

PASTOR'S PAGE – NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009

Musings

On January 11, 1944 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered his last State of the Union address to congress and the American people. The majority of his speech was broadcast over the radio, as he was ill at the time. This section, however, was recorded by the news cameras, who had been invited into his office to do so, for later broadcast. In it he sets out his case for a Second Bill of Rights.

Roosevelt did not argue for a change in the Constitution but, rather, for a bill of rights that would be implemented politically. His stated justification was that the “political rights” guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights had “proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness. His solution was to create an economic bill of rights which would guarantee:

- A job with a living wage
- Freedom from unfair competition and monopolies
- A home
- Medical care
- Education
- Recreation

On that January night in 1944, Roosevelt said:

It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth—is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure.

This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights—among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. They were our rights to life and liberty.

As our nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. “Necessitous men are not free men.” People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.

In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these are:

The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation;
The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;
The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;
The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;
The right of every family to a decent home;
The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;
The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;
The right to a good education.

All of these rights spell security. And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

America's own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these and similar rights have been carried into practice for our citizens.

Within a year President Roosevelt died, and his Second Bill of Rights was never implemented in the United States (although many of them were instituted in Germany, Japan and Italy as part of the restructuring/rebuilding effort after World War II). If he had lived, there is a strong possibility that it would have become the norm within our country, and many of the battles that we are fighting today for worker's rights, livable wage and health care would not be necessary.

Perhaps it is time to take this idea off of the shelf and see what it might do for us today. Every idea that Roosevelt set forth on that long ago night would still help to ensure the security of the American people if it were implemented today. I know that I, for one, would be willing to support this idea.

Meditation

I have been reading (re-reading, after a great deal of time) *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau. In his section on Sounds, he writes the following:

When other birds are still the screech owls take up the strain, like mourning women their ancient u-lu-lu. Their dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian. Wise midnight hags! Is is no honest and blunt tu-whit tu-who of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty, the mutual consolation of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernatural love in the infernal groves. Yet I love to hear their wailing, their doleful responses, trilled along the woodside; reminding me sometimes of music and singing birds; as if it were the dark and tearful side of music, the regrets and sighs that would fain be sung. They are the spirits, the low spirits and melancholy fore-bodings, of fallen souls that once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating their sins with their wailing hymns or threnodies in the scenery of their transgressions. They give me a new sense of the variety and

capacity of that nature which is our common dwelling. Oh-o-o-o that I had never been bor-r-r-r-n! sighs one on this side of the pond, and circles with the restlessness of despair to some new perch on the gray oaks. Then – that I never had been bor-r-r-n! echoes another on the farther side with tremulous sincerity, and – bor-r-r-n! comes faintly from far in the Lincoln woods.

I was also serenaded by a hooting owl. Near at hand you could fancy it the most melancholy sound in Nature, as if she meant by this to stereotype and make permanent in her choir the dying moans of a human being, -- some poor weak relic of mortality who has left hope behind, and howls like an animal, yet with human sobs, on entering the dark valley, made more awful by a certain gurgling melodiousness, -- I find myself beginning with the letters gl when I try to imitate it, -- expressive of a mind which has reached the gelatinous mildewy stage in the mortification of all healthy and courageous thought. It reminded me of ghouls and idiots and insane howlings. But now one answers from far woods in a strain made really melodious by distance, -- Hoo hoo hoo, hooter hoo; and indeed for the most part it suggested only pleasing associations, whether heard by day or night, summer or winter.

I rejoice that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men. It is a sound admirably suited to swamps and twilight woods which no day illustrates, suggesting a vast and undeveloped nature which men have not recognized. They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thought which all have. All day the sun has shone on the surface of some savage swamp, where the single spruce stands hung with usnea lichens, and small hawks circulate above, and the chickadee lisps amid the evergreens, and the partridge and rabbit skulk beneath; but now a more dismal and fitting day dawns, and a different race of creatures awakes to express the meaning of Nature there.

40 Day Wisdom

I, who live by words, am wordless when
I try my words in prayer. All language turns
To silence. Prayer will take my words and then
Reveal their emptiness. The stilled voice learns
To hold its peace, to listen with the heart
To silence that is joy, is adoration.
The self is shattered, all worlds torn apart
In this strange patterned time of contemplation
That, in time, in silence, leaves me healed and mended.
I leave, returned to language, for I see
Through words, even when all words are ended.
I, who live by words, am wordless when
I turn me to the Word to pray. Amen.

*40 Day Journey with Madeleine L'Engle – pg. 100
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Legends

Ever since I was a boy in Northern Minnesota I have read Native American legends. Some of them are very similar to scripture, some are vastly different. They seek to answer questions, as do our stories. Recently I have decided that I would like to share some of my favorites with you (or at least some that I have read recently that I find to be interesting). This time:

How the Big Moth Got Fire in His Wings

Un-nu-pit, Bad medicine maker, loves fire. He is red for he sleeps on a bed of coals. He is the maker of all trouble and he loves to play with fire. Shinob, the god, told the Indians always to keep their fires small for Un-nu-pit goes only to the big and destructive blaze.

Un-nu-pit has many warriors and he sends them everywhere. Some of them fly like birds, some of them run like the coyote, some of them come like men. These warriors are called Un-nu-pit's Ruan, which means they are evil spirits.

Once upon a time Ne-ab, chief of Un-nu-pit's dancers, came to the camp of the Indians. He had wings like pachats, the bat, and his flight was flickering and uncertain. It was deceptive,. You could not tell where he was going for he was changing all the time. He did not drive straight-forward like the flight of quan-ants, the eagle.

At night when the campfires were lighted Ne-ab came out to play and to entice the children to run after him into the fire. He came out to work all his evil enchantments. Into the circle of firelight he would swing, and darting in and out among the fires, dance his most dazzling dances. It pleased mam-oots, the maidens of the tribe, to see him do this.

To attract the attention of the girls he would dart out at them and scare them, then he would go dancing and flitting around and around the fires. The maidens laughed and clapped their hands on his dancing until he grew very vain and reckless.

One tragic time he forgot the dangers of the flame. He saw only the bewitching eyes of mam-oots, the maidens. Around and around and over the blaze he darted and flitted, for the maidens were running after him and grabbing at him and shouting at him. Into the fire he fell at last, the victim of his own vanity. His beautiful silken wings were singed and he lay dead upon a bed of coals.

Un-nu-pit, his evil father, saw Ne-ab fall and die. He mourned and said, "I will bring Ne-ab, the dancing chief, back. He shall live again to dance his wonderful dances. I will make his wings more beautiful and he shall dance again the fire dance for the Indian maidens."

Un-nu-pit raised Ne-ab up from his bed of coals and wrapped him in a silken blanket. In the bursh he was hidden away and there he lay through many cold and dreary days.

Winter passed. On a night when springtime came and in the moon Tats-a-mat-oits, the month that we will call June, the Indian maidens were gathered again around the campfire. They were talking about the dancer that used to come to their fires in the spring. They were sorry that he fell in and died.

Suddenly from out of the darkness there came the flash of flickering, uncertain wings. Into the light they circled and round and round the fires they flitted. The maidens caught their breath, and said, "See,. The dances Ne-ab's fire dance. Look, it is Ne-ab. He had come alive again," they cried.

It was true. Un-nu-pit, his father, had broken the blanket that wrapped him and called Ne-ab forth to a new life. But his wings, once black, were now as smooth as velvet and had taken on all the colors of the fire into which he fell. His back and wing tips were gray and sprinkled with ashes, but underneath he glowed like a bed of live coals fanned by the wind. The maidens

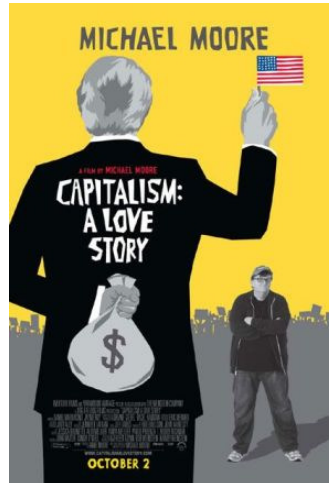
clapped their hands and said, "His wings are like un-nu-pit's fire. We will call him nipp-as-cat, the fire dancer.

And so, every year from then to now, in the moon Tats-a-mat-oits, the month that we will call June, you may see Ne-ab's children dancing around your campfire. They, too, have been wrapped in a silken blanket hidden out in the brush all winter. But in the spring they come forth resplendent in all the colors of the flames. The Indians call them "nippe-as-cat," but to us they are the red-winged moth.

Recommended Radio:

KQKE 960AM (Air America) – Talk Radio from the Left
KKSF 103.7 (The Band) – Classic Rock

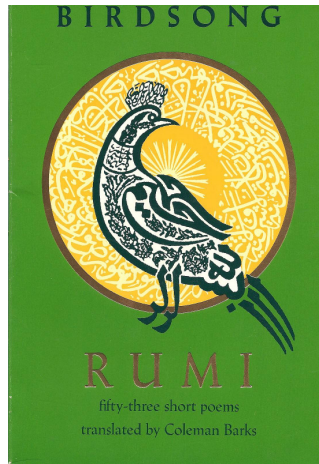
Recommended Movie:



On the 20-year anniversary of his groundbreaking masterpiece *Roger & Me*, Michael Moore's *Capitalism: A Love Story* comes home to the issue he's been examining throughout his career: the disastrous impact of corporate dominance on the everyday lives of Americans (and by default, the rest of the world). But this time the culprit is much bigger than General Motors, and the crime scene far wider than Flint, Michigan. From Middle America, to the halls of power in Washington, to the global financial epicenter in Manhattan, Michael Moore will once again take filmgoers into uncharted territory. With both humor and outrage, Michael Moore's *Capitalism: A Love Story* explores a taboo question: What is the price that America pays for its love of capitalism? Years ago, that love seemed so innocent. Today, however, the American dream is looking more like a nightmare as families pay the price with their jobs, their homes and their savings. Moore takes us into the homes of ordinary people whose lives have been turned upside down; and he goes looking for explanations in Washington, DC and elsewhere. What he finds are the all-too-familiar symptoms of a love affair gone astray: lies, abuse, betrayal...and 14,000 jobs being lost every day. *Capitalism: A Love Story* is both a culmination of Moore's previous works and a look into what a more hopeful future could look like. It is Michael Moore's ultimate quest to answer the question he's posed throughout his illustrious filmmaking career: Who are we

and why do we behave the way that we do?

Recommended Book



In the dark days of winter, this is an excellent book to lighten the spirit. It contains just 53 short poems of Jelaluddin Rumi. All of them resonate with the silence and love and great playfulness from which they spring.

Engaging in these poems is like being still to listen to the birdsong in the early evening, as it deepens the quiet that surrounds it and quickens the growing of all who hear.

Quote of the Month:

“We’ve come to get the money back for the American people.”

Michael Moore