

CONFORM



BY GLEN MOYER

You may not recognize Patrick Moore's name, but you know what he's accomplished. In 1971 a dozen young men, including Patrick Moore, made history by sailing a tired old fishing vessel called the *Phyllis Cormack* to Alaska's Amchitka Island to protest the United States government hydrogen-bomb tests taking place there. They weren't able to stop the explosion,

but I still recall how their surprising and bold presence in Alaska's seas along with their heady interaction with the news media created headlines around the world. They stirred a groundswell of outrage that eventually led to President Richard Nixon halting America's H-bomb testing program.

That mission launched Greenpeace into what became the world's premier environmental

activist organization. By 1986, it had become established in 21 countries and had an annual budget in excess of \$100 million. It won major victories against deep-sea whaling, baby-seal hunting, toxic waste discharges, nuclear dumping and drift-net fishing. To this day Greenpeace occupies a highly visible position and influences environmental policies of governments around the world;

however, they now do so without Patrick Moore.

A Remarkable Role-Reversal

Though Moore went on to lead Greenpeace for 15 years, he left abruptly in a stunning and controversial role reversal. Moore has

all produced in nuclear reactors. That's why I left Greenpeace: I could see that my fellow directors, none of whom had any science education, were starting to deal with issues around chemicals and biology and genetics in which they had no formal training, and they were taking the organization into what I call 'pop environmentalism,' which uses sensationalism, misinformation, fear tactics, etc., to deal with people on an emotional level rather than an intellectual level."

As a result of this dramatic shift, Moore has been demonized by many in the environmental movement. "He's a turncoat who supports many of the things we oppose," says Greenpeace spokesman Craig Culp, "we basically try not to have anything to do with Patrick Moore." "Patrick Moore is an eco-Judas," adds David Suzuki, who taught Moore genetics at the University of British Columbia and is one of Canada's best-known anti-biotech figures.

Though I happen to agree with Patrick Moore's position on nuclear technology, it is the way he has been ostracized by his former co-laborers at Greenpeace that intrigues me more. His story aligns with so many who became the enemy as soon as they viewed the world through a slightly different prism. Undoubtedly, Moore and Greenpeace agree on far more things than they disagree. Furthermore, I have no doubt that if they were to both sit down and objectively view the facts they would find themselves drawing closer together—even on the prickly issue of nuclear technol-

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ogy. Why is it that the truth table is rarely large enough to seat individuals of differing mindsets?

Searching for Truth, or Conformity?

In his recently released motion picture, *EXPULSED: No Intelligence Allowed*, Ben Stein attempts to document how teachers and scientists alike are being ridiculed daily, denied tenure and even fired for believing there is evidence of "design" in nature and challenging

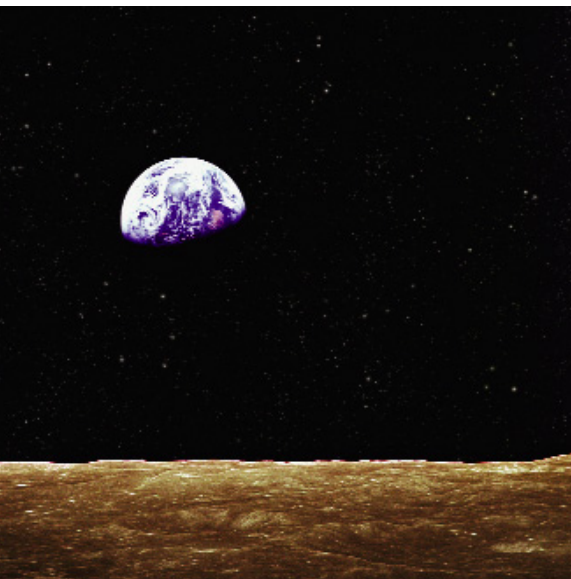
We don't have to give up what we believe is truth, but we must recognize that we don't possess all truth. Truth is ultimately owned by God alone. We humans are shortsighted, short-lived pilgrims passing through this third rock from the sun.



Crew of the *Phyllis Cormack*, first Greenpeace trip to Amchitka Island to protest nuclear weapons testing.

since become an outspoken advocate for some of Greenpeace's most detested causes, primarily nuclear energy.

When asked by *Newsweek* magazine in 2008 what changed for him, especially regarding nuclear energy, Moore gave this insightful response. "My belief, in retrospect, is that because we were so focused on the destructive aspect of nuclear technology and nuclear war, we made the mistake of lumping nuclear energy in with nuclear weapons, as if all things nuclear were evil. And indeed, Greenpeace still uses the word 'evil' to describe nuclear energy. Nuclear medicine uses radioactive isotopes to successfully treat millions of people every year, and those isotopes are



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the current orthodoxy that life is entirely a result of random chance. “Big Science in this area of biology has lost its way,” Stein says. “Scientists are supposed to be allowed to follow the evidence wherever it may lead, no matter what the implications are. Freedom of inquiry has been greatly compromised, and this is not only anti-American, it’s anti-science. It’s anti-the whole concept of learning.”

While I found *EXPULSED* entertaining, I found it lacking in its attempt to accomplish its goal. Still, I completely agree with Stein’s conclusion. Freedom of inquiry has been greatly compromised. Many have lost their jobs because of the Evolution/Intelligent Design debate. What Stein fails to point out is that the “expelled” victims are not limited to the Intelligent Design martyrs that he highlights in his documentary.

Imagine what would happen to a professor seeking tenure at a fundamentalist Christian college if he suddenly disclosed that he no longer believed in Creationism or Intelligent Design? How about a science writer employed at

a conservative Christian ministry, if she began making public statements that she had come to embrace the views of an atheistic evolutionary biologist such as Richard Dawkins? These employees would no doubt meet the same fate as those documented in Stein’s movie, only from the other side of this volatile issue.

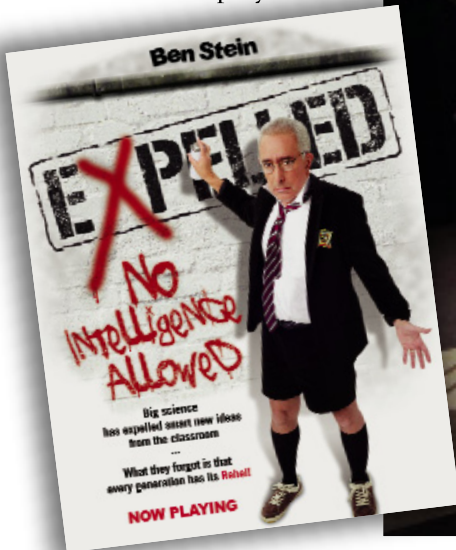
“Our” Truth—or The Truth?

My concern is not that organizations and institutions hire or retain individuals who don’t share their core doctrines and beliefs; rather, it’s the bizarre tendency we have to be so inflammatory toward those who don’t share our core doctrines and beliefs. Jesus brilliantly stated



that the truth will set us free, but what so often happens is that truth entraps people both intellectually and relationally. The more certain we are about our truth, the less open we become to any truth other than our own. The more comfortable we are with our truth the less comfortable we are with

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Ben Stein (on right) interviews Richard Dawkins in the motion picture *EXPULSED: No Intelligence Allowed*.

those who don't sit at our table. Where's the freedom in that?

I was a member of the Pastor's Association in my city for 18 years. For 12 of those years I was an elected leader of that group. However, that all came to an abrupt, unpleasant end after I told two of my fellow leaders that after several years of study I had come to the conclusion that I could no longer believe in a literal hell of eternal torment. Within two weeks I was brought before the group and excommunicated. I was no longer allowed to be a member of the group, attend meetings, or even be on the mailing list. Fellow members preached against me from their pulpits, all speaking engagements I had scheduled at churches and ministries within the group were cancelled, and some former friends even began shunning me. Is this the freedom Jesus had in mind when he talked about truth?

Though my friends ejected me as nicely as they could, it was obvious that only judgment and exclusion would be extended to me until I once again aligned myself with their doctrinal beliefs. They never asked me to explain how I, a leader of this group for a dozen years, came to this position. No one asked to see my study notes. The clear assumption was that what they believed was correct and true and what I now believed was incorrect and false. Either I come back to their truth or I would never be a part of the group again. There was no other option. No dialogue. No kidding.

This sad script gets played out in every society in every part of the globe. Shia Muslims vs. Sunni Muslims; Hutus vs. Tutsis; Management vs. Labor; Men vs. Women; Republican vs. Democrat; Catholic vs. Protestant; etc.

Can We Talk?

None of this has to be. Jesus implored us to love one another (those like us) and love our enemies (those unlike us). It's easy to love those who love and accept us—anyone can do that. The acid test of life and faith is loving those

who reject us; those who believe differently from us; those who speak badly about us. Yes, such love comes at a high cost, but the alternative is the unnecessary and counterproductive warfare that

equal value with rightness? How about meeting at a Starbucks for a friendly chat over coffee, and if we have disagreements, then like flavoring in the coffee, our conversation will be even richer.

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plays out every day around the world—as in Moore's story, Stein's movie and my own personal "Expelled" story.

We don't have to give up what we believe is truth, but we must recognize that we don't possess all truth. Truth is ultimately owned by God alone. We humans are short-sighted, short-lived pilgrims passing through this third rock from the sun. Love is the only way Jesus lived and taught, and grace is the language of the Kingdom of God.

I suggest we slam on the brakes and stop short of declaring that we are right and everyone else is wrong. Do we really have to agree on *everything* in order to be friends?

How about engaging in a wider dialogue on the sensitive topics, instead of merely shooting down one another's beliefs and kicking each other out of our groups?

How about making kindness of

Let's aspire to be people whom others can approach with questions, doubts and disagreements without fear of being condemned, judged or expelled. Instead of having all the answers or seeing ourselves as possessing "the truth," let's provide a safe space for all to think and explore together.

Let's make love the highest priority and pull an extra chair up to the table of truth. Let's trust that in the process of dialogue and community we will all find ourselves drawing closer to what really is truth. □

Glen Moyer is a pastor and gifted communicator of the gospel, a storyteller whose insights illuminate the depths of God's mercy and grace. Clothman is the name under which Glen writes his often humorous columns. You can discover more about Clothman at www.clothman.com.