

Thursday Theology: January 30, 2020

Co-Missioners,

On a day when our editor is still scrambling to get his wits together in the wake of this week's Crossings conference, we send along a bit of follow-up to [last week's post on the politics of Epiphany](#). There will be more of that in coming weeks. The aim for now is simply to stir a thought or two, and to point you to few items worth perusing that others have written.

Peace and Joy,

The Crossings Community



A Few Further Thoughts (Fleeting, On the Fly) on Epiphany Politics

by Jerome Burce



1. A few days after last week's screed got posted, I ran across a column by Michelle Goldberg of the *New York Times* that more or less defines what Epiphany politics are designed to defy—as hope defies fear, or light defies darkness; as Christ defies Caesar by dying for the hapless instead of crushing their spirits and grinding them to death. Crushed spirits is Goldberg's theme. Her title—or the one her editor

supplied—is [“Darkness Where the Future Should Be.”](#) Ah, but the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not, does not, and will not overcome it (John 1). Such is the Word that Epiphany types are being fashioned by the Holy Spirit to live into, for the solace and refreshment of dying, dispirited neighbors. They’re everywhere, they’re everywhere.

2. When I wrote last week that “Jesus is Lord” is the Epiphany politician’s defining confession, I may have left the impression that such a confession is enough to get those who share it to quit spitting at each other the way “the Gentiles” do. It isn’t, of course. It never has been, as the apostles themselves bear witness in their sorting through of the abundant messes of shrieking and yelling that bubbled up in their New Testament flocks. Subsequent centuries have multiplied those messes—exponentially, as it seems—and so many of these seem intractable. I was reminded of this over the weekend when I had to tell someone why I couldn’t endorse a proposed trip to visit the [Creation Museum](#) in Petersburg, Kentucky. The folks who assembled and run that enterprise are as fervent as I am about insisting that Jesus is Lord. They’re also convinced that Jesus can’t be regarded as Lord in any credible way unless one insists that Bishop Ussher had it right about the world being no older than 6000 years or so. After all, “it’s in the Bible”—and how can the Bible be true if the scientists are right and Bishop Ussher was wrong? To such as hold this view, I am a Judas and a heretic and a corrupter of little children, leading them even unto perdition. Talk about rocks that defy breaking! The shoulders sag; the heart does too. The obvious response would be the one that most of us have taken. Avoid such

people. Waste no time on them. Get about your Epiphany business in concert with saints you can talk to. Comes the nagging thought: do I get to regard them as dead to me if they aren't dead to Christ? The answer is obvious, of course, and I can't say I like it. Nobody said that Epiphany politics were easy. Then again, there's nothing in those politics that requires one to support a brother's misbegotten enterprise, or even respect it, for that matter.



3. Stephen Hitchcock is the Senior Manager of Special Projects for [Bread for the World](#). He's also a great friend of Crossings. Seeing him at our conference this week reminded me of an omission in the last post. I should have highlighted Bread for the World as a stunning example of how Epiphany politics can infiltrate and leaven the old-style politics that places like Washington D.C. are designed to run on. See their website to learn more—and to find a splendidly useful channel for practicing what our Lord gives us to preach.
4. If you haven't followed the recent furor over Mark Galli, it's worth a look. Galli has just retired from a long-standing position as editor-in-chief of *Christianity*

Today, evangelicalism's counterpart to *The Christian Century* In an all but final editorial, he called for President Trump to be removed from office. For an account of what happened next, and for a link to the editorial itself, see the [New York Times' subsequent interview](#) with him. This strikes me too as an example of Epiphany politics breaking loose in the world. Doubtless many in the mainline are feeling smug and vindicated, perhaps scoffing at the sincerity of one who takes so long to "come out." The word to them is to bite their tongues and practice repentance, as in finding the guts in Christ to challenge the idols that the left is in thrall to. These too are legion.



5. Finally, with the 2020 conference in the rearview mirror, we direct your attention much further back to the conference of 2012, and specifically to [a homily that Steve Albertin delivered there on the beatitudes](#) (Matt. 5:1-12). It makes for a marvelous refresher both in the ways of Epiphany and in the kind of re-wording that needs to be striking ears and hearts this coming Sunday when the saints gather at our Lord's feet to hear that original word again.

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A publication of the Crossings Community