

PASTOR'S PAGE – SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

Musings

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

How simple it is. At least those who founded our country (both male and female) thought so. That which deals with religion comprises only 16 words. It says that those who make the laws in this country, our elected representatives (within our representative democracy) cannot make a law that places one religion above (or below) another and they can't prohibit people of any religion from the free practice of that religion. And, if our representatives can't make such laws, then no one else can either.

Democrats can't. Republicans can't. Independents can't. Tea-baggers can't. Bigots can't. Those who think they are patriots can't. The Ku Klux Klan can't. And, no combination thereof can!

I may not like some of the things in your religion. That does not give me the right to say that you can't practice it. It does not give me the right to say that you cannot build a sanctuary, a temple, a mosque, a sweat lodge, a snake run or anything else that you may need so that I prohibit your free exercise of your religion.

Yes, I know that some will say we are a "Christian Nation." No, we are not! We are a nation that allows the free establishment – and practice – of all religions. We are not a nation that allows only the practice of one religion. We are a nation that allows the free practice of all religions – and we were so sure of this concept that we wrote it into our laws.

Speaking of those laws, they are founded upon the thought and the work of the great lawgivers of the past. If you visit the Supreme Court Building in Washington D.C. you will see (on the south wall frieze and the north wall frieze) the figures of those lawgivers: Menes, Hammurabi, Moses, Solomon, Lycurgus, Solon, Draco, Confucius, Augustus, Justinian, Muhammad, Charlemagne, John of England, Louis IX of France, Hugo Grotius, Sir William Blackstone, John Marshall, and Napoleon.

If you aren't sure who all of these people are I suggest that you look them up and read about their amazing lives and their connection to the law. Having done that, then you might understand why I said that it is simple, just 16 words. They tell us to value the religion of everyone, and to be a nation that doesn't prohibit people's free exercise of their religion, no matter how or where they choose to do so.

Meditation

I'm still reading (re-reading, after a great deal of time) *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau. In his section on The Ponds, he writes the following:

"Some have been puzzled to tell how the shore became so regularly paved. My townsmen

have all heard the tradition, the oldest people tell me that they heard it in their youth, that anciently the Indians were holding a pow-wow upon a hill here, which rose as high into the heavens as the pond now sinks deep into the earth, and they used much profanity, as the story goes, though this vice is one of which the Indians were never guilty, and while they were thus engaged the hill shook and suddenly sank, and only one old squaw, named Walden, escaped, and from her the pond was named. It has been conjectured that when the hill shook these stones rolled down its side and became the present shore. It is very certain, at any rate, that once there was no pond here, and now there is one; and this Indian fable does not in any respect conflict with the account of that ancient settler whom I have mentioned, who remembers so well when he first came here with his divining rod, saw a thin vapor rising from the sward, and the hazel pointed steadily downward, and he concluded to dig a well here. As for the stones, may still think that they are hardly to be accounted for by the action of the waves on these hills; but I observe that the surrounding hills are remarkably full of the same kind of stones, so that they have been obliged to pile them up in walls on both sides of the railroad cut nearest the pond and, moreover, there are most stones where the shore is most abrupt; so that, unfortunately, it is no longer a mystery to me. I detect the paver. If the name was not derived from that of some English locality, -- Saffron Walden, for instance -- one might suppose that it was called, originally *Walled-in pond*."

40 Day Wisdom

*As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves -- goes its self; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying What I do is me: for that I came.*

I say more: the just man justifies;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is --
Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

40 Day Journey with Gerard Manley Hopkins
[originally from "*As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame*"]

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:

Adoption of the Human Race (Natchez)

[Before Europeans arrived in the Great Southeast, between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River, there were one to two million tribal Indians gathered in their fertile homeland, speaking a variety of languages. The Natchez tribe, on the Gulf Coast, developed skills in contriving numerous kinds of fishing equipment to catch the tremendous quantities and types of fish available to them in fresh and salt waters. Their people had an abundance for themselves and for sale or trade with others.]

In the very beginning, Moon, Sun, Wind, Rainbow, thunder, Fire, and Water once met a very old man. This wise old man turned out to be Chief of the Sky Spirits. Thunder asked him, "Can you make the people of the world my children?"

"No, no, no!" Wise Old Man replied. "They cannot be your children, but they can be your grandchildren."

Sun asked Old Man, "Can you make the people of the world my children?"

"No, they cannot be your children" answered Old Man. "But they can be your friends and grandchildren. Your main purpose is to give plenty of light."

Moon asked, "Can you make the people of the world my children?"

"No, no, I cannot do that," Old Man replied. "The people of the world can be your nephews and friends."

Fire asked that the people of the world be made his children.

Wise Old Man replied, "No, I cannot give them to you to be your children, but the people of the world can be your grandchildren. You can be their warmth and give them fire to cook their food."

Wind asked the same question as the others. Wise Old Man told Wind, "No, no, the people of the world cannot be your children, but they can be your grandchildren. You can remove the bad air and all kinds of diseases from the people, and keep them healthy."

Rainbow wanted the people to be his children. "No, they cannot be your children," Wise Old Man explained. "You will always be busy preventing too much rain and floods upon the earth."

Water asked that human beings be made his children, but Wise Old Man answered, "No, the people of the world can never be your children. When they get dirty, you must always be available to wash them clean. You shall give them long life."

Wise Old Man continued, "I have now told all of you the best ways to guide yourselves and what you can do to help the people of the world. You must always remember that these children of the human race are my children."



Effigy pipe
Natchez

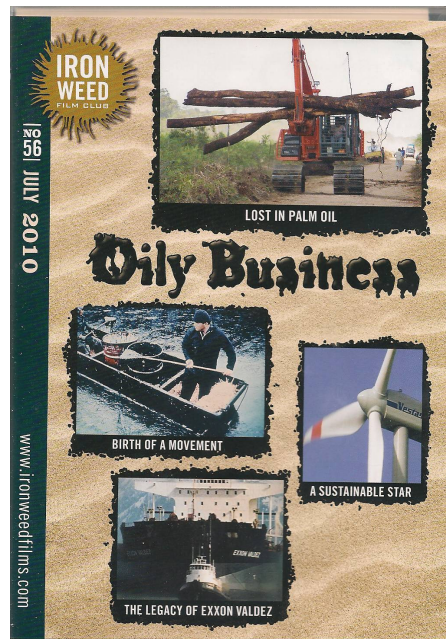
Recommended Radio:

KQKE - 960AM – **Green960 Online and Radio**

A community of progressive political thinkers, featuring nationally syndicated talkers, including local and live news programming and environmental editorial content.

KKSF - 103.7FM -- **(The Band) – Classic Rock**

Recommended Movie:



Four short films presented by Ironweed Films, dealing with the affect of oil on our lives. In the wake of the on-going disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, there may be no more relevant topic.

Lost in Palm Oil

Indonesia's rainforests are being destroyed and rapidly replaced by palm oil plantations for use in bio-fuel. Exposing the new industry's devastating effects on the local population and global ecosystem, this film informs us that we need to be precautions in developing alternatives to fossil fuels. 43 minutes, directed by Inge Altemeier

A Sustainable Star

With wind, solar, water and biomass technologies already successfully in use, Germany is leading the world in renewable energy. Yet its wide-scale application is still challenged by those in power. This film reveals the politics involved in attempting to transition to alternative energy sources. 20 minutes, ABC Australia

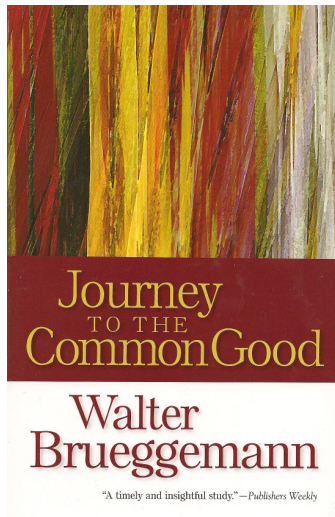
The Legacy of the Exxon Valdez

The local fishing economy is devastated and the ecological impact is still felt decades after the infamous oil spill off the coast of Alaska. Yet legal battles continue over the corporation's court ordered compensation to those affected, causing many to question the justice of the legal process in light of big business influence. 14 minutes and 35 seconds, Woody Landay (editor)

Birth of a Movement

A look at the 1969 oil spill off the coast of southern California, largely considered as the catalyst for the modern environmental movement. As we begin to shift our national and global energy policy, this film challenges and inspires us to learn from these kinds of "shocker" events in considering the impact that our choices make on generations to come. 8 minutes and 43 seconds, directed by Paul Lynch

Recommended Book



“Renowned scholar Walter Brueggemann mines Old Testament biblical narratives for interpretations applicable to contemporary capitalistic states and presents a counter-narrative: trusting in God’s abundance and obeying God’s economic commandments frees people to be good neighbors. He offers thought-provoking comparisons between the temple of Jerusalem’s destruction in 587 BCE and the terrorist attacks of 9/11, suggesting a “double read” in which biblical and contemporary narratives of loss, grief, and hope can inform each other.”

- Publishers Weekly -

In this short (125 pages, with notes), but insightful book respected author and world-renowned theologian Walter Brueggemann turns his discerning eye to the most critical yet basic needs of a world adapting to a new era, an era defined in large part by America’s efforts to rebuild from an age of terror even as it navigates its way through an economic collapse. Yet in spite of these great challenges, Brueggemann calls us to journey together to the common good through neighborliness, covenanting, and reconstruction.

Writing with his usual theological acumen and social awareness, Brueggemann masterfully brings together contemporary cultural analysis with challenging biblical insights and offers a hopeful roadmap to our shared human journey.

Quote of the Month:

“But there is suffering in life, and there are defeats. No one can avoid them. But it's better to lose some of the battles in the struggles for your dreams than to be defeated without ever knowing what you're fighting for.”

Paolo Coelho, author