Joseph (who had probably already died in Galilee) and his family did not have the funds to buy such an elaborate burial site. Moreover, they were from out of town and would need time to find this tomb location. To accept this theory, one has to believe they stole the body of Jesus and moved it to this tomb in a suburb of Jerusalem all within about a day's time.

Second, if this is the family tomb of Jesus and his family, why is Jesus referred to as the son of Joseph? As far as we can determine from history, the earliest followers of Jesus never called Jesus the son of Joseph. The record of history is that it was only outsiders who mistakenly called him that.

Third, if this is the family tomb of Jesus, why do we have the name of Matthew listed with the rest of the family? If this is the Matthew that traveled with Jesus, then he certainly was not a family member. And you would have to wonder why James (who remained in Jerusalem) would allow these inscriptions as well as allow the family to move the body from Jerusalem to this tomb and perpetrate a hoax that Jesus bodily rose from the grave. Also, the fourth-century church historian Eusebius writes that the body of James (the half-brother of Jesus) was buried alone near the temple mount and that his tomb was visited in the early centuries.

Fourth, there is the problem with the common names on the tombs. Researchers have cataloged the most common names at the time. The ten most common were: Simon/Simeon, Joseph, Eleazar, Judah, John/Yohanan, Jesus, Hananiah, Jonathan, Matthew, and Manaen/Menahem. These are some of the names found on the ossuaries and thus suggest that the tomb belonged to someone other than Jesus of Nazareth and his family. In fact, the name Jesus appears in 98 other tombs and on 21 other ossuaries.

Finally there is the question of the DNA testing. Apparently there is evidence that shows that the DNA from the woman (in what they say is the Mary Magdalene ossuary) and the DNA from

the so-called Jesus ossuary does not match. So they argue that they were not relatives and thus must have been married.

But does the DNA evidence really prove that? It does not prove she is his wife. In fact, we really don't even know who in the ossuaries are related to the other. Moreover, we do not have an independent DNA control sample to compare these findings with. At best, the DNA evidence shows that some of these people are related and some are not.

All of this looks like sensationalism from Simcha Jacobovici (who has a reputation as an Indiana-Jones type) and James Cameron (the director of the highly fictionalized Titanic). The publicity is certain to sell books and draw a television audience, but it is not good history or archaeology.

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Follow-up from Kerby 2/28/07

My commentary was a brief (two-page) summary of some of the criticisms and concerns that many people surfaced in the first few hours after the announcement. Now that we have a few days of reflection on the claims by James Cameron and Simcha Jacobovici, I think we can begin to provide an even more detailed perspective.

Here are some good commentaries and blogs posted by experts in the field as well some news articles that quote these people. Some of these experts have been able to see the Discovery Channel special "The Lost Tomb of Jesus" and thus can give even more detail than I was able to do when I first wrote my commentary on Monday, February 26. The first two links are for commentaries by Dr. Darrell Bock, Dallas Theological Seminary. He was on my radio program "Point of View" and provided some great insight. The next link is for a commentary by Ben Witherington, Asbury Theological Seminary. The following three

are news articles quoting from experts:

Hollywood Hype: The Oscars and Jesus' Family Tomb, What do they share?

<http://dev.bible.org/bock/node/106>

No need to yell, only a challenge for some who need to step up and could:

<http://dev.bible.org/bock/node/107>

The Jesus Tomb? Titanic Talpiot tomb theory sunk from the start:

benwitherington.blogspot.com/2007/02/jesus-tomb-titanic-talpiot-tomb-theory.html

'Jesus tomb' documentary ignores biblical & scientific evidence, logic, experts say

<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=25053>

Ten reason why the Jesus tomb claim is bogus:

<http://tinyurl.com/2rmj8a>

Remains of the Day: Scholars dismiss filmmakers' assertions that Jesus and his family were buried in Jerusalem:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/februaryweb-only/109-33.0.html>

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