
Documentation

Governor Lamm's genocide program

The following are excerpts from three lectures given by Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California on Jan. 15.

Lecture 1: 'The heresy trial of the Reverend Richard Lamm'

You object to how I have changed the Biblical quotes from "Love thy neighbor" to "Love thy nearest neighbor." You ask how a church with a tradition of missionaries and universal caring could love only their nearest neighbor. You object to my concept of "Toughlove" in which we simply accept the starvation in much of the Third World. You ask, "How can I ignore those pitiful scenes of megafamine that we see on our television sets every day?"

It is my sad and reluctant conclusion that the economy within the United States cannot keep up with all the problems outside of the United States and that we were foolish to try. It is my conclusion that "Toughlove" means that we let God's judgment take place in much of the Third World and that by trying to relieve this suffering all we do is postpone it.

We call these countries "developing countries" as if the use of a progressive noun makes a progressive country. Alas, it does not. The overwhelming evidence is that these are not "developing" countries but they are "never-to-be-developed" countries. It is sad but true that most of the world's poor will stay poor—and that there is nothing the developed nations can do to alter this. Our maximum generosity could not make a dent in their poverty. Some of those countries can and will help themselves. There will be success stories—as we already have seen in Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong—but most don't have the capital, don't have the culture, don't have the knowledge ever to become "developed" countries. They will sink into squalor, disease, and death. . . .

Our civilization has been running a marathon as if it were a 100 yard dash. We thought the Earth limitless, and even after the astronauts brought back their marvelous pictures of the finite globe we all share, we continued to act as if we could endlessly abuse the Earth. Schweitzer warned us, "We have lost the ability to foresee and forestall. We shall end by

destroying the earth."

Alas, we didn't listen. Each year our population grows; the deserts creep; the pollution seeps; the forests shrink; topsoil erodes; habitats degrade; and more species disappear. We are destroying the earth that we rely on for life; we are consuming our seed corn; we are treating our one-time inheritance of capital as if it were interest. We have adopted the Helen Keller School of Public Policy—blind to our excesses and deaf to all the evidence.

Aristotle said it so well, "From time to time it is necessary that pestilence, famine and war prune the luxuriant growth of the human race." Thus your argument isn't with me.

It's with nature.

Just as "God is dead" theology failed because it had an unwinnable argument with God, so did Liberation Theology fail because it had an unwinnable argument with nature.

Reality theology is a revolution in human thought. I do not claim it is the best scenario; far better had we listened to Schweitzer and learned to "foresee and forestall." But, alas, we didn't and now we are left with no other practical alternatives. The stork has outflown the plow. Chaos is on the march. Triage ethics always stand by, dictated by nature, to push out all other ethical standards that fail. It is Theological Darwinism: If your ethics don't jibe with reality, my ethics will. Just as triage is blessed in time of war, Reality Theology will be blessed in a time of chaos.

We have thoughtlessly destroyed one million species in the last 10 years, the products of 20 million centuries of evolution.

We *ethnocentrically* thought the Earth belonged to us. But alas, *ecologically* we belong to the Earth. And the Earth is now claiming its due from a myopic species called Man.

As we are clearly unable to alleviate all suffering and starvation, we have a Christian responsibility to use both our hearts and our heads to maximize the good we can do. Those answers—like in triage during war—are unorthodox and would require a change in policy for most of organized religion. But we cannot escape the task. . . .

We seek more than a living will. We seek more than a lingering, painful natural death. A natural death often requires months and years of unnatural living. We seek the self determination to end our lives under conditions that we feel are just and sufficient. We do not think it proper for the state to interfere, with its laws and prejudices, in this final and important right. We demand, for our sake and the sake of our nation, the right to timely suicide. . . .

I have come to the sad conclusion that couples' freedom to choose the number of children they have to be too important to be left to the couples. Freedom to breed in the new world we face is the freedom to starve children. Today—this day—42,000 children under five died of starvation. Each day the Earth adds 280,000 more people, a city the size of Berkeley. Ninety percent are born into a world consisting of nothing but hunger, disease and squalor. Reality Theology rec-

ognizes this. The individual miracle of birth has become a collective tragedy. . . .

Lecture 2: 'Reality Theology'

America is a national Titanic, speeding carelessly through iceberg-filled waters. It is beyond our power to know which iceberg America will hit, but it is naive to the point of stupidity not to know our nation shall surely hit one. Our problems are multiple. . . .

Our optimism is too deep; our traditions are too strong; our history is too rich; and our self-confidence is too bold to forecast negative change. Our policies, institutions and culture were built during incredible expansive conditions. We had an empty continent filled with free natural resources. We had the best foot of topsoil that God ever gave anyone; we were a dynamic and ambitious people who were given an empty continent.

We thus ignore where certain events are taking us, hope for the best, and live with our blind optimism. Yet there are demographic, economic and resource constraints that will not be denied, no matter how much we may wish it so. "Events are in the saddle and ride mankind," says Ralph Waldo Emerson. Today we are faced with an unprecedented convergence of negative trends and policies. The rising tide of demography, the gathering storm of a troubled economy, the political and economic instability of the Third World countries, the international debt crisis—these and many more forces are gathering strength and will forever change our lives and lifestyles. This is not to say that all of the gathering forces are negative. The positive—the information and computer revolution, green revolution in agriculture, biological revolution in our laboratories—are all widely written and commented upon, but it is my warning (and prediction if we refuse to change our ways) that the negative trends will overpower the positive trends unless we take action now.

Scientific advance is impressive but it is not enough if it is atop social, economic or political chaos. We tend too often to look at the miracles of communication and science and extrapolate that all is well with the world. It is not. Because pocket calculators are cheaper today than yesterday or fiber optics can transmit the encyclopaedia around the world in seconds, some seem to believe that progress is right on schedule. But progress isn't on schedule. There are illusions of solutions but few solutions. Our basic long-term problems are not being solved—they are being covered over. America and the world are heading toward multiple traumas.

[Lamm then recommends massive cuts in services, rationing of health care, etc.]

Lecture 3: 'Freedom from counterproductive medical technology'

Reality Theology demands that we adapt our standard of religious conduct to the overwhelming realities around us. It states in a world of finite resources, painful choices are not

only necessary but inevitable. It states we ignore reality at our peril.

Nowhere do Americans avoid reality as on the subject of death. Reality Theology recognizes that machines in many cases have replaced God as the author of death.

We have a hard time discussing problems in subject areas that we don't want to think about. Nowhere is this more true than the area of death and dying. We avoid these subjects with such skill and determination and some have suggested that death and dying is the last taboo. We are a death-denying culture: dealing with death about as openly as Victorians dealt with sex.

But something very dramatic has happened in death and dying. Ivan Ilyich described it: "The medicalization of society has brought the epic of natural death to an end. Western man has lost the right to preside at his act of dying. Health or the autonomous power to cope has been expropriated down to the last breath."

It would seem that a new liberation movement is forming. A liberation from our machines—when they are used not to prolong life but to prolong dying. The era of natural death as a reflection of "God's will" is being replaced by the possibility of technological immortality. We are rapidly approaching the time when we have the capability of maintaining some semblance of life almost indefinitely: alive biologically but long after we have ceased to exist as thinking, feeling human beings.

Shakespeare said, "We all owe God a death." Some say we should have a "right to die." But that makes it look as if we could refuse.

I submit that it is a *duty and burden* of our *humanness* that we *die*. Do *leaves* have a "right" to remain on the trees? Does the *tide* have the "*right to refuse*" to flow?" Does a snowflake have a "*right*" not to fall? *No*.

God has his/her cycles and we must bow to those cycles. Life is, sad but true, a terminal disease. It is the duty of man's body to die—his soul has other options. But the price of our humanness is that we must die. To attempt to achieve immortality through medicine is as useless as *gluing leaves* back on *trees* in the *winter* or *demanding the tide* to stop. It is not only useless, it is *absurd* and unseemly.

We should live life fully while we have it rather than trying through expensive technology to add a few hours or a few days onto it. When we start using machines which don't prolong life but extend dying . . . then we have abdicated our very humanness. We are making human sacrifices to the new secular god, Technology.

We neither can nor should defeat death. Death is a part of life, making the finiteness of our lives more meaningful and the state of our soul more important. Thus, the quality of life sometimes must determine the length of life.

To burden our fellow taxpayers with astronomical medical costs for a few more days of tortured existence is not only not a moral choice; it is bad public policy.