



# Chronicles of Diversity

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## Our rights & our dusty responsibility

*And the LORD God formed  
man of the dust of the ground, and  
breathed into his nostrils the breath of  
life; and man became a living being.*  
Genesis. 2:7

### Good News!

As much of the church noted the pagan holiday of Easter, thanks be to God that the Resurrection was celebrated by historic Christianity. This resurrection gift took place far beyond our experience of relationship, and in time and space, with Jesus Christ's righteousness imputed to me a sinner and His Resurrection, the down payment that His propitiatory death was accepted by God the Father, becoming my promise of eternal life. He is risen! He is risen indeed!

The truly sad thing is that the testimony of many Christian cults this Resurrection Sunday, was not much different than given

my most evangelicals. However, for some reason founded in my incredible optimism, I believe and hope that one day in the not too distant future, that at least for this one special day, evangelicals will get the gospel right.

In the mean time, I can take consolation that while all mankind was formed in the image of God, He chose in his infinite mercy to make us from the dust of the ground, that gives all of us a lame excuse. Armed with that excuse and ninety nine cents a pound for the ham, we could also celebrate the Spanish Inquisition. After all we are under grace, not under the law, and besides it's my God given right to eat and drink what I want, when I want.

Our personal and community rights are the main religion in America today. Those rights give me license to be all God made



me to be. Evangelical Christianity interprets marriage as between one man and one woman, others say that marriage can be between any two people who love one another. Which also opens the door widely to, how about three, four, or even a dozen lovers.

Fundamental to America and all western culture is the right to own property. It is no longer socially acceptable to own people legally, but that does not preclude the opportunity when given for personal satisfaction or business needs, we can hire and fire indentured servants, possibly illegal workers, but it is much more politically correct to export those jobs, to other countries without our repressive labor laws.

In western culture Seattle is probably the mecca of the tickle the earth, natural religion. After all Seattle features the home and the flagship store of REI and its famed 65 foot artificial climbing wall. There you can experience a simulated natural high that others must face on real rocks out in the elements. To find the place just set your GPS, or computer mapping software to 47 degrees 37.216' N, 122 degrees 19.75' W. That of course assumes you know how to do this on your materialist gadgets.

I of course, have the right to make such comments, since I have a five digit REI number, which now are well into the 8 millions, and over 5 million remain active. I also know someone with only a four digit number, seven thousand something. In the world of the modern outdoors I am sort of a guru, or maybe an old sage depending upon the continent of your desired religious nature experience.

As you enter the store and adjacent to the climbing wall you can see true religious relics from the United States first successful venture into the true mountain high, the 1963 Everest expedition. The Pacific Northwest while a mecca for animism in the Americas, pales in the presence of the Himalaya as the home of natural and pagan deities.

In a world with so many false religious experiences how can Jesus in my heart compete? Of course only in the cloister of American evangelicalism, which for security sake cannot comprehend a reality beyond its crumbling walls,

that are many times illustrated in sermons as “We are climbing Jacob’s ladder.”

I believe in the true power of Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead. For you can still find a multitude of people who truly believe and understand it, and are frustrated in an attempt to promote the true gospel in a church fully equipped with an array of religious relics and indulgences that continue to accompany Christianity throughout her long history.

In the United States we pride ourselves on our rights, which can be almost anything. We build our exclusive communities based upon our assemblage into organizations that promote those rights at the exclusion of others. But are those institutions true communities or just politically correct civic action committees feeding upon the resources of their members and followers? Where is the larger responsibility?

Obviously rights is the prime motivator as we all try to model our world upon our understanding of our own godly nature. Could it be that the power for responsibility is part of our dust? The dust by which we are made ties us to the land, to the extent we reject our dusty nature is the extent by which we reject our responsibility to other people, to the environment, to true community.

From dust we came, to dust we shall return. Those words in the Bible are used only in funerals. In life we can not, and will not look seriously at that concept. In funerals we try to spin the life of the deceased person in some manner that we may accept that they wisely used the responsibility they received when they were born. Needless to say most people, regardless of any religious or non religious affiliations, were much more concerned with exercising their rights rather than their responsibility. Could that be because we do not consider our dusty heritage more often, and that we have no concept of personal and institutional responsibility by which to tension our lust for rights.

Power in the dust? That concept sure doesn’t fit within anything that modern man can conceive. We can speculate on the rise of life on earth coming from the seed of space aliens, but dust is just dust. It can be assembled into sand, rocks, diamonds and gold, but it is nothing but inert dust, randomly organized into elements and compounds, dust could not at all be considered divine.

If that is true, why does REI exist? REI exists because it facilitates and provides gear for religious experiences. If you seriously interview avid hikers, climbers, and even fly fisherman, you will find that, even though they have other more formal and politically correct religious affiliations, they can commune with God in nature in a way they can not do in church. If the person does not believe in a personality of God, by the fact of human personality they must give personality to the forest, the rocks, and the Rainbow trout. Furthermore, that God, or those gods, are more concerned with true community responsibility than they are with personal rights. In the woods, you may be sincere in all your rights to your beliefs, but if they don't line up with the reality of the situation, not only are you sincerely wrong, you are really dead. Dust to dust.

Thanks to Netflix, I recently saw a documentary, "In the Light of Reverence," from which I borrowed the concept for the title for this week's message. The essence of that film was the fact that Native Americans have a serious problem with the native churches of America's modern, New Agers, climbers, and greens, because these people are more concerned with their right to use nature, than they are with any responsibility to take care of nature.

To the Native peoples and places documented, there was something about the specific nature of the place that was beyond human comprehension, that needed to be treated with reverence, and hence it required responsibility to maintain that "power." To the modern personal deists, this concept of a reality beyond "the present and its rights," was completely incomprehensible, even though they too talked of the place as a church and a place of spiritual power.

Getting back to our cloistered evangelical. One of those places in the movie is called Devils Tower, in the Black Hills. Christian missionaries recognized this rock's power was just as foreign, or more foreign to them than it was to the Native American, or today's New Age climber. Rather than embrace that power however, it was associated with the devil, or pagan supernaturalism, rather than God. You cannot

comprehend the scope of this power, but it does apprehend you. However, that power in the dust just can not be dismissed, other than in the distance of the removed urban office, study, or bar.

The question remains however, do you really need to deify that power as deity or demonic just because it exists, or rather could it be nothing more than a gift of common grace, to help us understand the role of true community and responsibility, to creation as a whole and to one another personally?

*Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.* Genesis 1:31

One of the real problems of promoting an internalized gospel is the fact that everything that you don't understand as part of you or your perceived rights as a child of God, is demonized, giving power to the devil way beyond his created ability. If that power however, is just part of God's common grace and natural law, it still becomes a gift you can not enjoy, comprehend, or take responsibility. We live in a post modern world without responsibility and who is to blame?

While the Christian evangelism of the native people in the areas of the documentary is beyond my area of study. Initially, in the Inland Northwest, depending upon the area in which you lived and chopped up by politics back in the other Washington, Indians were given the opportunity to be either a Roman Catholic, or a revivalist Protestant in the likeness of Charles Finney. Personally, if I was forced to choose, I would probably take the mackerel snappers.

However, if I was truly given the freedom to choose among these options period, I would just like most native Americans, take a pass on the whole perceived concept of Christianity. From my perspective and theirs, religion really isn't religion if all it is concerned with is the rights of natural materialism. So show me not your words, but your actions carrying out your religion and then I will choose. If all you have is words, that carry no supernatural power or even a paradigm of responsibility to the dust by which you were created, and I will show you a religion of man.

True Christianity however, is not a religion of man, nor just a relationship with Jesus in your heart.

Jesus Christ is the Creator of all, and the Saviour of all, and Restorer of all. Just as He had the responsibility from before the foundation of creation, to redeem it and humanity from the curse of sin and death. So too do his followers, still within this universe of time and space, life and death, have the responsibility to temper their rights for something that through faith has apprehended them.

I do look forward to that day that Christianity is not a religion of the fearful, and does not manipulate emotions to get a decision for Jesus. In that day, Christian evangelism will mean instead, on the slopes of Devils Tower, or any other dust empowered natural spot, saying to a small group of assembled people.

“Jesus Christ is the creator of all the beauty that you see, and the author of the supernatural power that you feel. Through a total plan that we can only perceive darkly, you may one day live in a world beyond the nature we comprehend with all our senses. My responsibility is to describe that plan and how one morning a couple of thousand years ago that plan was completed and witnessed. Right now we are waiting for that plan to be manifest in history, so that non comprehensive numbers of people will share in that wonderful future.

“This plan included within God’s created structure a mechanism for satisfying God’s requirements for holiness and overcoming the curse of sin and death so that you can be truly free for all eternity. That plan included a sacrificial propitiatory offering, on a wooden cross, grown from the dust of the ground, to take away your sin and death. That sinless sacrifice was imputed to us by Jesus Christ and we were adopted legally as one of God’s children. Furthermore, that resurrection from the dead, witnessed by many and recorded in the Bible is to give us that gift of hope of that eternal gift, while we wait expectantly as more are gathered into that kingdom.

“While we see around us everything created from nothing but dust, such an eternal hope empowers me with the responsibility to not only share this free gift, but to undergo all life’s hardships as training for that everlasting home.

What could be any better than that? So why do your perceived present rights make you so up tight. True freedom is a free gift of God you receive by grace alone, by faith in Jesus Christ. That alone brings rights and responsibility into their proper tension.

**He is risen indeed! Amen!**

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