

No Quarter November

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NQN, Part Deux

Well, here it is, November once more. Many of you know the drill since I did this last year. But mark, you only know the drill if I do the same basic thing I did last year, which I *intend* to, but you didn't necessarily know that, did you? And on top of that, some of you are new.

Here's the deal. I do understand that I write provocatively from time to time. But there are different ways to be provocative. For example, there is the cudgeling style that might be employed by one of the Nephilim laying about him on every side with a Juvenalian quarter staff. There is no real nuance in that kind of mayhem. Then there is the little Horatian pinprick wound made by one of those dentistry tools, that thing with the little tiny wire on the end of it. That does have nuance and subtlety. My difficulty is that my tone—whenever I shift gears away from my standard oleaginous docility—is Horatian, and yet a number of people tend to mistake it for the quarter staff treatment.

So what I usually try to do is this. I (*usually*) know if something is going to go over big, and so I take care to pack, nice and tidy like, a number of disclaimers and qualifications early on in the piece, usually in the second paragraph. These anticipatory qualifications take care to inform the world that, “no, I don’t believe that all women are stupid,” for example. I have to make this kind of qualification because it is possible that I am about to maintain, in the course of my upcoming argument, that most men are taller than most women. This, naturally, opened me up to the charge of maintaining that all women are stupid. I try to anticipate such things, and disavow them beforehand.

Of course, with a certain class of critic this careful approach does not work at all. They blow right past my qualifications, *as though they didn’t even exist*. And then what have I done? I will tell you what that does. It exasperates those readers who have followed me for years, and who by this point could almost write my qualifications for me. These poor souls dance in place, they yell at the ceiling, they shake their forefinger at the computer screen, and all for naught. There I go again, qualifying my position, as though someone were reading carefully.

Except for November. This November, just like last November, I might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. I will just say what I think. I will not try to anticipate any blowback outrage, and I will not hedge any of my bets. But this is not really my version of Rand Paul’s celebration of Festivus, where he “airs his grievances.” No, the grievances are always aired. That part is dialed in over twelve months. What is new is that for one month I will treat my most hostile critics to one full month of confirmation bias. I will write me the way they read me. Will it make any difference? Not a bit, except to my friends, who have been telling me how much they are looking forward to November.

CHAPTER ONE

Inerrancy as the Queen Mum of Evangelicalism

Secularists scoff at Bible. Postmodernists sneer at the metanarrative for not being their own. And liberals cherry pick what *they* find to be of lasting spiritual value, according to the canons of the very latest contagions from the academy. And in the face of such manifest unbelief, conservative inerrantists draw themselves up to their full height in order to *pretend* to believe the Bible. And of course, the appearance given by such stated conviction also provides an appearance of courage, which was perhaps the point.

Inerrancy is the queen mum of evangelicals—honored, respected, and praised in the abstract, while entirely ignored when it comes to practical obedience. Ignored, that is, unless it is one of those special holidays where she is trundled out onto a balcony to wave at her loyal sons and daughters below. Correction: make that her disloyal

sons and daughters. Folks are willing to show up periodically to be waved at by the Chicago Statement, but that is the full extent of their commitment. Inerrancy appears to have nothing to do with issues like authority and obedience. Inerrancy is only there to beam at us while we continue to do whatever we took it into our heads to do.

Cooking for Pigs

Let us suppose—and these dark days it is not that big a suppose—that you wanted to advance some godforsaken pig’s breakfast in the name of Jesus, and there was an outcry from some of the predictable types—you know, the ones with a critical spirit and a censorious eye. And so it suddenly became your desire to get them to lay off. All you have to do is get out your tube of Critic-B-Gone, now available at Walgreens, and slather a bit of that “I am deeply committed to inerrancy” cream on your forearms. *Ta da*, as the kids say.

So long as you are committed to the inerrancy of the Bible you never have to do anything that it says.

This is why secularists and liberals, who are not committed to inerrancy, are often more to be trusted with what the Scriptures actually say because they are not ever stuck with defending the final results. They can say, for example, that the apostle Paul told certain busybody women to “go home” (Tit. 2:5) and wasn’t *that* just a laugh riot? So the unbeliever can just flow with the spirit of the age. He can simply walk along in step with that spirit, letting his arms swing free. The professed evangelical, on the other hand, has beads of sweat appearing upon his brow as he breaks out the usually reliable Greek word study. Unfortunately, he has needed to rely on these things more and more as the madness of our age has been moving into its more frenzied and spastic stages. And speaking of stages,

what stage is it when your exegesis is flat on its back, heels drumming on the floor?

But fortunately, the word there in Titus is *oikourgos*, which one could perhaps even render as “bossy pants.” Indeed, Twila Fitzheast Simmons, EdD, has made precisely this application, both in her monographs and in her personal life.

The Law is Holy, Righteous, and Good

Fortunately for those engaged in this strategy of sanctified shiftiness, they can rely on massive amounts of biblical ignorance in the evangelical ranks. You can get away with a *lot* when nobody is reading their Bible. You hardly ever have to answer any questions.

As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are around you. You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn with you and their clans that are with you, who have been born in your land, and they may be your property. You may bequeath them to your sons after you to inherit as a possession forever. You may make slaves of them, but over your brothers the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another ruthlessly (Lev. 25:44–46, ESV)

Let us ask and answer some exegetical questions now, and try not to make any faces while we do this. Was it lawful and proper for an Israelite—let’s call him Jonathan Edwards, or perhaps even @johnhsather, just for grins—to buy an Amalekite for a slave? Further, was it lawful and proper for an Israelite to buy an Amalekite slave whose family had lived in Israel for three generations already? Why yes, it was. And if such a transaction occurred, what relationship would have then existed between the master and his slave? Would

it be appropriate to say that v. 45 says that the Israelite owned an Amalekite *as his personal property*?

“Let us continue,” the Sunday School teacher says, even though the eyes of the class are now the size of teacup saucers. Was it lawful and proper for whichever Jonathan to bequeath these slaves to his heirs and assigns? And how long was this state of affairs to last? Can we find the word *forever* in the text? Well, yes, right there in v. 46. So we are talking about a form of permanent slavery, is that correct?

Oh, but we have various devices to deal with this. We have our hand-waving strategies down pat. We say, and all together now, but that’s in the *Old Testament*. Okay, that is in the *Old Testament*. I knew that because I put the reference down. It is from *Leviticus*. But was it, for that time, under those circumstances, holy, righteous, and good (Rom. 7:12)? This is a law, straight from God. Was it a good law? Or a bad law? Do you approve of it? Or does the holiness of God conflict with all your Enlightenment assumptions that you mistook for holiness?

That Amalekite slave, and his children, and his grandchildren, have all been dead for a long time now. But they all died in slavery. So I would like ask my fellow inerrantists to step up to the microphone and tell everyone—particularly the atheists, about whom a bit more in a few minutes—whether they approve of this law in its original setting. If you don’t, your commitment to inerrancy is what men of another age would have called a Joke. If you do approve of it, then let us pause for a few moments while all the evangelical thought leaders block you on Twitter.

Those guys crack me up.

CHAPTER TWO

Restoring Sexism: The Lost Virtue

So the Bible is a sexist book, and that fact alone should make Christians want to acknowledge that sexism has to be a virtue. And because the Bible has been assiduously ignored when it comes to these matters for lo, these many years, this should make us realize that it is also a *lost* virtue. Therefore it must be renewed, or restored, or recovered, or perhaps even reupholstered. But how?

This is a Football

A story is told, and is perhaps apocryphal, about Vince Lombardi talking to his players after they had gotten badly beaten one time. “Men,” he said, “It is time for us to get back to the fundamentals.” And holding up the ball, he said, “*This* is a football.”

When it comes to the optimal relationship between the sexes, I think we are pretty much at that point. Actually I mean that we are way *past* that point. What if the football identifies as six-year-old Asian girl? About the only thing the football couldn't identify as would be a Brooklyn rabbi, and that is because a pigskin isn't kosher, although there is reason to believe that we will soon overcome obstacles like that. But we are starting to stray from the point.

As we have now established that this is November, let me get back to the point and just say it. We have all been snookered. Sexism is certainly a sin against the gods of egalitarianism, but those gods are not gods at all. They are rather little wisps of aspirational fog floating off the sewage lagoon of late-stage secularism, and so we have no reason to feel bad about committing any such "sins." If they are not gods at all, then sins against their commandments are not sins at all.

The living God has given us His Word, and nowhere in that Word does it say that sexism is a sin against Him. That means it is not a sin at all. In fact, various things that our culture defines as sexist are enshrined as virtues in Scripture, and this means that Christians should stop their furtive glancing from side to side, and simply acknowledge that it is high time for us to recover the lost virtue of sexism.

But what would such a recovery look like? How might we recover our sexist heritage? How shall we know when we have recovered it? The heart and soul of a restored sexism is to recognize that God created men and women with different natures, and has commanded us to recognize those *natures* as different, and to treat men and women differently simply because they *are* men and women respectively.

There. I said it.

A Primer on Boys and Girls

Boys and girls are different. Men and women are different. The differences are not superficial or accidental, but rather are profound, extending from the tops of their heads down to the soles of their boots, or flats, as the case may be. The differences between them affect everything, and are found in virtually every aspect of their lives. Men and women both have ten toes, and men and women both have two kidneys, but that is about it.

Healthy cultures *budget* for these differences. Healthy cultures train boys and girls in terms of them. Boys are taught that they need to learn how to “do this” because they are boys. Girls are trained to do “certain things” because they are girls. Not only is sexism a virtue, but so is stereotyping!

I want to interrupt the proceedings in order to remind everybody that this is No Quarter November, and not No Kidding November. In other words, I am not skylarking here, but rather making a serious point. Well, actually, I am skylarking a little bit, but that doesn't affect the seriousness of the point.

What's at Stake

Up to this point, I dare say that quite a few conservatives are cheering me on in all such observations because they are currently being appalled by the androgynous end game—they are horrified by the insanities surrounding restrooms, and showers, and bio-males competing against girls, and all that kind of thing. And of course, I am against all of that too.

But you can't dial these things back “a little bit.” If the culture has gone insane, you can't call it a great reformation when you get it back to almost insane.

To make this point a little bit clearer, I am not just talking about Bruno not being able to shower with the junior high girls. I am also talking about women not being able to go to the Naval Academy or West Point. And I am saying that they shouldn't be allowed to apply simply because they are female. No other reason is needed.

Women are not supposed to be warriors, and so we shouldn't be training them to be warriors (Dt. 22:5). And I know that there will be numerous conservatives, and you can supply your own scare quotes there, who will be upset by this. And it is that kind of conservative who is the problem. This is the kind of conservative who never conserves anything except the most recent progressive achievements. After women were introduced into combat roles, it took Fox News about five minutes to start saluting our "brave men and women in uniform." And they also, without even blinking, routinely show footage of service members returning from deployment in such a way as to surprise their family members, you know, those heartstrings videos, and they make no distinction whatever between men returning from war and women returning from war. Here's mom, back from Afghanistan. If that doesn't make you sick and angry, then you are an essential part of the problem.

The Mirror of Nature

Upon occasion traditionalist conservatives will make an argument from nature, and it is an argument that resonates with those who still have some common sense hidden away in the basement. Last year when the federal government was engaged in that massive push, that big common sense buy-back, there were many—I have it on reliable authority—who ignored the federal diktat and who have kept quite a bit of unregistered common sense in their possession.

And this is why appeals to nature work for many people. They still use their common sense. But appeals to nature don't work with others, and so I want to walk through something here. How should we learn from nature?

Female robins build the nest, and male robins—when it comes to nest building—just horse around, helping only occasionally. If you spot a robin building a nest, the chances are excellent to outstanding that you are watching the female. And the chances are even better that “the patriarchy” had nothing to do with this arrangement. The female robin is not trapped in stereotypes derived from the 1950s. The female robin was not indoctrinated by the Victorians. That bird is simply doing *what it is her nature* to do.

Now if you started fuming to yourself over this illustration, then it appears to me that you have fallen into my trap. You were saying to yourself that you could go out into nature also, and you could find mother spiders that eat their young, or find female praying mantises that bite off the male's head while they are mating, and which consume the body later, or they go out and find the occasional gay penguin. You can't just look at nature, they say condescendingly, and derive ethical norms.

Speaking of the gay penguin thing, I find that whole operation to be gay. Wearing those shiny little tuxes, and walking funny that way, and so what did you expect? But I digress.

Here is the trap that I mentioned earlier. We tend to think that “learning from nature” means watching things that go on in nature, and then using that to justify us doing the same thing in our own lives. If we can find it in a BBC nature doc, then we get to do it ourselves. But that is not reading nature; that is rather a pronounced form of natural illiteracy. That is not how nature is to be read at all. Otherwise, the objection mentioned above would have a point.

CHAPTER THREE

A Word in Defense of Rosaria, If I May

So the first order of business is perhaps a bit of background. Rosaria Butterfield recently gave an interview,² and in the course of that talk she gave us all an insight, and as is the case with many such insights, there was a pointy end to it. Someone then took that insight from the interview and tweeted it out to what was supposed to be a welcoming and friendly cyber-world. My friend Toby Sumpter retweeted that, and got what can only be described as A Reaction.

Here is what Rosaria said:

Gay Christianity is a different religion. I'm not standing in the same forest with Greg Johnson and Wes Hill and Nate

2. "Interview with Dr. Rosaria Butterfield - From Victim to Guest: Sexuality, Intersectionality, and Hospitality," *Abounding Grace Radio Broadcast*, July 26, 2019, <https://www.agradio.org/resource/interview-with-dr-rosaria-butterfield-from-victim-to-guest-sexuality-intersectionality-and-hospitality>.

Collins looking at different angles of the trees, I'm in a different forest altogether.

This caused no small amount of official consternation, with all kinds of people calling upon Rosaria to repent of her slanderous evaluation of Johnson, Hill, and Collins. There has been, in short, a hubbub, a set-to, a fracas, an imbroglio, a brawl, a complication, an embroilment, a soap opera. And, as Toby Sumpter observed, the reactions ranged from a measured tutt-tutting to full-on meltdowns.³

So as I was reflecting on this statement from Rosaria, and I was jotting down some notes for this post, one of the things that occurred to me was how faithfully Rosaria was following in the footsteps of J. Gresham Machen. This is basically what he was arguing in his magisterial *Christianity and Liberalism*. Then I listened to the interview, and one of the first things that astute interviewer said was that this reminded him of J. Gresham Machen. On point and amen.

The point of Machen's book was to show that the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of liberalism were not the same spirit. They came from different places entirely, and they were going to different places entirely.

In a train station, it is possible for two trains to be lined up right alongside one another, looking for all the world like they are in perfect fellowship, one with another. But one train came from City A and is going to City B, while the other train came from City C and is going to City D. The superficial observer might look at the trains and the parallel tracks, sitting in alignment right there, and proclaim behold how good and how pleasant it is when the locomotives of harmony rest upon the true steel tracks of ecumenicity. But other observers—like Rosaria for instance—know how to read train schedules.

3. "Rosaria & Revoice in a 48hr. Petri Dish," November 4, 2019, <https://www.tobyjsumpter.com/rosaria-revoice-in-a-48hr-petri-dish/>