

Wednesday May 9, 2012

It's all Adam and Eve's fault

By Jim Taylor

On the first truly warm day of spring in this part of the continent, I went out weeding my garden. I don't enjoy weeding. I consider weeds about as loveable as Republicans. Or fundamentalist preachers. Or pre-recorded telemarketing messages. Sorry about that -- weeds tend to get my dander up about all kinds of things that bug me.

Like China. What is it about China that weed roots find so attractive?

I have a sure way of telling which green things are desirable plants, and which are weeds. If I gave it a good sharp tug, and it comes out easily, it was a plant. Past tense.

Real weeds never come out that easily.

Last summer, I bought a wonderful new tool, made by Fiskars. It has prongs that jab down into the earth to grab an entire dandelion by the throat. It has a long handle that provides lots of leverage.

There's enormous satisfaction in heaving on that handle and feeling a dandelion's tap root scream in protest as it lets go of its links to the evil socialist empire on the far side of the world.

"The Fall" of all Creation

I blame weeds on Adam and Eve.

Weeds, you see, are a direct consequence of what theologians call "The Fall." Like tornadoes, blizzards, and volcanos, noxious weeds didn't exist in the original Garden of Eden. Read the Bible and see for yourself – there's no mention of any of those in the Creation story of Genesis.

These complications came into being only after Adam and Eve got banished from the Garden for disobeying God's explicit command. God told them, "Don't bite that apple!" But they did, and immediately realized they were naked.

Which, naturally enough, led to Eve getting pregnant.

So God evicted them from their earthy paradise to a land of privatized health care, so that Eve could have babies and Adam could pay for them by the sweat of his brow.

Of course, there had to be labour for Adam's brow to sweat over. So, since agriculture was the only industry available, God invented weeds. Also tornadoes and earthquakes and floods, just to make sure Adam and Eve could never kid themselves they had created their own version of paradise.

As a conservative Christian once explained to me, when Adam and Eve fell from grace, the whole of Creation fell with them.

Someone to blame

That's why I'm confident that weeds were not part of God's original plan for this world. If Adam and Eve hadn't been disobedient, we wouldn't have weeds at all. Apple trees would not need pruning. Dorothy would never have been blown into the Land of Oz.

And a merciful God would not have had to invent RoundUp.

I haven't figured out yet how mosquitoes fit into God's divine design. But I'm sure they're also connected to The Fall somehow. Along with climate change and stock indexes.

Fortunately, a merciful God gave us someone to blame for everything that goes wrong. We don't have to worry that we might have contributed, by our own actions, to any of the calamities that afflict us.

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YOUR TURN

Rather to my surprise, three local people stopped me on the street to thank me for the column about God not needing passwords. Among the e-subscribers, Charles Hill and Sally Stoddard both said "Bravo!" or similar.

Mary-Margaret Boone wrote, "I was recently cornered by a large 'P' pentecostal minister who asked if we United Church folks believed that people did not necessarily have to follow the salvation of Jesus Christ to get to heaven and to God. After some clarification about what his question was, about I responded that as a Christian I follow the message and direction of Jesus but I do not believe that everyone in the world has to convert to Christianity to find the way to God. That did not sit well with him, so I pointed out two very similar statements from widely differing theological perspectives -- one from Teresa of Avila, medieval Roman Catholic mystic, and one from Gandhi, an Indian Hindu -- that essentially said, 'One God, many paths.'

"None of us has exclusive rights to the password!"

Jim Johnson mused, "I wish there was a password that would guarantee that God was getting my message. I was taught all my life that it was important for me and for God, to pray to (communicate with) God so we could build a relationship, that God would hear my prayer and answer 'yes', 'no', 'later'. Communication flows two ways -- I never experienced this with God. I expect that 'devout' Christians will point out that the problem is not with God but with me, and from their perspective they are correct. From my perspective I now believe that prayer is a waste of time."

Two of last week's letters were continuations of the discussion on childhood mourning, from the week before.

Paul Harvie commented, "I remember the grief I had when my mother died. We were in the hospital and I went down the hall to see her [only to find that] she had passed away ten minutes before I arrived."

Joa Lazurus recalled "growing up in a military family and moving an average of every 18 months. Your column affected me in an unexpected visceral way, and leaves me wondering [how] who I am has been affected by [that experience]."

PSALM PARAPHRASES

This Sunday is celebrated in most churches as Christian Family Sunday (and in the secular world as Mothers' Day. I had that in mind as I paraphrased Psalm 98.

1 How different God's creation is from human society.
The clamor of human conflict creates a cacaphony

like orchestras competing with their conductor.
Dysfunctional families sacrifice their favorite songs,
And nations murder each other's melodies.
2 But God plays other tunes.
3 The colors of nature never clash with each other.
4 In a garden, every shade of leaf and flower joins a joyous chorus;
bare branch and bonsai provide a counterpoint
to balance the beauty of blossoms.
5-6 In the depths of the jungle,
the sounds of termite and tiger weave a wondrous harmony;
eerie descants echo through the ocean's deeps.
The pulse of life throbs in every cell,
and the seasons swell and ebb away.
7-8 From the farthest galaxy to the tiniest atom,
all creation dances to honor its choreographer.
9 God applauds each performance.
But God detects the discords, too.
And God does not applaud.

YOU SCRATCH MY BACK...

If you know someone else who might like to receive this column regularly via e-mail, send a request to jimt@quixotic.ca. Or, if you wish, forward them a copy of this column. But please put your name on it, so they don't think I'm sending out spam.

For other web links worth pursuing, try

- David Keating's "SeemslkeGod" page, www.seemslkegod.org;
- Isobel Gibson's thoughtful and well-written blog, isabel@traditionaliconoclast.com
- Alan Reynold's weekly musings, punningly titled "Reynolds Rap," write reynoldsrap@shaw.ca
- Wayne Irwin's "Model T Websites." a simple (and cheap) seven-page website for congregations who want to develop a web presence <<http://www.modeltwebsites.com>>
- Alva Wood's satiric stories about incompetent bureaucrats and prejudiced attitudes in a small town are not particularly religious, but they are fun; write alvawood@gmail.com to get onto her mailing list.

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You can access several years of archived columns at <http://edges.Canadahomepage.net>.

I write a second column each Sunday called Sharp Edges, which tends to be somewhat more cutting about social and justice issues. To sign up for Sharp Edges, write to me directly, at jimt@quixotic.ca, or send a note to sharpedges-subscribe@quixotic.ca
