

T ranslations



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An evaluation of the names we give Biblical characters

THE RHODES LESS TRAVELED

An examination of the intersection between faith and science

GOOD NEWS FOR ENVIRONMENTALISM

A proposal of Christianity as the solution to environmental problems

PLUS! FAITH AND POLITICS: *A biblical defense for voting blue*

volume 2, issue 1
winter 2007

Translations

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Opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of Translations magazine, Cornell University, and its supporters.

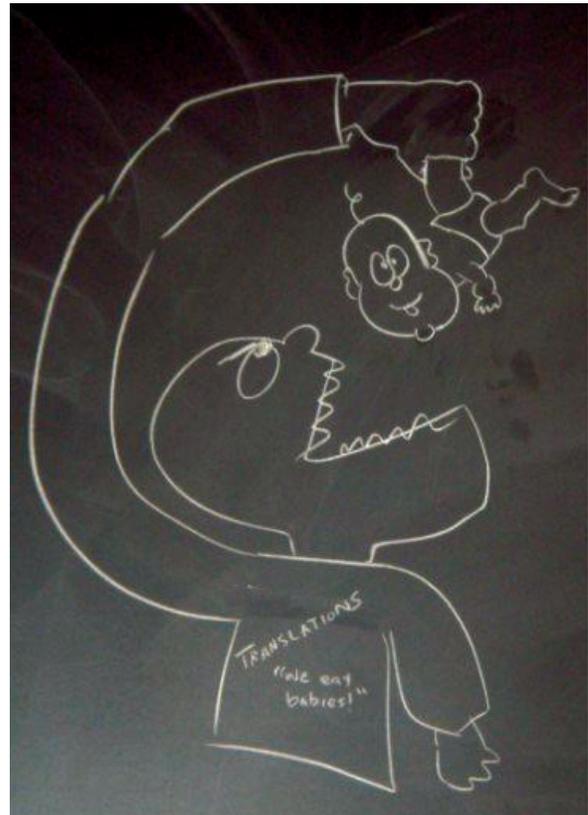
Translations is made possible in part by funding from the Christian Union and the Chesterton House.

Cover photo by Justin Hui '10

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FROM THE EDITORS



A year ago this time, we editors excitedly handed out copies of our first issue to anyone who didn't have the nerve to say no. And now you're reading our second and (maybe) last issue. Producing a magazine is hard, and sometimes it drove us past the edge of sanity (see above picture), but through it all, God has been faithful.

Despite some setbacks early on, we raised more than enough money to print this issue, and even more importantly, God blessed us with eager contributors and editors who enabled us to produce what we all wanted in the first place: a magazine with a high level of content (check out our Features section, including "Affirmative Diction" on page 2 and "The Rhodes Less Traveled" on page 5).

Thanks to all of you who supported us with kind words or critiques; we hope you're pleased with what you read and continue to give us feedback. In particular, we'd like to thank Claire Bryant for all the effort she put into this magazine as its outgoing editor in chief: none of this could have been accomplished without you.

And on that note, we want to see some fresh faces on the editorial board! Our managing editor is going abroad next semester, and the future of Translations is in your hands so if you have any thoughts on a new direction for the magazine (web-based, perhaps?), don't hesitate to shoot us an email. Come hit this up! If no one responds, well, that's it. It's been fun and rewarding, and we hope you're as blessed by this magazine as we have been (and more). Happy reading! (PS - We don't actually eat babies. At least, not unless we're really hungry.)

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AFFIRMATIVE DICTION

Donald Kelling

Divine Grace and the Aliases We Assign to Personalities in Scripture

We have, it seems, a natural tendency to name things. It was one of the first creative things that Adam did, "God...formed every beast ...and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." (Genesis 2:19), and we still have in us this taxonomic tendency.

Somewhere in a litter box, cage, or dog house sits 'Fire!', or 'Jimbo'. We name buildings, sports teams, terrestrial and celestial things (mountains, lakes, constellations and cyclones), and, here, at Cornell, I met a car named Suzie; an old machine in its final throes that somehow was female.

We name people, too. And so pleasurable is it for people to name other people, that many of us, already adequately named by our parents, have accumulated any number of aliases over the years, designed just for us by dear friends and mortal enemies. These special names may be affectionate and affirming: Pelé, and Babe Ruth. Some are simply brutal: like Gargoyle, and Fatty-bum-bum. If we know someone's proper name, we can avoid nicknames. But aliases become indispensable when we talk about people whose stories we know but whose names we do not.

We meet many persons in scripture to whom clergy and laymen over the centuries have assigned aliases: e.g., the centurion (Matthew 8:5-13), the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20), woman with the

issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34), and woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). Nowadays, we use these and other such titles routinely in sermons and bible studies the world over to identify biblical characters.

How godly, though, are these titles? In the list above, the centurion gets off easy. He is identified by his profession. However, the other three get unflattering aliases rooted in who they were before they met Christ, aliases that highlight historic impediments and sins.

The Power of Grace

Because of Christ, we who "in time past were not a people" have now become "the people of God" (1 Peter 2:10). We inherit through Him a renewed and substantial dignity. "If any man be in Christ," Paul tells us, "he is a new creature: old things are passed away; ...all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The dignity in repentance, and divine forgiveness was clearly manifested in Paul, a converted terrorist from the first century. Sometime after his dramatic conversion he wrote, "For I am the least of the apostles...because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Corinthians 15:9-10). He understood that divine forgiveness freed him to acknowledge his past, and freed him from its guilt

and power.

Some skeptical Christians initially rejected Paul (Acts 9:23-26). Yet, he soon became established as a leading light within the church, a true apostle, and servant of God. These many centuries later, we revere our Apostle Paul as a pioneering missionary, and God's mouthpiece for much of the New Testament. In fact, to call him 'Terrorist Paul' today would reek of blasphemy.

It is true that Paul did much to gain his good name. But is it necessary to be martyred to muster an affirming space in Christian diction? In the following, let us examine the stories of two personalities in scripture to whom we have assigned aliases.

The Evangelist from Sychar

In John 4, we are told of a lady who went one day to a well to get water. When she got to the well, Jesus was already there. She was Samaritan, Jesus was Jew, and the two groups did not get along well. But Jesus started a conversation with her. The discussion progressed enough for Jesus to minister to her deepest needs. With at least five failed marriages under her belt, she was now with a man not rightly her own. Far from condemning her, Jesus helped her to recognize God's love for her.

Her response was immediate. She became an evangelist—running into her community calling others to Jesus. "Come, see a man," she said, "who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" As a result of her testimony, we are told, many of the Samaritans believed on Christ that day (John 4:39). So, she was probably the first successful Samaritan Christian missionary.

She was the first evangelist from Sychar but that's not what we call her. We call her 'the woman at the well.' That's not a maligning title, but it is far more marginalizing than affirming. Any number of women may have gone to the well that day, drawn their water and left. In fact, if we really needed someone to call 'woman at the well,' we should probably have given priority to Hagar (Genesis 21:19) or Rebekah (Genesis 24:15-20) who much earlier in scripture had decisive well-related experiences.

Happily, 'Samaritan water fetcher' did not catch on; but 'woman at the well,' for a passionate convert who changed her city? At the well, she is burdened

with a water pot and an infamous history, but when she meets Jesus, she is radically transformed. John emphasizes the grace Christ showed in offering "living water" (John 4:9-16) and the efficacy of that living water in changing her life. So, 'woman who met Christ at the well' would probably be a better pseudonym for her—if it weren't so long. And if 'Evangelist from Sychar' is a bit pompous, we may still be able to find a name that affirms more than the fact that she was once at a well.

She is long dead, of course, but her testimony is not. For women today who also come to Christ out of a maze of marital troubles and social frustration, her example carries real redemptive substance. If only for their sake, we might consider affording the Samaritan woman a more enabling and affirming identifier.



Unfortunately, 'woman at the well,' with all its limitations, is among the more tolerable aliases we continue to use. For a fellow we meet in Luke's Gospel, the situation is far less acceptable.

The Beloved Son

In the parable in Luke 15:11-32, he is the younger of two sons of a certain man. Filled with rebellious exuberance, he claims his share of the inheritance from his father, and leaves home early. He is ready, he thinks, to go it on his own. His father eventually releases him, and he goes on to squander his resources. In his worst moment, he accepts one of the last jobs a sane Jew would consider; to make ends meet, he feeds swine.

Soon enough, he comes to his senses, leaves his sty and returns home. When he finally sees his father

Alias Alienation and Affirmation

again, he offers to work as a servant in his father's house rather than reassume his place as a son, but his father would have none of it. Overjoyed by the boy's return, the father sets off a season of celebration, expressing love and forgiveness to his son.

The father's unconditional love for his boy is an example to us all. I am moved, too, by the young son's capacity for repentance. His example is an important model, for each of us who, having embraced wantonness and earned its abuses, finally find the courage to return home.

Yet, the church has historically been rather unmerciful to the boy. Disregarding his repentant heart and actions, we have branded him simply 'the prodigal son'.

'Prodigal', of course, carries no redeeming connotation. A search anywhere for synonyms of 'prodigal' yields a litany of accusations: irresponsible, extremely wasteful, excessively extravagant,.... So, instead of celebrating the boy's spiritual reawakening (his "coming to himself" as Luke 15:17 puts it), and his wholehearted repentance, we commemorate his stupidity.



Of course, that was not the attitude of his father. The father admits that his son was a rebel without a cause, but emphasizes the reunion: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." (Luke 15:24).

The Father models the appropriate Christian response to genuine repentance. His forgiveness is an enabling one: acknowledging the offence, but more importantly, rehabilitating the offender (Galatians 6:1). In this rehabilitation, communion with God is renewed and fellowship with others is normalized. The son that was 'prodigal' is now 'beloved', 'repentant', and 'forgiven'.

Like 'Pele', and 'Babe Ruth', 'woman at well' and 'prodigal son' are convenient identifiers. So one might see no need to apologize for or modify them. However, it may be that our naming practices are inconsistent with Christian principles.

In fact, a general review of our strategy for naming persons in scripture may be warranted. Even in cases where we have actual names for biblical personalities, our epithets sometimes tacitly deny or overlook their divine transformation. Readers unfamiliar with the Bible may not recognize that Simon, who we still call 'the sorcerer', had abandoned sorcery and was a companion to Philip (Acts 8:13). In Matthew 10 Bartimaeus is blind in verse 46, but delivered of the impediment by verse 52. So is it not rather short-sighted of us that we still call him 'blind Bartimaeus'?

Towards an Affirming Taxonomy

Although their failures are only too clearly described in scripture, Paul and Peter are wholeheartedly embraced in our religious discourses. We celebrate them, making an effort to note their transgressions only when a rigorous theological analysis demands that we do so.

However, many of our brothers and sisters in scripture are not treated with nearly the same love and respect, especially when we consider the names we call them - names that rehash their faults, sorrows and lowest moments in their lives. We employ aliases so entrenched in the sad and sinful starts of scriptural narratives, it is as if we have yet to read the stories through to their victorious ends.

In our neighborhoods, schools, churches, and workplaces, the level of acceptance we have for others is shown in the language we use when we talk about them. Scripture, with its many personalities who have been rescued by God from sin and suffering, is an excellent practice ground for developing an affirming and enabling diction. The aliases we invent for others say something about us. They sum up the characteristics we wish to emphasize, how genuinely we believe in repentance, and how well we practice forgiveness. There's a lot in a name, it seems, especially when we not only have the natural inclination, but are also trusted with the privilege to make it up.

THE RHODES LESS TRAVELED

Stephen Jackson

No good will ever come of setting any limit to the advance of scientific knowledge. The relations of science and faith are not such that faith comes in where science stops, or comes in to fill up the gaps and supply the missing links. God is not a stop-gap. He is not to be discerned through the cracks of our experience but as giving meaning to the whole. Or, to put it more abstractly, purpose is not to be called in where mechanism fails, or primary causes where no secondary causes can be discovered. Rather is mechanism everywhere, and is everywhere the servant of purpose. The two conceptions are not alternative but complementary. - John Baillie

I was recently introduced to an excellent article written by Cornell president emeritus Frank H.T. Rhodes entitled "Christianity in a Mechanistic Universe." First published in 1965, it is perhaps more relevant now than ever. He offers a challenge both to atheists who would declare religion irrelevant due to the progress of science and to Christians who would seek to keep scientific inquiry far from matters of faith. I present here a summary of his arguments and compare his concept of complementarity to Stephen Jay Gould's concept of Nonoverlapping Magisteria (NOMA) as presented in his 1997 article by that name.

Rhodes begins by delving into the history of the modern scientific conception of the world. Citing many historians, he argues that it is significant that empirical science had its beginning in a predominantly Christian civilization and that its early pioneers were primarily devout Christians.

The Aristotelian view that was gradually overturned was decidedly non-mechanistic. In this system, natural objects had souls, and their behavior was determined not by law but by will. "The increas-

ing velocity of a falling body indicated its pleasure in moving towards its natural home at the centre of the universe (R 14)." In contrast, modern science is dependant on the assumptions that the universe is orderly and rational, that human minds are capable of discerning that order, and that human reasoning is reliable. None of these can be proved, and none has been universally held throughout history.

These assumptions were originally justified based on a belief in a rational and personal God, and those who argued most strongly for a mechanistic universe did so *because* of their belief in God. "It was not that these pioneers denied the existence of purpose or final causes in nature as many people do today. Far from it. What they did assert was that ultimate purpose was not the concern of natural science; that the purpose of the Creator could not be discerned by empirical science (R 21)." A distinction was made not of the kinds of questions that were valid, but on the kinds of answers that an organized investigation of the natural world was equipped to provide. This distinction is between mechanism and purpose.

After showing that the foundational assumptions of science, far from being hostile to religion, did in fact gain their support from the Christian faith, Rhodes proceeds to examine the methods of science. In particular, he focuses on the method of investigating nature by consciously selecting which aspects of experience to consider. The scientific approach to a particular question works not by evaluating the totality of our experiences regarding the issue but by fo-

ocusing on and analyzing a small number of variables that are judged likely to provide the most useful results.

He uses as an illustration how one could describe the properties of a diamond. "It is true on the one hand that a diamond is native crystallized carbon with a hardness of 10 and a specific gravity of 3.52. It is also true on the other hand that a diamond may be a precious stone of great beauty and significance. Each of these categories of experience is relevant and is useful within its own particular framework.

The danger is that we should suppose that any one category of experience, any one definition, precludes all others (R 27)." While in the lab, the chemist puts aside thoughts of his wife's reaction to her engagement ring. Doing science well means in part isolating and emphasizing particular aspects of our experience. This allows us to build powerful models which explain and predict phenomena.

But for the same reason, "science, by its conscious abstraction, can never claim to be the only method of apprehending reality, the only 'real' explanation, the only legitimate avenue of human experience and knowledge (R 28)." Both the success of the scientific method and the possibility of alternative forms of knowledge stem from the same source.

Does this then mean that boundaries between scientific and other forms of knowledge exist or should be erected? Are there topics that science is unfit to investigate? Rhodes argues against this. "It was once fashionable amongst some Christians to define carefully the area in which scientific thought may operate; to regard it as a distinct area in which scientific explanations were legitimate. ... This is a view which is no longer tenable, for the realm of science is the realm of the whole universe, of all existence, and in the same way the realm of Christian belief is the realm of all existence. There is no difference in the scope of the two (R 33)." (An argument could be made that the realm of Christian belief extends beyond that of science into the unseen, the eternal, but that is a topic for another day.)

If the scope, the topics of relevant inquiry, of sci-

ence and Christianity are equal, has the progress in scientific investigation rendered religion superfluous? Rhodes rephrases the question by asking, "Is the scientific description itself enough to do justice to the totality of human experience? (R 37)." He maintains that it is not. A mechanistic analysis of love, for example, does not do the experience full justice. It is not that science has nothing to tell us about love, but that as scientists who are first of all people, we must be both observers and participants for full understanding.



Rhodes argues for a principle of complementarity, that the same phenomena must be observed from various viewpoints. So long as each of those viewpoints is valid, "They are not exclusive or competitive... All are 'true', and all are needed to do justice to the total 'reality' they represent (R 39)." As in the case of the diamond, the choice of when to use one conception versus another should be based on the logic of the situation, and care should be taken not to inappropriately mix them.

This concept of complementarity, of a peaceful coexistence of a Christian worldview with a scientific mindset, is at first glance very similar to Stephen Jay

Gould's model of Nonoverlapping Magisteria. Gould argues that there should in principle be no conflict between science and religion because "each subject has a legitimate magisterium, or domain of teaching authority – and these magisterial do not overlap (Gould NOMA)."

Gould and Rhodes agree that science and religion each provide distinct forms of knowledge, each of value to human life. They further agree on the benefit in separating descriptions of mechanism from descriptions of purpose. We can investigate the world without knowing why it was made or by whom, and we can search spiritually without a complete knowledge of the world we live in. Where NOMA and complementarity begin to diverge, however, is the issue of scope.

For Rhodes, as we have seen, the topics of inquiry for science and religion are the same. Each is interested in 'all that is'. For Gould no such overlap exists. Gould further explains the distinctiveness of his two magisteria by saying, "The net of science covers the empirical universe. What it is made of (fact) and why does it work this way (theory). The net of religion extends over questions of moral meaning and value (Gould NOMA)." This may be true of some generic concept of religion, but it is certainly not true of Christianity.

The scope of Christianity is the entire universe, material and spiritual, temporal and eternal; from the heart, thoughts, and actions of man to the earth that God created and actively rules. Contrary to Gould's neat division, Christianity deals explicitly with facts. It rests not on mere mysticism and morality but on the historical life and death of a particular man, and most importantly on the claim that he returned to life.

The apostle Paul bases the validity and the relevance of Christianity on this historical (factual) occurrence. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. . . . If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19)." The concept of NOMA is not reconcilable with Christianity because it is the very nature of faith in Christ to impact every area of life.

The principle of complementarity is stronger than that of NOMA because it does not try to draw borders that can't be held. The spirit of scientific inquiry will seek a mechanistic explanation of any phenomenon the heart of faith uncovers, but there is not necessar-

ily conflict between the two descriptions.

This is consistent with scripture which teaches that God's action in the world is not the exception but the rule. In uncovering a mechanistic explanation, the scientist is not removing God from the picture but revealing His paintbrush. To paraphrase and correct Gould, "Science tells us how the heavens go, theology tells us *why* the heavens go."

NOMA is simplistic and comforting for those who for one reason or another would like a clear separation between science and religion. What is daunting about complementarity is that it is far more challenging to apply correctly. It requires wisdom, patience, and practice to be able to rightly say that for *this* aspect of the question at hand a mechanistic description is the most beneficial while for *that* aspect we should use a theological (or more generally an explanation with reference to purpose). The question, "Why is the water boiling?" can be answered with a treatise on specific heat and vapor pressure, or by the sentence, "Because I wanted some tea" (R 42). Both answers are equally true; an awareness of context is critical for the answer to be useful.

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GOOD NEWS

Anna Lam

FOR ENVIRONMENTALISM

Growing up, I was shaped by one dominant worldview: that of evangelical Christianity. One of the first things I learned in Sunday school was that “In the Beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,”¹ including Adam and Eve in His own image. That in the perfect garden of Eden, God placed them in charge of all the living things, and allowed them to eat from any tree but the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. That the couple ate the forbidden fruit when tempted by Satan, thus disobeying God and sending the world into chaos. Relationships between God and man, and man and nature, were broken. But, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life,”² and so provided for man’s failure in the beginning.

Meanwhile, hermit crabs and Discovery books from the first grade introduced me to a strange wonderful “other” thing called nature. From then on, I had no doubt that revelation of God from both scripture and nature complemented each other. Unfortunately, both church and school seemed to tell me that a Christian had no business caring for the environment and nonhuman nature. So, rejected from the best of both worlds, what was one supposed to do? Well, gut instincts told me that my God was too big and involved in our lives not to provide for our present environmental situations (or “crises”), so I sought reconciliation.

A Google search produced eminent organizations of the field such as the Evangelical Environmental Network, the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies,

and A Rocha (“Christians in Conservation”), as well as a blog called the Evangelical Ecologist. My immediate response, though, was a self-righteous sigh of relief: *I am in the clear. I will no longer allow my worldly environmentally-conscious peers to boo or hiss at me, and I will even repent to the best of my abilities on behalf of all the other erroneous Christians, those environmental degraders who give me a bad name.* Little did I know then that I was just as guilty as my secular peers of never critically questioning the (mis)perception that the evangelistic Christian community was full of earth-and-nonhuman oppressors, ignorantly carrying out God’s command to dominate everything until the earth burns up in the end anyway.

Arguably, no other person contributed to this “conclusion popularly accepted by ‘everybody’ in respectable intellectual circles in its time” to as great a degree as Lynn White, who in 1967 published the infamous essay, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” in which he called attention to “a moral deficiency in Judeo-Christian teaching about the environment,”³ drawing most of his conclusions from what is now generally agreed to be an oversimplified and incorrect analysis of Genesis.⁴

White, however, also accomplished much more for a Christian environmental ethic than he perhaps expected: such criticism gave Christians the occasion to defend themselves regarding environmental stewardship, thus creating “relevance for Christian interaction with the environment that had not previously existed. It was, in fact, the spark that ignited the developmental fire of the modern Judeo-Christ-

tian environmental stewardship ethic.”⁵ In fact, this “developmental fire” is still refining the rich potential for the evangelistic Christian ethic of creation care to contribute biblical understanding to a global environmental ethic effective in solving present ecological problems.

One of such efforts of the cultural transformation culminated in the formation of the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), who summed up biblical principles concerning creation care and launched the result, *An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation*, in 1994. *The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action*, edited by R. J. Berry, explores the theological commentary on this monumental document. It claims to be a product of “three truisms: 1.

A virtually unanimous and somber acknowledgment that humans have damaged their environment..., 2. A general feeling of helplessness on the part of individuals...”⁶ and let me just stop there to point out that these two points reflect the outcries, both for and from the scientific community, for a spiritual and religious ground on which to battle environmental problems. Even White admitted to a “[personal] doubt that

disastrous ecologic backlash can be avoided simply by applying to our problems more science and more technology.”⁷ Instead, he suggested that we needed to “find a new religion, or rethink our old one.”⁸

Similarly, E. O. Wilson proposed that the hope for the conservation movement lay in “the understanding of motivation, the ultimate reasons why people care about one thing and not another.”⁹ In 1990, Carl Sagan led thirty-two other well-known scientists of the Union of Concerned Scientists to the signing of *An Open Letter to the Religious Community*, urging for “efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment [to be] infused with a vision of the sacred.”¹⁰

Shrader-Frechette summed up their sentiments nicely: “If environmental degradation were purely, or even primarily, a problem demanding scientific or technological solutions, then its resolution would probably have been accomplished by now. As it is, however, our crises of pollution and resource depletion reflect profound difficulties with some of the most basic principles in our accepted system of values. They challenge us to assess the adequacy of these principles and, if need be, to discover a new framework for describing what it means to behave ethically or to be a ‘moral’ person.”¹¹

This is only the beginning of what Loren Wilkin-son describes as “a global change in perception [in the 1990s]...an awareness of a deep flaw in human



nature, and a need for some sort of religious change to meet the problem.”¹² This cultural setting is addressed in the *Declaration*: “Many concerned people, convinced that environmental problems are more spiritual than technological, are exploring the world’s ideologies and religions in search of non-Christian spiritual resources for the healing of the earth.”¹³

The message is clear enough: scientists have come to realize that the environmental/conservation movement desperately needs a religious, spiritual, and moral foundation. The solution I hope to explore is that of the biblical Christian ethic of creation care. Not surprisingly, this belief opens the *Declaration*:



“As followers of Jesus Christ, committed to the full authority of the scriptures, and aware of the ways we have degraded creation, we believe that biblical faith is essential to the solution of our ecological problems.”¹⁴ First of all, this bold statement surprises many and raises skeptical eyebrows of others. For although White had based his argument on a distorted interpretation of the Genesis mandate, there was just enough truth and reason in it to have convinced many that there was no way Christianity would be relevant to current ecological problems, much less acceptable as a solution!

For this reason, a unified Christian response is essential in this dialogue, and it is not something that has been forming naturally. The third of three truisms mentioned earlier, from which the *Declaration* and *The Care of Creation* arose, describes the issue: “3. Christians dither—caught between a Scylla of welcoming environmental disasters as a sign of the ‘end-times’ and a Charybdis of shipwreck on pantheism and New Age nightmares....there has not been—nor is there—any general agreement about Christian commitment on priorities or actions about creation care.” So here it is, the formation not of a set of rules for behaviors, but an evangelical consensus on the underlying issues that must be dealt with before it is possible to “robustly and sustainably produce answers to applied questions.”¹⁵ The apparent disconnect between belief and action does not excuse weakly understood beliefs. Rather, perhaps Berry is arguing that the right beliefs should and will be much more conducive to

fostering right behavior.

For evangelical Christians, the “underlying issues” refer to what scripture has to say about the material world, people’s relationship to it, and its implications to conservation and stewardship, i.e., the biblical basis for an environmental ethic. A good chunk of the *Declaration* is under the heading: “Thus we call on all those who are committed to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to affirm the following principles of biblical faith...”¹⁶ Since evangelicals take the “Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God,”¹⁷ they would “treat such information [such as explanations

of the application of stewardship to life and livelihood] as authoritative and legitimate,”¹⁸ and behaving from personal submission to authority is already a step closer to linking belief and behavior.

Unfortunately, many Christians who call themselves evangelicals have not been carefully studying, understanding and living out biblical principles, leading to behavior confusing to the rest of the world.¹⁹ Peter Harris, International Coordinator of A Rocha Trust and with years of experience working with both evangelical and secular communities, goes as far as to say “that the urgent task in changing the way we live as evangelical Christians has to begin with believing differently, and not simply obeying new rules...it has become uncomfortably clear that its roots lie in unbiblical belief.”²⁰

So what does the Bible say about the material world and creation (both nonhuman and human)? It is significant that the Bible begins with Genesis, the creation of the cosmos and all its environments and creatures. There, we learn that the Creator God declared all creation “good”²¹ and makes a covenant with even not just Noah, but also nonhuman creation after the Flood.²² Throughout the Bible, there are metaphorical, didactical, and descriptive references to how God cares for nonhuman creatures, even the seemingly most mundane of them all.²³ Knowing the intrinsic worth of each creature apart from their usefulness and their coming to being for God’s pleasure, humans must consider the implications for their own system of species valuation.

As for humans, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."²⁴ Of all scripture relating to man's relationship with the environment, the verse following right after that describing the creation of the first humans has been oversimplified, misused, and overall tainted with perhaps the most anti-environmental connotations. It is sometimes called the Dominion Mandate, as it states: "God blessed [the first couple] and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and *subdue* it. *Rule over* the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."²⁵ It was taken to mean that the earth was created for the benefit of humans, and therefore blamed as the excuse of those whose lifestyles seem to exploit the earth. This passage in fact forms the basis of the stewardship principle and is also fundamental to the Christian environmental ethic, with which it is sometimes even synonymous.

As the only creatures created in the image of God, humans have been given a special responsibility over creation, but not one of exploitation. Instead, corroboration with a later passage, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work [*abad*] it and take care of [*shamar*] it"²⁶ reveals that humans were placed in Eden to serve the earth (*abad*). The Hebrew for cultivating, *shamar*, also means to keep, "to care, to guard, and to protect, as in other verses where God cares for his beloved and we protect our eyes."

This paints a much different picture of relating to the earth than that of exploitation; in fact, it now connotes more the servant-kingship attributed to Christ Himself, who, appropriately, is our model for the stewardship concept.²⁷ Recognizing that "the earth and everything in it is the Lord's,"²⁸ not ours, and that he has given us the responsibility of caring for it, ought to motivate us towards more responsible behavior towards the earth and nonhuman creatures.

Biblical faith also addresses relationships among people in terms of their relationship with God, therefore providing a framework for dealing with overconsumption, materialism, global injustice, and related problems. "The greatest commandment," after all, is "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind'²⁹...And the

second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'³⁰ So, to begin my attempt at explaining a holistic idea: love for God ought to motivate his stewards to loving care of his earth. Here, "love for God cannot be separated from love for one's neighbor."

Stephen Rand completes the link by observing that "concern for the environment is inseparable from true and authentic love for our neighbors,"³¹ since, for example, "poverty forces people to degrade creation in order to survive,"³² and, I would argue, a degraded creation causes poverty among people as well. Many of the Christians I grew up with had been very concerned about the impact their relationship with God had on theirs with people, but the equally profound impact of each of those relationships on their relationship with creation probably never occurred to them.

The most wonderful true story ever told—the reason evangelicals evangelize—surrounds Jesus Christ and his redemption of the fallen world. Instead of ending in an implosion, as the passage in 2 Peter 3:7, 10-13 describing the destruction of the earth by fire is commonly interpreted to mean, the "'end'... is a lasting reconciliation between God, humanity, and the nonhuman world."³³ How is the correct interpretation of the end times biblical view one of redemption, reconciliation and renewal, and not one of destruction? Paul, the writer of Romans, talks of creation "being subjected to frustration" and yearning for future glory, when it will be "brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God,"³⁴ implying that we will exist together at that time. Then, in perhaps my favorite passage in the Bible because it is so definitive and clear, Paul writes of Christ's involvement in the creation of



the earth,³⁵ his personal sustaining of the earth now,³⁶ and, most importantly, of his redeeming work to include the “[reconciliation] to [God] himself *all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*”³⁷

Future glory is manifest in a city with an unpoluted river of life flowing through it, surrounded by fruitful trees.³⁸ As for the controversy surrounding the interpretation of 2 Peter 3:10, Stephen Bouma-Prediger argues that the Greek verb translated as “burnt up,” *heurethesetai*, means “to find” and actually means that the world will “be found” after it is refined by fire; again, the idea is continuity and not discontinuity.³⁹

What difference does having biblical knowledge of something so far in the future make in our present treatment of the earth? Perhaps one need only ask the better question, as David Henderson does: “How is one to coherently yearn for the redemption and restoration of creation while treating it as worthless?”⁴⁰ Thus, the last section of the *Declaration* is founded “in Christ [where] there is hope, not only for men, women and children, but also for the rest of creation which is suffering from the consequences of human sin.”⁴¹ I had not realized it at the time, but in hindsight it was clear that only the concept of eternal creation, complete with restoration through Christ, could have completed the narrative relating God and humans for me.

Pointing out the major biblical principles central to a Christian environmental ethic, then providing biblically-based applications to everyday life—both of which the *Declaration* has generally been considered to have succeeded in doing—is but only half the work. The problem lies in the actual translation of the set of beliefs into effective action and transformed lifestyles. This is perhaps the most pressing challenge for any group claiming to have the solution in principle; in fact, commentators of the *Declaration* critiqued it for not emphasizing enough what they thought was vital to the connection: true worship. Michael North-

cott suggests that worship of God will turn us away from “idolatry, unrighteousness and injustice,” which “generate problems in the environment.”⁴² By emphasizing the lordship of Christ over both the creation and civilization through which we worship him,⁴³ the *Declaration* helps us to realize that “our relationship to the societies we live in, and their physical environment, becomes the place of redemption,”⁴⁴ and faith and behavior is integrated.

That is great news for those evangelicals who already consider themselves environmental and/or ecological, but how can Christians work together with those founded on different religious beliefs, or those who don’t claim religion? The answer seems to



be to engage. The collective influence of evangelicals is more far-reaching than that of most groups, and they are able to offer grounds for hope where nothing else can.⁴⁵ Rather than putting differences aside, Christians need to recognize that “difference”—biblical faith—as the very thing that motivates us,⁴⁶ and initiate respectful communication in which both sides listen and learn from each other.⁴⁷

By accusing the Genesis passages of Judeo-Christianity for being the “historical roots of our ecologic crisis,” Lynn White opened doors for scholarly, active and ethical Christian engagement in the environmental and conservation movement. Tenets of Christianity have been identified as possible solutions—namely, biblical faith and true worship. Whether or

not they are solutions is not so important as whether Christians could continue to be a living example of the unified *Declaration* to their secular colleagues in conservation and environmental work, providing the grounds for hope that the secular environmental movement desperately lacks. After all, "by this *Declaration*, the evangelical Christian community now places its behaviour on the line, open for public scrutiny and evaluation."⁴⁸

For me, I wholeheartedly agree with Henderson, who sees it immoral *not* to be both an evangelical and a conservationist. This may seem extreme, but I hope Christians would at least heed his challenge: "How is one to sing on Sunday about the glory of God reflected in forest glade and lofty mountain grandeur and then turn around and be indifferent to the deforestation of the tropics?"⁴⁹

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YOUR BEST LIFE NOT NOW

Liang Zhang

In a culture of diet, watered-down Christianity, few embody the message of the marginalized, tooth-fairy-like, vending-machine Jesus as clearly and shamelessly as Joel Osteen, the pastor of the largest church in America.

The message is simple: God is your personal piñata—hit him a few times when things aren't going well, and he'll fix your problems. God would not want you to live uncomfortably; he wants you to be rich, healthy and prosperous. God will solve all your emotional, psychological, relational, and personal issues—he's your personal shrink. Jesus will make you feel great about yourself, and tell you how great you are. With benefits and payoffs like that, who wouldn't want Jesus?

The apostle Paul wouldn't. He said, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." This verse alone throws a dag-

ger into the heart of the prosperity gospel. If Christ is not real, if this is all a delusion, and when we die, we find out there is no God, we are "to be pitied more than all men." Real Christian life is not comfortable. It is not safe. It is not easy. It is not built on prosperity or wealth. It's lived in such a way that if Christ is not risen and real, we would be most pitiful of all.

"I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far." But isn't your best life now, Paul? Why would you say that departing and being with Christ is better by far? I think Paul would say, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ." And, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

How is dying gain if your best life is now? How could dying and being with Jesus possibly be gain,

when the best things about life are wealth, prosperity, health, and comfort? We see that Paul would not have wanted the “best life now” Jesus, but why not? I mean, who wouldn’t want a Jesus who gives you a nice spouse, a fine house, a safe neighborhood, a secure retirement plan and great self-esteem? I think the answer is simple. There is no such Jesus.

Jesus Christ is God supreme. In him all things were made. He sustains all things by his powerful word. He is a more real reality than anything in this world, including all of our bodies and souls, everything was made in him and is sustained by him. This Jesus who is God, who reigns supreme, who says, “The world is mine and all that is in it,” laid down his crown, stepped off his throne, and poured out His life on a cross, the most humiliating execution tool, perhaps in history.

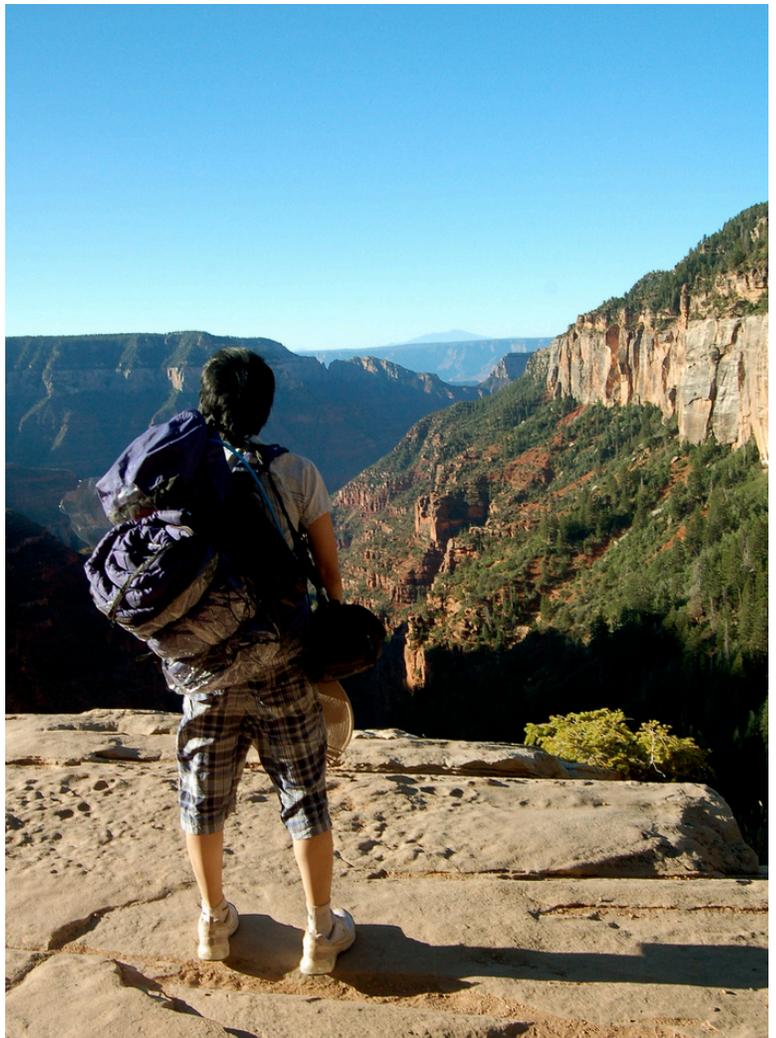
Why would he do that? The answer is two-fold. Why would Jesus choose to love messed-up human beings? One answer is that it beats me. Beats the Psalmist too, who marvels, “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?” The other answer is that Christ’s purpose in coming down from heaven, is our salvation. Salvation FROM God. And salvation FOR God. We are saved from the wrath of God and saved for knowing and enjoying God forever.

When you take that Christ-exalting, God-centered gospel, and you twist it into a man-centered, this-life-exalting gospel, why should anyone be surprised why so many Christians live no differently than the world? It makes perfect sense. Take the gospel, make it ultimately about humans, rather than the glory of God, and we start seeing wasted lives, lives lived as though there is no resurrection. Why is anyone surprised people think the church sucks? Or that Christianity is stupid and pointless? If God is your personal maid for your problems; if God is weak and submissive and pretty much a loser; if God’s main purpose of existence is to boost your self-esteem—who on this side of hell would want to worship a God like that?

But that is not the God of the Bible. That’s a figment of the American imagination, soaked in the lies of the American Dream. The God of the

Bible is supremely perfect and righteous, joyful and holy, wrathful and just, loving and merciful. This is a God who out of joy, gave us life when we didn’t deserve it and out of mercy, withheld his wrath when we did deserve it. Out of his wrath and perfect justice, he demanded blood for sin, and then out of his love and mercy, met his own demand for justice on the cross through his son, Jesus Christ. Christ bore the wrath of God on the behalf of God’s children and performed the perfect righteousness that is imputed onto all who believe.

That supreme Christ is the center of the gospel—he’s the author of life; he’s what life is about. That Christ died so that in this life, you would joyfully give up what you cannot keep to gain that which you cannot lose, namely Christ. And that you might know his joy in such a way that displays that your treasure is not on earth and this life is not your best life. Knowing and rejoicing in Christ for eternity and knowing the pleasures of God forever, is far better.



SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

Nathaniel
Houghton

INVESTING

As Christians, we often allow our faith to guide us as we make many important decisions. Nevertheless, stock exchanges have never been places suited for theological reflection. After all, the Bible states that “people who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction” (1 Timothy 6:9), and Jesus himself warns that “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:25). In other words, if we are to be good Christians, we must place our faith on a higher level than our worldly objectives. Dr. Theodore Lowi, professor of government at Cornell University, describes the discord this way: “Capitalism is secular... it makes no pretenses of religion or of gods.” Nevertheless, one development has mixed the Church with our market economy: Socially Responsible Investing (SRI). SRI is not a new idea, but it could allow Christianity to keep pace in an uncertain, rapidly modernizing world.

SRI combines goals of profit making with those of maximizing the social good. According to the Social Investment Forum, an online database system, SRI “considers both the investor’s financial needs and an investment’s impact on society.” SRI has its roots in the 18th century with the Religious Society of Friends and typically does not invest in companies promoting alcohol, tobacco, weapons, or abortion-related products. Despite these caveats, SRI allows shareholders to increase their capital while maintaining a clear conscience. For this reason, many individuals create customized SRI plans, and many planned funds have emerged promoting this concept.

Although SRI is not explicitly Christian in nature, clear connections between its objectives and Christian values make SRI an attractive Christian venture. In

fact, some denominations have even created departments concerned with mutual fund development. The Presbyterian Church, for example, has created the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Corporation (PILC). The PILC’s “Mission Market Fund” creatively uses SRI to provide loans to churches in financial need out of investment funds. Through one investment, investors can protect their assets, invest with a clear conscience, and help churches expand.

A further example of faith-based SRI includes the United Church Foundation, which has created its own “UCF Investment Policy” to guide its investment strategy. Also, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), which works for “peace, economic justice, and stewardship of the Earth,” has for thirty-five years called for more socially responsible investments, using its 275 members (which include denominations and religious communities) as examples. The ICCR uses, in a phrase borrowed from the group’s website, “the power of persuasion backed by economic pressure from consumers and investors to hold corporations accountable,” an idea closely aligned with SRI’s goals and values.

For the Church, SRI creates a much-needed opportunity to actively infuse faith into an area of secular life not usually influenced by religion. If this idea catches on, and it should, it represents a breath of fresh air for an institution fighting to stay current. “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10), but in our world today, the use of currency is essential. Socially Responsible Investing allows the Church to involve itself in the secular world without losing the spiritual grounding that makes it a truly special and unique institution. If the Church hopes to thrive in modern times, it must balance these seemingly disparate ends.



WHY I AM A DEMOCRAT

Brianne Limner

Hi everyone. I am a Christian, and (I hesitate to even say this) I am a Democrat. I would even venture to say that I am a very progressive Democrat. Phew. It feels good to get that off my chest. The reason for the hesitation before disclosing my political leanings stems from the presence of the Republican hegemony within American Christianity that, at times, looks down on Democrats. I've been told before that my views are wrong or "un-Christian" (whatever that means), but I believe being a Christian who is also a Democrat is not oxymoronical because the reason I am a Democrat is because I am a Christian. Now, I'm not saying that I support everything the Democratic Party supports, nor am I here to say that Republicans are wrong and Democrats are right; but I simply want to explain to you why, as a Christian, I support the Democratic Party.

I am a Democrat because I am Pro-life. "Wait!" you say. "I thought Democrats were pro-choice." I commend your political awareness. Yes, dear reader, many Democrats are indeed pro-choice, but when I say I am pro-life, I am not specifically or exclusively referring to abortion. I am pro-life in all senses of its meaning. To list a few, I am anti-war because war destroys life. I am anti-poverty because poverty deprives one of life. I support prison reform because prisons ruin lives. I am a proponent of stricter gun control laws and more preventative crime control methods because they will save lives, etc. I apologize for the hyperbole, but I think I conveyed my point—I value life.



Why?

Because God has given all of us life and we should therefore respect his creation. How could we not appreciate that which God has made and loves? God wants to see us thrive and lead abundant lives. Jesus made this clear when he said, "I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10).

In the Gospels, we see how, through Jesus, God's love is freely given and open to everyone. He eats dinner with "tax collectors and 'sinners,'"¹ and not just the righteous. He has compassion on the sinful woman who washes his feet with her tears.² He frees the woman caught in adultery instead of condemning her.³ He tells us to invite the "poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind"—the social outcasts—to dinner.⁴ He humbles himself and loves his disciples enough to wash their feet.⁵ Jesus lived a life of radical love, loving both the easy-to-love and those who were likely viewed by

culture as undeserving of his love. His love has never discriminated.

Because God is non-discriminating and loving, I aspire to be the same way. One way of showing equality and love in the context of government and politics is by supporting policies which give individuals equal opportunities. No race, gender, color, etc. is better than any other since God's creation is without fault; thus, no laws or policies (or lack thereof) should stimulate or contribute to the marginalization of any individual or group. I believe women should have equal rights as men. I support equal rights for homosexuals. I believe that immigrants, whether they be legal or not, should be treated with the same level of respect as American citizens and should not be exploited in the workplace. I also support affirmative action because I feel it brings about a measure of equality that would otherwise be difficult to establish due to legacies of discrimination.

Equal opportunities should also extend to lower-income individuals, which is a difficult concept to grasp in the United States' highly capitalistic economy. People with small or no incomes should neither be deprived of their basic human rights nor exploited. For example, under our current system of private insurance and government provision for very low-income people and the elderly, millions of Americans are excluded from health care. I don't think God would want those who are unable to afford health insurance, but who don't qualify for Medicaid, to forgo treatments for cancer or live without preventive care. Accordingly, I support universal health care initiatives. To combat exploitation, I support fair trade practices because they are the only just trade practices, and "the Lord is a God of justice."⁶ In fact, in Amos, God specifically addresses trade. He says he will not forget those who, in their business practices, were "skipping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with wheat."⁷ God makes it clear in this passage that he abhors the use of methods which defraud producers, inflated prices which allow the powerful to receive the profits while the poor receive less than they deserve, and the mistreatment and devaluing of poor producers. These are just a few of the equitable practices that Democrats typically support and that I support as well.

In the Bible, God is unambiguous in his hatred of injustice, especially injustice that harms the poor. Thus, I care deeply about advocating for the poor. Poverty is the most pressing issue of our time, yet many Christians fail to recognize the importance of it, as they tend to focus on the so called "moral issues," such as gay rights and abortion, but these are not the only moral issues out there! I share the same sentiment as Tony Campolo who said, "I'm dismayed that even though Jesus never mentioned homosexuality, somehow it's become a defining issue of our time. Why, when the Bible has just a few verses about it and 2,000 verses about helping the poor, do I always hear about this issue whenever I tune in to a Christian radio show?"⁸

In the United States, ownership of wealth is heavily skewed. For example in 2001, the wealthiest one percent of the nation dominated 33.4 percent of the wealth, and the next 19 percent of the nation controlled 51 percent, leaving just 16 percent of the wealth for the bottom 80 percent of the nation.⁹ In order to mend this injustice, we need to reform how the economy is run. We cannot keep allowing the economy to favor the rich and forget the poor. In the Bush Administration's 2001 and 2003 tax cuts, for example, the bottom 80 percent of income earners received only 28 percent of the total tax savings, while the top 20 percent received 72 percent!¹⁰ Trickle down economics does not work, and it certainly doesn't help the poor. In addition to tax reform, we need to have more regulation in the market so that this wealth gap does not keep increasing. In fact, I would argue that we need to look to economic paradigms other than pure capitalism because inequality and exploitation are necessary for capitalism to function.

The final issue which I will address is certainly a hot topic today: war. I am a pacifist, and therefore, do not support or condone violence of any kind, including war, even if said violence is supposedly for a "good" cause. Now, it is certainly debatable whether or not the motives behind the Iraqi war are good, but even if the rationale behind the invasion of Iraq (the supposed existence of weapons of mass destruction) was legitimate and not just a façade to further U.S. interests, there is no legitimate excuse for violence and killing. The apostle Paul said, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."¹¹ Jesus taught us that peacemakers are blessed¹² and that we

conflict, violence will not even be necessary.

Christians should advocate peace, not support the terror the U.S. is inflicting on citizens, not just of Iraq, but of other U.S. occupied countries around the world—terror that is leaving children dead in the streets, tearing families apart, and depriving people of the greatest gift God has given them, life. Around the world, the United States is known as a Christian nation, so when we wage war on others, we are putting Christianity's reputation at stake. By engaging in violence, we encourage the world to believe that Christianity is spiteful, vengeful and bloodthirsty, not loving, forgiving, and peaceful.

God is a God of justice. He loves us all equally. He gave us all life and wants to see us thrive. He loves peace. He hates injustice. Therefore, how could I not want health care to be available to all citizens? How could I support economic policies that steal from the poor? How could I not support equal rights for all? How could I be judgmental? How could I support a war that is vainly contributing to the deaths of thousands of God's children? I feel that the Democratic Party is the better promoter of justice, and as a Christian, that is why I vote blue. Now, I just hope I don't trip as I climb down from my soap box.

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should turn the other cheek.¹³ Jesus did not support violence. When a mob came to arrest him and Peter defended Jesus by sword, cutting off one of the mob member's ears, Jesus told Peter, "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword."¹⁴ Violence is not necessary to solve problems. There are many successful

examples of non-violent resistance movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement in America. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Nonviolence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him."

In addition to engaging in non-violent resistance, we must look at the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, that lead to war. In his book, *The End of Poverty*, Jeff Sachs writes, "Since September 11, 2001, the United States has launched a war on terror, but it has neglected the deeper causes of global instability. The \$450 billion that the U.S. will spend this year on the military will never buy peace if it continues to spend around one thirtieth of that, just \$15 billion, to address the plight of the world's poorest of poor, whose societies are destabilized by extreme poverty and thereby become havens of unrest, violence, and even global terrorism."¹⁵ By addressing the sources of

LESSONS LEARNED

Funmi Adewale

FROM BIOLOGY

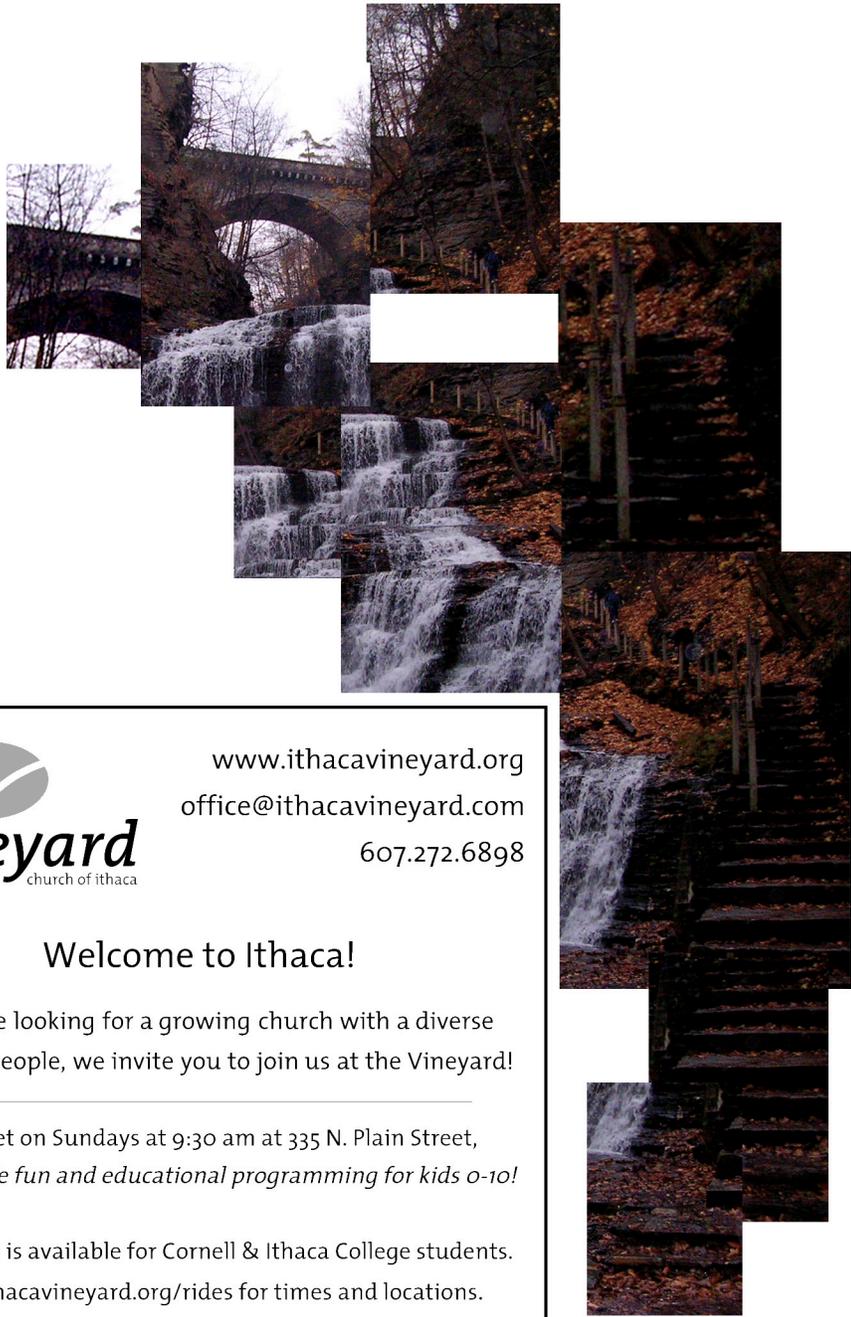
Sitting in one of the study alcoves in Duffield, I searched desperately for any distraction to draw me away from my readings. Not that I don't find metabolism fascinating (I'm actually not being sarcastic), but I really didn't feel like reading the twenty plus pages that lay ahead of the one I was on. Page 151. Enzymes. *Ughh!* Ready to escape to an exciting game of Minesweeper, my eye caught the words in bold: activation energy. "The initial investment of energy for starting a reaction..." I must say, despite the topic sentences and introductory paragraphs that overwhelm the thirteen hundred page book, Campbell's Seventh Edition of "Biology" is truly genius.

I wondered why God would create such a thing as activation energy. Wouldn't it just be easier if every reaction occurred spontaneously? Or if I could graduate summa cum laude from Cornell University with a full ride to Harvard Law School without having to glance at a single book? Or if Jesus didn't have to die for us to receive the gift of eternal life? In the beginning, why did God do the work of creating the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1)? Well, I'm not a philosophy major, but I think one reason rests on the fact that God is just, and justice requires that consequences be based on actions. I mean, think about it. If everyone received wages without having to do work, how would we defend someone cheated out of their wages?

Beyond that, I believe God values hard work because it's rewarding. After making the first cell complete with DNA replication, transcription and translation capabilities, God probably sighed in

satisfaction and thought to himself, "That's pretty frickin' awesome." I'm guessing our parents feel the same way. If they hadn't sacrificed their money, time and gametes to produce and raise us, they wouldn't have been as proud when we opened that admissions letter from Cornell. In addition, the rest God engaged in on the seventh day was meaningful. Think about it: if there was no work, there would be no rest. Sure, every moment would technically be spent resting, but then, would we even understand the concept of rest? Cornell students would finally have access to the sleep we love so much except, we wouldn't be able to love it anymore. On the other hand, Ecclesiastes 5:12 reads: "The sleep of a laborer is sweet." I'm sure you can attest to this. Sure, that chapter in Campbell and Reece is brutal, but the six hours spent sleeping after you're done are much more peaceful than the ten hours (I'm not exaggerating; it really does take four hours to read a chapter) you get from, as Twain advises, putting it off until tomorrow.

Anything worth anything requires some effort, and in fact, it's that effort that makes it worth something. And that's why Jesus needed to die, as opposed to God just pardoning all of us. If our lives were exchanged for nothing, then that would mean that in God's eyes, we are also worth nothing. But God found us so valuable that He was willing to invest the life, death, and resurrection of his only son, Jesus Christ for our eternal lives. In a sense, Jesus is the enzyme that allows us to overcome the activation energy in our lives and enables us to transform from our current reactant state of separation from God to a finished product state: eternal unity with God.



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