

SPECTRUM

Metanoia by John Valk

Between Myth and Reality

I attended a lecture last Thursday evening in Dineen auditorium. The speaker, Dr. Jamal Badawi, sought to highlight the reality of, and dispel the myth about, Islam. That is an important undertaking today, for any religion. Too much distortion, even blatant misrepresentation, exists, not infrequently due to media bias or ignorance.

Nonetheless, a fine line often distinguishes myth from reality. Some feel the distinction can be maintained if the "facts" are presented carefully. But "facts" always require interpretation, and interpretation has much to do with faith or belief: about the things of nature, or the nature of things.

I heard it said once that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating." The truth or validity of something—particularly a faith or belief—rests in how it serves us: how it explains our experience, how it helps us as we live, how it liberates us from injustice, oppression and distortion.

I raise this in response to one of Dr. Badawi's premises. Though I was quite pleased to hear what he said, even agreeing with some of it, I wonder if what he himself brushed off as myth might not in actuality be real.

Dr. Badawi claimed as real that Jesus was a prophet, a wise teacher and a healer of the sick. But he denied as real that in Jesus' life, death and resurrection God did something definitive for humanity: past, present and future. He claimed as myth that Jesus is the Christ, the One who, through complete trust in and reconciliation with God, provides healing and freedom for all humanity. Further, he claimed as myth the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Of course, Dr. Badawi is not alone in making this claim. All varieties of religious traditions, atheists and agnostics support him. And, so generally does our society, at least to the extent that it seeks to be secular. It may encourage us to maintain such a belief as real, but only for our personal or private, individual or collective lives.

Dr. Badawi recognises, however, that religion is more than a purely personal or private matter. Whatever one believes regarding life's ultimate concerns cannot be confined to the private realm. Answers to life's most profound questions—"who am I; what

is the meaning and purpose of (my) life; what is moral, ethical and just"—cannot be relegated to our "after-hours" discussions or pursuits. They impinge on our very thoughts and actions, including questions such as "why am I at university?"

No doubt these questions are religious. Perhaps that explains why we are generally not taught or trained to raise and respond to them outside of church, synagogue or mosque. But that is hardly satisfying, and reflects a failure of our education. Might it explain, as some have exclaimed, the spiritual, moral and ethical vacuum in our education?

Universities exist, at least historically, to search for "truth". Prior to the last century, most knew what the truth was, and spent their time coming to better understand it. Today the onus is on searching. Hence the "information age." But, in all our inundated information, where is our firm foundation? In what are we anchored? Is the search endless; is the objective the search? Or can we also discover the object of our searching; something not made by our own minds or hands?

The early followers of Jesus found the object of their searching. They discovered something real for life. They slowly came to understand that meaning and purpose was inextricably linked to this figure. Then they took a radical step. They began to shape their lives according to what he had said and done. They discovered that it did bring meaning, healing and liberation, to all areas of their lives. They came to write about it, in considerable detail, explaining all the while why it was so.

We are left with the written witness of the early Christian community. We can argue or debate about that witness: who said what, and where, and whether it is to be interpreted literally, symbolically, or allegorically. But at the end of the day we are left with the same notion: are the Scripture writers conveying myth or reality? Is their claim about Jesus truthful or fanciful?

We are also left with something else: the present generation of that early Christian community. This community lives the claim of the early writers, its own foibles notwithstanding. Could it be that they have recognised reality rather than myth? Could it be that they have uncovered something valuable, and that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating?"

no one knows i'm gay by darren elliot

In a recent conversation with a friend and acquaintance, the person made the following statements. "I don't want to hear what goes on inside anyone's bedroom. Your sexuality is your business, I don't want to hear about it." I'm tired about hearing about all this gay stuff, it's all everyone's ever talking about. I keep hearing GALA this and GALA that..."

I will first address these comments by saying that if everyone had this healthy attitude of sexual indifference, most of the problems that gay/lesbian/bisexual persons face would be nonexistent. What this person fails to realize however, is that these attitudes are not universally held by all individuals. The attitude of letting bygones be bygones and of realising that ones sexuality is a personal matter is what I am trying to promote. At the same time however I look forward to living in a society where I can live honestly and openly. Where I can live with my spouse and not need to pretend that we're just friends in public so that others will feel comfortable; because others will feel comfortable anyway. Seeing a same sex couple will not be comparable to witnessing a heinous crime, as it seems to be today for some people.

Firstly, when have I ever described what goes on in my bedroom? Since it has been bought up, I think I'll discuss it now. Usu-

ally I lie down and go to sleep. Sometimes I read or listen to music. Just because I'm gay does not mean that I sleep around. I don't condemn those who do, it's simply not for me. (IN YOUR FACE NOW ????)

Secondly, my sexuality is my own business, you are right. Being my business, I have chosen to express it publicly with the hope of possibly making a difference to the lives of others. It is not for my own personal achievement that I disclose my personal life for all to read. Truly such disclosure could be a hindrance to my employment opportunities, a cause of interpersonal turmoil, an embarrassment to my family, and may even make me the most prime target for gay bashing at UNB. On the up side, it sure does keep life interesting! As for those of you who "don't want to hear about it", I have little sympathy. Poor you, it must be so disturbing to hear that gay people exist. It must be terribly difficult having to deal with such issues of diversity being "pushed in your face." My heart goes out to you. Hang on, I'm sure you'll cope.

Finally, you're tired of hearing about all this gay stuff. Yes, I'm sure it must be exhausting for you. And it's all that anyone's ever talking about? I have just one question in response to that comment: What colour is the sky in your world? Lavender, no doubt.



Forest Breeze

Tractors for Small Woodlot Harvesting

by Geoff Peters

Farm tractors have proven themselves for over 50 years as a cheap, effective way to remove small quantities of wood from a small woodlot. Their origin for this use no doubt traces back to the first farmers to have tractors who decided to save time and energy by using their machines to haul out firewood and/or small quantities of pulpwood. However, today, the farm tractor can be adapted and fitted with various pieces of equipment, making it a very useful and productive tool, but at the same time a relatively cheap piece of equipment.

In selecting a farm tractor, one has to consider many factors. How wide will skid trails be? How much do I want to spend? What size engine do I need? How much power do I need to run shaft-driven equipment? What kind of terrain will I be working in? The list of questions you should ask yourself is almost endless, but some basic things should be considered. A wide tractor has more stability, but also needs a larger turning radius, wider roads and skid trails. An expensive tractor will cost you in the short term, but in the long run replacing parts and wasted time may be too much bother if you buy a cheaper tractor. A tractor with less power may be lighter and more fuel efficient, but may be too gutless to skid large logs. Similarly, tractors with under 15HP PTO (power take-off) may be insufficient to operate some pieces of equipment you may require. Larger units are more stable in rough, hilly terrain, but may get sunk to the belly in soft ground. These are just a few options to consider when selecting a tractor to use in your logging operations.

Any tractor must be fitted with certain pieces of safety equipment before they even see the woods, or you are flirting with serious injury or death. Remember, even the best, largest, most stable tractors were still only designed for operation plowing a field or harrowing—and not skidding tree length logs. The most important thing to keep in mind is weight distribution. When skidding logs (only dragging one end of the log on the ground), the centre of gravity is just behind the rear wheels, making the front wheels very likely to suddenly come off the ground, and very easily turn the tractor over. This danger can be modified in a couple of ways. On heavier tractors, weights can be added to the front end to counter balance the force of the logs pushing downward. On all tractors, a suitable ROPS (roll over protection structure) or roll cage should be constructed. It must be strong enough that if the tractor turns over, the operator will not be crushed underneath the tractor. To ensure proper stability, the rear wheels can be weighted with chloride, which adds some stability, as does cast iron weights that can be bolted to both the front and rear rims. A steel plate of no less than 1/4" thickness should be bolted or welded to the underside of the tractor to prevent stumps or rocks from punching holes in the oil pan or transmission. When constructing such a piece of equipment it is important to remember that you have to have access to the underside of the tractor for repairs, so this plating is usually removable. Other parts of the tractor that need to be guarded include the valve stems on the tires, the radiator, PTO shaft, and the operators position. Tire chains are also an invaluable piece of equipment for working in soft ground, wet areas, or deep snow.

Again, I cannot stress the importance of remembering the primary function of a farm tractor, that for which it was designed—farm work. It is not a skidder, and can never be as versatile or manoeuvrable as a skidder, which is designed for use in the woods. The farm tractor is limited in several ways. Skidders have the weight and protection to drive over dead trees, smaller trees in the way, and large brush piles. Most farm tractors must have a relatively unobstructed skid trail, but the heavier the tractor, the more you can drive over. Farm trac-

tors can safely skid or haul a much smaller amount of wood than can a skidder. Of course these statements are "all other things being equal"—assuming the operator is not a maniac.

However, personally, I view farm tractors in a much more positive manner. They are relatively cheap, and cheap to outfit for woods use. They are relatively narrow and have small turning radii, and require only small trails on which to travel. They are versatile in their function—in slack time when they are not being used in the woods, they can be used for plowing snow, haying, plowing fields, harrowing, etc. There is also a wide range of forestry related implements available for tractors, most at a semi reasonable price. Forestry winches, which allow the user to winch from 100 to 200m, limit the number of skid trails needed to operate on a piece of ground. These winches are available new from places like Bremner Farms Ltd., and Island View Equipment for around \$3000, tax included, a very reasonable price relative to the price of most forestry equipment. These winches are very powerful, with anywhere from 3000 lbs pull to upwards of 11000 lbs pull for large tractors (40 HP or more on the PTO). Many of these winches come with a hinged but-plate, allowing the plate to be used for pilging logs up, much as a skidder can, while at

the same time giving ample ground clearance as the hinge allows the plate to ride up over high stumps. Another useful but very expensive piece of equipment is the "power trailer" with grapple loader. This unit is very useful in trailcutting operations or where wood has been pre-bunched at the side of a skid trail. These rigs usually start out at around \$20000 new, so not everyone will be buying one. They have the advantage of a log loader, approximately 2-3 cord carrying capacity, and the ultimate advantage, a power driven axle. The trailer is connected to the tractor PTO, via a gear box, to provide power to the axle of the trailer. The gear box allows the tire wheels to turn with the same speed as the tractor tires, in most gears. In a sense, this turns a two wheel drive tractor into a four wheel drive, or a four wheel drive tractor into a six wheel drive! This can be extremely useful in very muddy ground conditions, deep snow, or rough ground conditions, where pulling a large load could be very tricky with a two wheel drive tractor.

Anyway, these are just a couple of pieces of equipment that you can use on your tractor in the woods, which usually can pay for themselves with a little hard work. I hope this article has provided a little insight into a machine that is fairly cheap and very versatile!

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