

OPINIONS

The Bible provides a solution for the environmental crisis



Art vonLehe
Unified Solar Columnist

The environmental crisis is undeniable. The water, air and land are polluted. We even contaminate our own food.

The largest extinction period ever is now, with human activity to blame. Global warming threatens the entire biosphere. The list goes on. Yet, Christians are called to put nothing before God, not even His creation.

Consequently, many environmentalists have seen the Bible as the root of our present dilemma. The famous article, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis," argues a transcendent God removes Christians from nature, allowing for easy exploitation thereof.

Rarely are the ecological implications of Greek and Roman philosophy considered. However vast the Greco-Roman impact, Christianity repeatedly receives the charge of guilt.

The frequent response is the adoption of a pantheistic worldview. Pantheism, which equates Creator with creation, is repeatedly emphasized as a foundation for an environmental ethic.

Pantheism leaves no real place for man or any individual part of the universe. This view emphasizes no more importance on humans than on a rock.

In theory, we are left with no placement. In practice, one may find alienation from an indifferent and cruel, natural world.

As part of the natural world, humans are capable of the most depraved and selfish behavior toward each other and nature.

Counter to the pantheistic goal of elevation of nature, man and nature arrive at an equal depth, not height.

The Bible offers the answer to the environmental crisis.

Along with grace (salvation through God), which uniquely sets Christianity apart from all other religions (salvation through self), the Christian foundation for environmental stewardship is set apart as well.

The notion of human dominion over earth has been historically misinterpreted.

The true translation from the Hebrew is "Godly dominion," which denotes a care for creation.

We have a serious responsibility to care for the earth, not a thoughtless freedom to destroy it.

We are a part of creation in that we are created ourselves, but we, made in the likeness of God's image, are also set apart from creation.

We are part of creation and simultaneously distinguishable from it, which is evident in our immense capacity to alter it.

We have the task of addressing nature with the same care as God, which requires the council of the Holy Spirit. This is not to be taken lightly.

In Genesis 9:8, God speaks to Noah saying, "I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature."

This covenant applies equally to mankind and nature.

Later, in verse 13, God refers to "the covenant between me and the earth."

So clearly, God values nature. It is important to Him.

The Bible repeatedly refers to nature. The book of Isaiah, in chapter 55, states, "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you, and all of trees of the field will clap their hands."

Luke 12:27 recounts Jesus saying, "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these."

Revelations 11:18, speaks of "destroying those who destroy the earth."

A challenge is now laid out for Christians and secular environmentalists alike.

For the Christian, there is a call to responsibility. This requires a change in views about nature and the way in which our lives affect God's creation that he cares for. It is time to hear out and respond to ecological concerns.

For the secular environmentalist, possibly burned by the church, there is a call to reconsider. Christianity has a responsibility toward the environment, and a call to action.

If you are honestly seeking the truth regarding Jesus, listen to his words.

It is written in Matthew 7:7, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Solution for Israel not found in violence



Glenn Sewell
Columnist

Avi Mechanic: It is sad you have chosen to make your argument against me personal one. I have a standing order not to answer a response, lest my character is made libel, like about me being some sort of pro-Nazi sympathizer. Shame on you.

First of all, do not compare me to Louis Farrakhan. I have neither loyalties nor relation to him, nor am I of his Muslim persuasion or beliefs.

Secondly, your idea to have the Palestinians forcibly assimilated into the surrounding Arab Nations is akin the all-white government of the 19th century United States insisting on the destruction, collection and displacement of Native Americans (called Indians) for the sake of self-defense and manifest destiny.

That same idea was used to enslave blacks. Isn't it nice that someone must first have a claim on a piece of land, in order to have the God-given human right to live there?

Thirdly, Mr. Mechanic, I am overtly aware of how many types of Jews exist, as well as how many types of Muslims exist (include the millions of white Muslims in the eastern European nations).

Fourth, I have every right to disagree with Israel, in regards to its treatment of Palestine, seeing as Israel has the bigger weapons, the most money and the greater means to annihilate the Palestinians, just as Nazi Germany decimated the Jews (a history no human should be proud of, as I have attempted- to no avail- to state before).

Your- along with several other people's- attention was not on my

words expressing the disbelief that all Jews agreed with Sharon, but on my statements in regards to Israel mirroring its own worst enemy from the past- Nazi Germany.

That hit a terrible nerve. There must be truth in it, somewhere.

Your anti-Arab statements reveal the very same mirrored hatred for any form of people or government that differs from your own religious belief.

Any nation has a right to defend itself from attack (including Israel and Palestine), but should never use that idea as an excuse to incur-militarily and religiously- upon another people.

You are no different than the one you call your enemy, Mr. Mechanic. I would have never called you, personally, a Nazi as you've done me. For anyone who knows my character, that idea is just as ludicrous as the idea of me being anti-gay.

When I have to call myself an American, Mr. Mechanic, and then deal with the same kind of imperialistic attitudes that enslaved my father's ancestors, nearly obliterated my mother's people (the Blackfoot and Cherokee tribes) and disenfranchised my entire heritage nearly up to present day, it is difficult seeing the positive nature and principles for which our very government was founded. That is it, however.

This government was merely founded upon principles of speech and religious freedom and self-determination.

However, it has been a long and difficult struggle, judging from the attitudes toward different peoples, life ways and religions, for the

United States of America (the bloody bloated empire that it is) to actually conduct itself in a manner befitting our original Constitution.

My concern in life is not about the Jews, the Blacks, the Native Americans, the Palestinians or even the Europeans (or any other part of this planet I missed).

My concern is for all humanity. No piece of land, no matter how overrated by ancient, misogynistic, male-centered culture, is more God-given than another, Mr. Mechanic. Our entire home world was made by the same God(ess), no matter how many different forms or names She/He takes.

We all live on chosen land, and are all chosen people.

To suggest that only one group and one place is better than or has more significance over others is arrogant, racist, religiously intolerant and overwhelmingly destructive in every way.

You, and many others, somehow think a "Final Solution" type of fix (the expulsion you spoke of) over the Palestinian debacle will be the end all and be all of biblical prophecy.

I tell you this: That collection of stories has caused more grief, death and destruction on the face of this planet than anything else ever created by human hands, including the thermonuclear bomb.

I commend those who have found the spirit and the will to pull out the peaceful aspects of Judeo-Christian-Muslim beliefs. I call the situation with Israel and Palestine as I see it. A military solution WILL NOT WORK. A political solution WILL NOT WORK. The only thing that WILL WORK is for ALL OF THEM, ISRAEL AND PALESTINE, TO LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS AND COME TO PEACE IN COMPLETE AND TOTAL COEXISTENCE.

If you say it will not work, it is because you do not wish it to work, Mr. Mechanic.

My message goes the same for total pro-Palestinian groups that want nothing but the same, total war and destruction. Neither side will have that land, singularly. Both sides must come to peace within the land of ancient Judea or annihilate themselves totally. There are no other options. God is merely an observer of human actions, not an active participant in the mounting bloodshed, as so many of you want Her/Him to be.

The nation with the biggest guns and most money needs to be human enough and act first. Try first to return disputed lands, pull out of occupied territories and stop treating the Palestinians as second class citizens.

I might remind you that it was a Zionist teenager (working for whatever right-wing Israeli organization or group) that assassinated former Prime Minister Rabin on the eve of peace with Palestine. You've conveniently neglected to recall that fact.

Being that I will always be an American, whether living in Britain or North Carolina, I will always relish the fact I have a say in the matter and a choice.

I will not be told that I must support Israel (or anyone else, for that matter), lest I be some sort of anti-Semitic.

If that is how you feel, so be it. That is your God-given right.

It is not your right to libel my name, personally, however. Your defamation of my character, in order to support your stance, was uncalled for, Mr. Mechanic. I take legal issue with that.

There are those who have said, "thank God" for your comments against other nations of people, Mr. Mechanic.

To me, that is akin to thanking God for allowing the continuation of religious and racial war, at the eternal expense of everlasting peace.

Be well on your trip to Israel, Mr. Mechanic, and go very carefully.

The Blue Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication. Letters should not exceed 300 words.

Letters for publication should also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA.

Sorry, we will not accept submissions of anonymous letters to the editor.

The deadline for letters is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you may send it to *The Blue Banner*, Karpen 244, One University Heights, Asheville N.C. 28804 or to banner@unca.edu. Please include your name, contact information, classification and major/position.

Blue Banner Editorials

The passing of the baton

As the semester ends and *Banner* staff members graduate or prepare for graduation, the time to pass on old titles to new individuals is here.

The Blue Banner would like to congratulate the following new editorial board for the Fall 2002 semester.

■ Rachel Crumpler-Editor in Chief

■ Ed Fickle-News Editor

■ Stuart Gaines-Features Editor

■ Elizabeth Moe-Managing Editor

■ Whitney Setser-Copy Editor

■ Jennifer Dintsch-Advertising Manager

■ Jason McGill-Circulation Manager

Congratulations to Stuart Gaines, Lana Coffey, Sarah-Vance Goodman and Shelley Broglin, who all received awards for articles they wrote for *The Blue Banner* over the past semester.

We would also like to congratulate fellow staff members Luke Knox, Shelley Broglin, Rae Stephens and Scott Adams on their graduation from UNCA May 18.

Nothing in the Opinions section necessarily reflects the opinion of the entire *Blue Banner* staff, advisor, or the university faculty, administration or staff. Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of a majority of *The Blue Banner* editorial board.