



convert them, one must recognize that insulting the core values of person will inflame emotions. This doesn't justify violence, but it should lead us to recognize the care we must exercise in our speech (cf. James 3:1-12).

criminal but reprehensible, shameful, and disgusting. Such actions do not advance truth, demonstrate the attitudes of a Christian, or advance the quest for a better understanding of the world which God has created. At the same time, we must acknowledge that the words we use influence the actions of those around us. A religious conservative may be impugned for speaking of a "battle for the soul of America," yet a liberal can talk of "burying" an opponent or "running them off campus" and too often that is viewed as acceptable. In the same way that we as Christians cannot tell unbelievers that they are "stupid" and "unintelligent" then expect to

Religious Studies in State Universities. The social, religious, and intellectual environment of modern America has created an odd condition in many State-run colleges and universities. It is often very difficult for one who believes in the verbal inspiration of the Bible to hold a seat in a religious studies department in a major university. The liberal professors who are hired often feel as if it is their responsibility to "debunk" the religious views of young students. I encountered this personally long before I began preaching. In a course on the Old Testament, taught in a State college, the professor delighted in and emphasized arguments that sought to discredit traditional and historical interpretations of the Old Testament. I saw students who had attended Sunday Bible classes all their lives finding their core beliefs shattered. As their education advanced, you could watch the moral decay it had on these students. As Christians we must be aware of this and prepare to address it. If our children attend such classes we must prepare them for what they will encounter. As we teach prospects in the world we must recognize that this type of "religious education" may be the only exposure to Scripture some have ever known. If we are not prepared to counter it, we will find prospects who view our loving efforts to teach them the truth, as the feeble efforts of ignorant and backward "fundies."



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Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

ISSUE

14.50

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

December 9
2012

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope



Creationism & "Other Mythologies"

By Kyle Pope

The winter before I moved from Kansas to Amarillo, a controversy filled the news in that state that revolved around a former college professor I had when I studied at the University of Kansas. In December of 2005, Dr. Paul Mirecki, the chairman of the religious studies department, resigned as chair at the suggestion of his colleagues. Only days before, Mirecki was assaulted in outside of Lawrence, Kansas and hospitalized in connection with a controversy he had stirred up over the issue of evolution and creationism.

This all began to brew when the Kansas State Board of Education moved to allow criticism of the theory of evolution to be included in science standards for elementary and secondary schools. This action outraged the liberal elite, not only in Kansas but throughout the nation. That "backward Kansas" would dare question macroevolution, the sacred cow of the liberal academic worldview, was reprehensible and embarrassing to the academic liberals that fill so many state universities.

My association with Dr. Mirecki began in 1998 when I began work on my Masters thesis. Dr. Mirecki was not the head of the religious studies department then, but for two semesters he was my initial thesis adviser, working in conjunction with the Classics department. After that, I studied Coptic under him for two semesters. While I would not say that I knew him well, I feel that we had a cordial relationship with one another. He knew that I was a preacher and occasionally when our different views of Scrip-

ture became evident we expressed such differences with a good natured attitude towards one another. After I graduated, we communicated with each other by e-mail a few times, and he autographed a copy of a book he published on a Gnostic manuscript he translated called *The Gospel of the Savior*.

Although I knew Dr. Mirecki did not believe in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, it was not until the events of 2005 that it became clear the degree to which he rejected the biblical account of creation. Dr. Mirecki planned a course that was slated to be taught in

the Spring of 2006 entitled: *Special Topics in Religion: Intelligent Design, Creationism, and Other Religious Mythologies*. As might be expected, this very title, categorizing intelligent design and creationism with “Other Religious Mythologies,” infuriated many religious and political leaders throughout the state.

The initial response of the university was to suggest that the term “mythologies” did not necessarily address the validity (or invalidity) of such views, but was used simply of a belief system. This argument collapsed, however, on November 19, 2005 when Mirecki posted an e-mail to the online forum of a group known as the “Society of Open-Minded Atheists and Agnostics,” a student organization of which Mirecki acted as faculty adviser. In this e-mail, Mirecki called those who believe in intelligent design and creationism “fundies” (i.e., *Fundamentalists*) and told the group that a course depicting such views as mythology would be a “nice slap in their big fat face.” Mirecki even signed-off the e-mail, with the post-script: “doing my part to ‘tick’ off the religious right.”

When Mirecki’s statement became public, the fury over this came to a head. Politicians and religious leaders spoke out. The course was pulled, and Mirecki apologized, claiming, “I made a mistake in not leading by example.” He restated the importance of discussing differing viewpoints in a “civil and respectful manner” and took full responsibility for what he called an “ill-advised e-mail” which “unintentionally impugned the integrity and good name of both the university and my faculty colleagues.” Apparently this apology did not satisfy some in the community nor at the university. Early on the morning of December 5, 2005, according to Mirecki, two men forced his car to pull over in rural Douglas county and then beat his head and upper body with their fists and some type of metal object. It was shortly after this event that Mirecki resigned as chair. He still serves on the religious studies department for the university.

Observations

This unfortunate chain of events is now in the past, but it continues to offer some compelling insights and lessons.

“Mythologies.” Is it “mythology” to believe in intelligent design or creation? Webster defines a myth as “a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people.” By that definition, it is true that to call something “mythology” does not necessarily address the validity (or invalidity) of the account in question. However, in common speech, when something is called a “myth” the inference is that it is imaginary and not real. Webster’s third definition is, “a person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence.” Naming the course *acIntelligent Design, Creationism, and Other Religious Mythologies* clearly sought to use these definitions to advance the view that creationism is imaginary, while at the same time, acting as if the validity of the belief was not the issue. It became clear that was the issue all along. I’ve wondered since then what “Other Mythologies” were going to be addressed in the course? Would they discuss the myth that theorizes that order can come from disorder by chance? Perhaps they would have talked about the myth that something can come from nothing if given billions of years? What about the beloved myth that there can be enough positive mutations to produce the diversity of life that exists while leaving a species still capable of reproduction? Or my personal favorite, the myth that DNA, a molecule reflecting a complexity of programming more intricate than the most advanced computer program, could just sprang into existence one day? Each of these myths are all “unverifiable,” but I doubt that the course would have questioned these myths cherished by liberal academic elites.

“Fundies.” The term *Fundamentalist* has come to be broadly applied to anyone from Islamic extremists to even non-religious moral conservatives. Properly, it applies to a Protestant religious movement of the 19th century that published a statement of several “Fundamentals,” or religious doctrines they accepted in opposition to modernistic trends within liberal scholarship. Among these fundamentals were things like a belief in the virgin birth and the inspiration of Scripture. While today, many Protestants consider themselves

Fundamentalists, liberals often use this term in a derogative sense of those who they think are backward, close-minded, and ignorant. I am a Christian. I am neither a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew. I am not a *Fundamentalist* although I believe in the virgin birth, the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and the record of a six day creation as taught in the first chapters of Genesis. To class all who believe in intelligent design and creationism as “Fundies” is an inaccurate and insulting oversimplification.

Open-Mindedness? It is interesting to me that many who take such an aggressive posture towards those who believe the Bible consider themselves to be so “open-minded.” Wouldn’t an open-minded person want to look at all of the facts? Wouldn’t such a person be eager to examine his or her beliefs to verify their accuracy? If the worldview of these “open-minded” souls is so unquestionably sound, wouldn’t they be confident that it could withstand scrutiny?

“A Slap in the Face.”

If the physical assault against Dr. Mirecki was in fact motivated by some foolish, overzealous, advocates of creationism, I must say that such behavior is not only



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