

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating December 10, 2017

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations; however, anyone wishing to join should make a donation to Pax Christi U.S.A. and notify Maria Tobin, matob@aol.com, to receive email messages sent to members. Pax Christi International was founded in 1945 with the encouragement of Bishop Pierre Marie Théas of Montauban, France, by Marthe Dortel Claudot, as a Christian lay organization dedicated to preventing a repetition of the savagery of the twentieth century's world wars. Send comments on the newsletter to J6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com.

Editorial

After the calendar, the *Third Reading* commentary is based on the gospel reading for the Second Sunday of Advent. Tom Keene's poem is *Meditation*. See <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php> for more of Tom's poems. My review of the recent book by Kenneth Bedell, *Realizing the Civil Rights Dream*, follows the poem. As I was reading Ken's book, Pax Christi USA sent out a link to Pax Christi members of an address by its executive director, Sister Patricia Chappell, at an Ignatian Teach-In. When time permitted some days later, I listened to Sr. Patricia's address, only to find it and Ken's book come from the same spirit. Give it a listen: <https://paxchristiusa.org/2017/11/07/sr-patricias-moving-speech-from-the-ignatian-family-teach-in/>

This past week Americans were embarrassed, again and in a non-partisan way, by the behavior of our president; he had "retweeted" several old but violent videos from a British right-wing nationalist organization, videos that had been proven to have been staged or misattributed. Even the prime minister, a "Brexit Conservative," condemned what the President of the United States had done. Why can an American public figure get away with such behavior? Why is there an audience for such videos? The phenomenon suggest why such books and addresses as those of Kenneth Bedell and Sister Patricia Chappell are important.

Then the *Washington Post* caught an operative of an American alt right (i.e., white nationalist) organization trying to plant a false allegation of a sexual assault by Roy Moore, a U.S. Senate candidate in Alabama, so that, presumably, the allegation could be disproven and thereby detract from the multiple credible allegations against Mr. Moore that the *Post* had previously published. What motivates such behavior? Perhaps it is privilege, a privilege broader than "white" privilege, a privilege so unmerited that it agitates in people's motivational engines more powerfully than do truth and decency.

Calendar

Monday December 4, 3:30pm, video, "In the Light of Reverence," documenting obstacles to religious freedom of land-based practitioners: Lakota at Devil's tower, Hopi in the Four Corners area, and the Wintu at Mt. Shasta. Christus Heritage hall, The Village at Incarnate Word, 4707 Broadway.

Monday December 4, 7:00pm, Tyrone B. Hayes, Ph.D., "From Silent Spring to Silent Night: A Tale of Toads and Men," discussing research that became the basis of a class action law suit against Syngenta, the Swiss manufacturer of atrazine. Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

Wednesday December 6, 10:30am, pro immigrant demonstration. ICE Office, 3523 Crosspoint (go north from I-410 on Nacogdoches Rd., left onto Hillpoint, right onto Crosspoint).

Thursday December 7, 4:00pm-6:30pm, Ron Nirenberg and Katharine Kahoe, San Antonio Climate Plan Kickoff, followed by a happy hour. Buena Vista Theatre, UTSA Downtown, 501 W. Cesar E. Chavez. RSVP with Public Citizen at action.citizen.org/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=13669.

Saturday January 6, 10:00am, Pax Christi San Antonio meeting, residence of Maria Tobin, 8715 Starcrest Dr., #27. (Go north on Starcrest from I-410; Starcrest becomes a divided road. The apartment complex is located between Hidden Drive and Granby Court, on the south-bound side of Starcrest. (It is possible to park at a church across the street.)

Thursday January 25, 2:00pm-3:30pm, **in Austin**, Kiberly D. Russaw, Ph.D., "What Shall We Tell our Sons and Daughters," addressing violence against women as narrated in the Bible. Agard-Lovinggood Auditorium, 900 Chicon St., Huston-Tillotson University. Parking available on Chalmers Avenue. Information: Rev. Donald E. Brewington, debrewington@htu.edu.

Tuesday January 30, 4:00pm. Laurie Brink, O.P., Ph.D., "Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44): Interpreting gospel ethics in an age of polarization." Reinbolt Hall, Assumption Chapel, St. Mary's University, One Camino Santa Maria. Park in Lot D near the NW 36th St. entrance, or in Lot H near the Culebra Rd. entrance.

Third Reading (Mark 1:1-8)

This brief introduction in the earliest of the four gospels clearly aligns the "good news" of Christianity with the Hebrew prophetic heritage. "The origin of the good news of Jesus, the Messiah, son of God," is to be found in that tradition. Mark cites a famous

prophetic text: "A voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord.'" Mark goes on to introduce John the Baptizer with language reminiscent of the description of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). Prophetic concerns are not to be at the fringes of normal religion and pastoral care but rather comprise the origin, the very root, of the Christian tradition.

Historically prophets had condemned the rulers of Juda and Israel who abandoned God and God's people, not only by adopting cults brought in from foreign allied powers but also by failing to secure the common people's loyalty through justice; instead they allied themselves with seemingly mighty empires. John the Baptizer's message was a call to turn away from the cult of power and quest for influence to be had from the Roman Empire. All Judea and Jerusalem, says Mark, went out to repent and be baptized by him, voting with their feet, as it were, against the ritual baths available in the centers of power.

It is more than a coincidence that the *Gospel of Mark* was composed in the imperial center of power, Rome, where the followers of Jesus had been persecuted by order of Emperor Nero. What was it about the small Jesus following in the imperial capital that Nero and his court feared?

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Poem

Meditation

Sipping Time
to know this very now,
as Adam knew
The Mother of All that Lives.

Plunging into the urge
of moon-drawn Tides,

in a Silence
that conceives, births
the hum of galaxies.

Tom Keene June 1, 2015

Book Review

Kenneth B. Bedell, *Realizing the Civil Rights Dream. Diagnosing and Treating American Racism*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger/ABC-CLIO, 2017, 272 pp., introduction by Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. Reviewed by Anthony J. Blasi.

Last October while I was setting up a display table to promote my own book, *Social Science and the Christian Scriptures*, my eyes met those of Ken Bedell (Ph.D. Temple University, 1991), who was setting up a similar table for his new book, *Realizing the Civil Rights Dream*. Ken had been a teacher and, ordained in the United Methodist Church, a pastor of congregations in New York, Maryland, and Ohio. He had served as executive secretary of the International Association of Methodist Schools, Colleges and Universities. He had also been a member of the executive committee of the Religious Research Association, which led to my making his acquaintance. For five years he edited the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* for the National Council of Churches.

Numerous social scientists have described and explained various aspects of American racism, and Ken's ambitious book reviews and updates the literature. It goes further, however, and proposes a general solution—a most difficult task. The concern is not so much with the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis, but white people who know racism exists, recognize it as morally repugnant, but are simply waiting for it to go away. The result, he notes, is a chronic racist condition in America. The reason racism persists is the vaguely sensed but unrecognized and unadmitted advantage it accords those white people.

The advantage enjoyed by whites, termed "white privilege," goes back to the sixteenth century; the English masters of indentured servants and Native American slaves could not see the Native Americans as equals because the masters themselves enjoyed a seemingly superior Christian culture. Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia (1676) induced the English masters to co-opt non-elite whites and form an alliance with them to control the African indentured servants, who would become slaves, and Native Americans, who would become an enemy. This established "whiteness" as a dominant social criterion. This pattern even undermined the effort of Georgia's founder, George Oglethorpe, to prohibit slavery. In later years, segregation developed in the North while slavery persisted in the South.

The American Revolution was based on a philosophical argument that all humans were created equal, but the new republic did not have equality. James Madison addressed the dilemma by making representation, not participation, the response to the situation of African Americans. In the era leading up to and including the Civil War, abolitionists abhorred slavery but nevertheless assumed white supremacy. The stratagem of segregation spread to the South in the wake of the elimination of slavery, once the federal troops were withdrawn. The twentieth century Civil Rights Movement eliminated the legal framework of segregation, disenfranchisement, and open lynchings, and included Native American, Latino, Asian, and sexual minority movements as well as that of African Americans. It did not eliminate, however, the white paradigm.

The post-Civil Rights Movement era saw both a backlash and efforts at a more complete participation of minorities in American life. The backlash was polite in the

marginalization of Jesse Jackson during his presidential bid and not so polite in the English-only movement. And now today, “the most obvious and visible symptoms of racism are white supremacist activity and schemes to make it difficult for nonwhites to vote” (p. 69). The underlying cause of the backlash lies in the power of paradigms: Whites believe their status is merited and does not need to be explained. They exercise power “realistically,” i.e. within the prevailing paradigm. Because paradigms are presupposed rather than set forth explicitly, efforts to change them encounter reluctance and emotion rather than reason and factual information. Consequently it is important to identify “everyday racism”: stereotyping, inadvertent microaggression, coding, and “dog whistle” discourse. These have psychological consequences for their victims and should not be dismissed as trivial.

In one chapter, the author takes up the difficult subject of institutional racism. Our major institutions—education, criminal justice, and government, for example—depend on individuals’ prior economic status. Even students on scholarship drop out because of financial emergencies; even the innocent forfeit bail when they cannot pay the money owed the bondsman; and even otherwise electable candidates cannot mount a campaign without funds. Bedell calls for the use of charisma, i.e. personal legitimacy, to be employed in allying government and communities of value, in revealing the inefficiencies of racism, and in combatting visible racism. He identifies “disciplinary institutions,” which excessively control people in general and are disproportionately applied to minorities: the juvenile “justice” system, prisons, and the school discipline movement. He notes that there is much that is needlessly criminalized. Such could be replaced with “empowering institutions”: support for development, expanding environments, supporting individuals’ and communities’ making of history, and pluralist modes of educating.

Scientifically, Bedell has a general model of how racism persists: A pattern of action engenders an unarticulated white paradigm, which in turn leads to stereotyping, institutional racism, and the resort to disciplinary institutions. These in turn reinforce and perpetuate the patterned actions that originated the problem to begin with. His proposal is the introduction of a different model, a full-participation one: Newly and differently patterned action is to engender a patchwork quilt paradigm, which in turn would lead to antiracist institutional practices and institutions that empower. These, again, would reinforce and expand the newly patterned everyday actions. The “patchwork quilt” paradigm is one that aims at pluralism rather than integrating minorities into the uniform white paradigm. As history progresses, the patchwork paradigm is more realistic than the white paradigm since in the future whites will not be the statistical majority.

Adopting the patchwork paradigm requires recognizing the present power of the white paradigm, questioning it, and going beyond diversity toward full participation by all. Bedell goes on to speak of being an antiracist in everyday life. He presents the stories of a number of empowered antiracist organizations and people. He speaks of “beloved community,” a circumstance in which one group does not seek to replace another one as dominant but rather one in which each group rejoices in the contributions of other groups. He also speaks of restitution, wherein wealth that had accumulated through privilege is redistributed.

In summary, Bedell argues that we need to be able to state our civil rights goal; unless we say what we want we will not achieve it. We need to understand the white

paradigm, with its stereotyping, institutional racism, and disciplinary institutions. In its place we need a new, patchwork, paradigm.

Links

Pax Christi International
<http://www.paxchristi.net/>

Pax Christi U.S.A.
<http://www.paxchristiusa.org>

Pax Christi Texas
<http://www.paxchristitexas.org>

Pax Christi San Antonio
<http://www.paxchristisa.org>

Marianist Social Justice Collaborative
www.msjc.net

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, International JPIC Committee
<http://saccvi.blogspot.com/>

San Antonio Peace Center
<http://www.sanantoniopace.center>

Interfaith Radio, (*Interfaith Voices*)
<http://www.interfaithradio.org/>

Texas Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty
www.txccedp.org