

No Quarter November

THE 2021 ANTHOLOGY

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C H A P T E R O N E

On Aspen the Lost Dog and Other Imponderables

I begin with a disclaimer, but not with the kind of disclaimer that is banned from these November observations of mine. Even though my adversaries believe I run everything in Moscow, I still do not constitute part of the Wilson legal defense team. These are the observations of someone who has had a seat on the fifty yard line for the whole game, and who has taken very few bathroom breaks. I do not speak on behalf of the guys in any legal way. I speak on behalf of wisdom and common sense only.

But ... if you have any friends or loved ones who have had a modicum of legal training, or if they have a basic biblical understanding of justice, and you would like to see their faces melt (assuming for some good reason), I would urge you to bring them abreast of the behavior of the City of Moscow over the last year. I am referring

to their deplorable behavior throughout what we have affectionately come to call Stickergate.¹

Perhaps you have been aware of the inexplicable and demented behavior of the city for some time now, referring here to the public facts of the case to date. But I am here with an *update*.

I would like to inform you that there is EVEN MORE inexplicableness going on, enough to make ourselves a 9 layer bean dip. The feature that gives it that spicy tang, not entirely appetizing to be frank, are the alternating layers of small town venality, corruption, small-mindedness, and incompetence.

If you can't wait, and want to just cut to the chase, jump down to the section that has RIPER in the header. But if you are patient, you might enjoy the build-up. Because this thing, I must confess, is fruity and overdone. The whole thing is fruity and overdone, and if one is going to start in on fruity and overdone things throughout the course of November, why not follow the lead of hipster restaurants and begin by sourcing locally?

You Already Knew About the Selective Prosecution

Moscow is a college town, and as a consequence, there are stickers on poles. There are stickers on poles everywhere. There are stickers celebrating indie bands, there are lost cat posters, there are yard sale adverts, along with totalitolerance stickers urging us kirkers to absent ourselves from the city limits, and the sooner the quicker. We are apparently harshing somebody's mellow, polluting the diversity vibe, by trying to live here in a way that provides some actual diversity. Nothing ruins a diversity vibe like differences.

1. "Moscow PD Buries Evidence in Sticker Case for More than a Year," *Moscow Report*, October 27, 2011, <https://moscowidaho.news/2021/10/27/moscow-pd-buries-evidence-stickergate/>.

CHAPTER TWO

The Great Justice Juke

Allow me to explain how the Marxist enemies of the gospel did it. This is what we should see if we are looking intelligently at the game film. And we *are* quite willing to look intelligently at the game film, are we not?

I want to provide you with this explanation because there was this two-dimensional movie-set Western town, see?, that we once *thought* to be a powerful evangelical establishment. Anyhow, that facade apparently had a couple of careening tumbleweeds blow the wrong way into it, and they knocked the whole thing over.

And so here we all are, looking over a forlorn studio lot, where many Oscar-winning conferences were once held. The commitment to the gospel in those conferences, provided that commitment stayed immediately behind the lectern, was something to behold. The acting was superb, and the cinematography enchanting.

How The Bad Guys Did It

The first thing the bad guys did was limit themselves (and all the rest of us) to “the gospel.” They declared themselves beholden to “gospel issues” only, and so they insisted we be *focused* on the gospel, or truly *centered* on the gospel.

Hey. If I could, may I say just a few things about that word *central*? I would simply like to mention one thing in passing ... every Christian heart loves to hear about the gospel being *central*, but there is another set of questions that really need to be raised and asked. Central to what? U.S. Central Command? Central how? Central Park? Central heating? Central in what ways? An axle with twelve or fourteen sturdy oak spokes attached to an equally sturdy rim is central, a decorative vase full of pansies is central to the coffee table, and a faculty lounge full of pansies is central to a historic Christian college. So what do you mean, my friend, when you say *central*? Are you referring to a connected center, or to a *disconnected* center? Are you referring to a supporting center, or to a decorative one?

Having established the pungency of the phrase “not a gospel issue,” they would then begin to chide conservative Christians for bringing up *their* issues of cultural concern—the kinds of things that are taught at those Christian worldview camps for high school seniors—because such things were not really gospel issues. What are you, a theonomist? What are you, a Trump supporter? *That* kind of mingling of politics with the gospel corrupts the gospel, or so the line went, and makes us a laughingstock before a lost, broken, and hurting world.

But *then* ... once the views of conservative Christians were excluded from consideration by definition, the second step in this pretty simple dance move was to declare “justice” to be a genuine gospel issue. After all, remember the *dikai-* word group! But, as I have cautioned multiple times, our current cultural conflagration is a battle

CHAPTER THREE

(L)et's (G)o (B)random—(t)o (Q)Anon +

If our generation got any fruitier, it would have to be acknowledged from every quarter that somebody had put way too many mangoes in the fruit salad.

This judgment of judicial fruitiness is a judgment that has fallen on the entire nation, and not just on parts of it. This includes millions of ostensible conservatives, whose opposition to this tsunami of crazy has to date been feeble, frail, sickly, enervated, insufficient, sapless, and just plain out of gas.

When a bunch of people suddenly go nuts, we can certainly give an accounting for *that*. There is such a thing as mass hysteria. There have been stampedes of various sorts down through history, and our 21st century street-smart sheeple have proven themselves to be no exception. There is a category for this kind of crazy, as the human race has known for centuries. If you want a vivid picture of this kind of mindless conformity, try to imagine a guy on a bicycle, with the

requisite bedhead, wearing a *Rage Against the Machine* t-shirt, riding down a bike path on a sunny day, out in the country, with two masks on. That just about says it all.

But what are we to make of the *sane* people, who know how bogus just about everything is, and who yet go along with it? As one wit once observed, it is all professional wrestling, everywhere. Climate change is André the Giant, the great reset is Hulk Hogan, and the war on COVID-19 is Dwayne “the Rock” Johnson. And too many Christians tune in to their favorite news program every night to see how the match is going. Too many Christians are inclined to think that when the big Vegas investor (who owns the arena) comes out of the stands to hit one of the wrestlers with a folding chair, he is there to “make a difference.” A champion has arisen to reform the sport! But he’s not there to make a difference. He is part of the show.

Decoding My Title

Let us begin by decoding the title of this iteration of my November installments. What exactly is meant by (L)et’s (G)o (B)random—(t)o (Q)Anon +? or LGBTQ+ for short? Interpreted, it means that the increasing callousness of our public discourse is going to do nothing but coarsen our nerve endings until certain QAnon ravings—up to and including that Kennedy *redivivus* business—start to seem almost reasonable by comparison. The comparison would be, of course, to whatever that ominous + sign is hovering over, which likely includes \$25 contributions to the Democratic National Committee, and other activities usually restricted to fever dreams, but only when the fever is over 103 degrees. Talk about crazy.

The idea that JFK Jr. is going to come back again is, of course, nuttier than squirrel poo. But it is a nuttiness that is *consigned* to the margins, as opposed to the nuttiness that is *assigned* to the center.

CHAPTER FIVE

Escaping the Cult of Nice

I want to begin by saying that evangelicals really are nice, and that this is their problem. The second thing to say is that the top strata of the evangelical leadership elite is also nice, and this is their weapon, their signature move, and the source of their deadliness.

Having begun this way, I must hasten to explain how the whole thing has gotten so muddled and confusing. The confusion arises because we tend to think of the whole thing in simplistic terms—as though we had the nice people over here and the nasty people over there.

Not so simple. What we actually have is a binary situation. Every group has a nice face and also a stern face, and everything depends on which direction they are facing. And so the ethics of the thing are not determined by whether or not you are nice, but rather by who you are nice to. We see a shepherd out in the pasture with the sheep. Our ethical evaluation of this man is not determined by whether

he is nice or not. Rather, if he is nice to the sheep and mean to the wolves, he is a good man. If he is nice to the wolves, and mean to the sheep, he is not a good man. If he is cruel to the sheep himself, he is a wolf himself, or else just a hireling (Jn. 10:12–13).

Throughout this post, per my November commitments, I do not qualify anything. But if you just come here for the November fireworks, you can jump to the last section. But if you read through the whole thing, the last section will make better sense to you, and will be more than just eye candy.

Not Whether But Which

To review, an inescapable concept frames a dilemma in this way—not whether but which. It is not *whether* we will impose morality, but rather *which* morality we will impose. Will we impose a Christian morality or a secular morality? It is not *whether* we will discipline for certain behaviors in the church, but rather *which* behaviors we will discipline for in the church. Will it be the standards of Christ or the standards of the CDC? It is not *whether* we will live in a theocracy, but rather *which* “theos” we are willing to acknowledge as the supreme authority. What name is carved on our temples? Will we worship and serve the Father of the Lord Jesus, the God of Abraham, or will we worship and serve Demos, the god of the misbegotten mob?

And because we are supposed to be talking about the evangelical cult of nice, let us go there.

This niceness vibe has been advanced in such a way as to make conservative believers think that they have been attending churches that have real trouble disciplining for error. But ... *not whether but which*. In this world, it is absolutely necessary for every group that has defined boundaries to discipline for error, or for what they *consider* to be error.

CHAPTER FOUR

Obey Your Husband and Other Transgressive Ideas

As trendy as it may be to rage against the patriarchy, for progressive evangelicals, the key to doing this successfully is to rage against the exegesis, which is to say, to rage against the clear implications of the text.

I have been astonished at how often a plain statement of Scripture is simply backhanded in a discussion among Christians, as though the presence of raw unbelief (under the guise of anger, or hurt, or something) somehow settled a matter. And if you press the issue with such a person, the attitude expressed goes from contemptuous dismissal to one of white hot anger and indignation. The end of the affair is that the responsible exegete, who labored to determine what the text actually required of us, is dismissed as a hater and bigot, and is forced to begin thinking about what ministry in the Siberian camps might be like.

Compounding the irony, there are many passages of Scripture where the liberal exegete might be more trustworthy than the evangelical exegete. This is because the liberal is at liberty to tell us what the (bigoted) text says (*ho, ho, ho*), while the evangelical is employed on the faculty of an institution that requires that an annual pinch of incense be offered to the Doctrine of Inerrancy, as a way of placating the donors, and this means that the said evangelical faculty member is going to be stuck with the results of his exegesis. What to do, what to do! The liberal can tell us what Paul thought, and wasn't it quaint, not to mention hateful. At the same time, the progressive and very stuck evangelical has to affirm whichever apostle may have offended this time, but while maintaining that what he *akkchully* said was....

Let us take just one example of this. We shall consider the teaching of the apostles that Christian wives should be submissive to their husbands, and that it was necessary for wives to take care that they obey their husbands.

Let's Make It Plain, Shall We?

Paul teaches us that the older women in the church are supposed to instruct the younger women a number of things. Among the things he includes in the curriculum is the lesson on how to be *obedient* to husbands.

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. (Titus 2:4-5)

But now, in this enlightened era, we teach the younger women to reach for their dreams, follow their heart, and to not let anybody tell them what to do ... that the word of God not be blasphemed. We are wiser than Paul, as it turns out.

CHAPTER SIX

Atheism and Meaningless Black Lives

A lot of cyber ink has been spilled when it comes to responses and critiques of the Black Lives Matter movement. But it has to be said that many of these critiques, however good, have merely plucked leaves or branches off the tree. What I would like to do in this space is borrow a 28" Husqvarna chainsaw from John the Baptist, and have him show me how to lay something like that at the root of the tree.

Much of the tussling has been because normal people want to say something sweet and reasonable, like *All Lives Matter*, and they point out that it follows necessarily that black lives would also matter, being a subset of all lives as they are. The response to this claim is that white supremacists are plenty clever enough to nip in and get control of any kind of All Lives control panel, and do so in such a way as to perpetuate the inequities between whites and blacks, which means that, at the end of the day All Lives Matter would turn into some version of All Lives Matter, but Some Don't Matter as Much.

Thus to say anything like this is to betray that you don't know what the Black Lives Matter people are talking about, not even a little bit.

And, I must say, if we all agreed that Jesus rose from the dead, they might have a point in there worth considering and discussing. But we don't share any kind of transcendental commitments, which means that all these pretended advocates of justice have simply surrendered the field. We still might dispute with one another, but the dispute doesn't signify. It just means that we are dogs yapping at each other endlessly at midnight.

I say this because the founders of Black Lives Matter were basically atheistic Marxists, which means that their actual position necessarily reduces to No Lives Matter. And by atheism here, I mean both atheism proper and functional atheism—where there may be an appeal to tiny gods that can fit on a tribal shelf. These are arbitrary gods with no transcendent authority and ultimately, the ramifications will be the same. We need to look at them straight on.

One of those ramifications is a helpful explanation of the irrational black rage we see exploding all around us. All of it is just naked envy of the successes of what they call white supremacy, but I am getting a little ahead of myself. Someone needs to tell me to cool my baby jets.

Pharisaical Atheism

One of the things I have noticed in my interactions with atheists is the fact that they are very good at getting themselves into a fever pitch of moral indignation. It is one of their signature moves. Hitchens used to do it, Dawkins does it, and Harris does it. They banish any and all possible grounds for any kind of moral evaluation at *all*, and then they wheel on you, jowls quivering and anger in their eyes, like an archbishop who just found a couple of painted ladies in the choir loft.

CHAPTER SEVEN

This Carnival of Dunsical Folly

As everyone in the world knows by this point, last week a Wisconsin jury acquitted Kyle Rittenhouse on the charges that had been brought against him. This was a sober, sane, and necessary judgment, and I was really grateful for it. It truly was an instance of the jury system working the way it ought to—despite the mobs outside the courtroom.

Having said that, we need to consider the reasons for all of this. Exactly how did we get into this position? I am referring to our place here at the head of the main parade for this carnival of dunsical folly, and how are we expected to get down off of these stilts? And how do we get these ten-foot silk and very purple pantaloons off?

How Then?

About the only plausible criticism I have heard that can be laid against Kyle Rittenhouse comes in the form of a question. What was

he doing down there in Kenosha in the first place? How many of you parents are willing to send *your* 17-year-old off to the deadly riot armed with an AR-15? I myself have voiced this (mildest of) criticisms in the recent past, while then moving on to say that I thought that, once he was there, Kyle acquitted himself well.

But...

But as I have been pondering this cultural demento-moment of ours further, I think I might actually want to retract that criticism, or at least qualify it into oblivion. This is the spirit of November, is it not? Not only do we not make qualifications, we even remove some that had been previously made.

A Porridge of Platitudes

We need a theology of civic unrest. What is required is a theology that guides us when times are peaceful, and one that guides us when times are tumultuous. In case you hadn't noticed, *our* times are among the tumultuous ones, and that highlights the fact that we need a theology that enables us to tell the difference between the two. I say this because a large number of our Christian leaders are persisting in acting as though the church is ministering during a placid time of transition—say, from the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower to that of JFK, instead of where we actually are, which is at the stumbling, staggering, and drunken transition from Caligula to Claudius to Nero.

In the aftermath of the Rittenhouse verdict, I did a little search online. Not an exhaustive search, mind you, but a little search. If I missed something, please let me know. But I took the phrase “reaction to rittenhouse verdict,” and prefaced it with “erlc,” and “9 marks,” and “the gospel coalition,” and came up with what should be described as kind of a goose egg. It was as though they were able to cook for all the troops so long as we were content with the porridge