

## Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

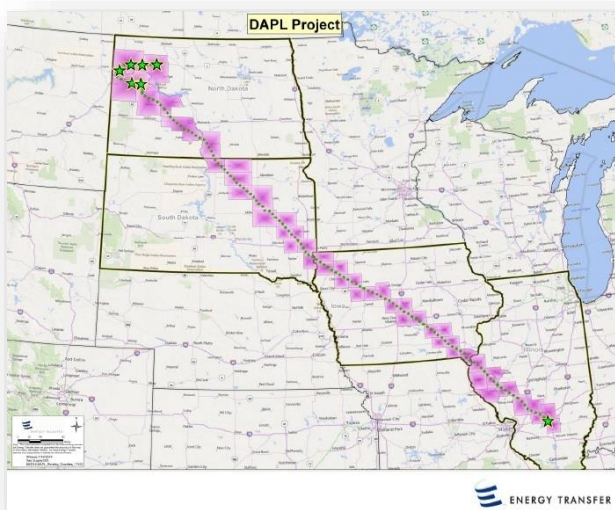
February 14, 2017

First of all, on this Valentine's Afternoon, I want to wish you a wonderful Valentine's Day and to tell you once more what joy it is for me to share life with you as your pastor. I love you. I really do.

But alas, the other things I'm going to write today are more controversial than loving you . . . .

You surely have at least some awareness of the controversy surrounding what is known as "The Dakota Access Pipeline." You are aware that the Lakota Indians of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation have been blocking the final section of the pipeline through what they regard as sacred land, that the Obama Administration was hesitant to allow completion of the project, and that the Trump Administration has given the go-ahead to completion.

In an article in the current issue of *Herald*, the journal of Baptist News Global,<sup>1</sup> Norman Jameson points out that "environmentalists acknowledge that, as dangerous and potentially polluting as pipelines are, they are relatively safer than transporting oil to refineries by truck or rail. But voices are growing steadily louder that the problem is less about transportation and more about dependence on fossil fuels to power industry, transportation, and electricity production."



It is this habit that drives highly-developed nations – particularly the United States – to manipulate oil-producing regions in what Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has called "pipeline wars." In a detailed and chilling article in *EcoWatch*,<sup>2</sup> Kennedy points out that the American CIA began meddling in Syria in 1949 when Syria's democratically-elected president, Shukri-al-Kuwaiti, hesitated to approve the Trans-Arabia Pipeline – an American project intended to connect the oil fields of Saudi Arabia to the ports of Lebanon via Syria.

According to Kennedy, President Eisenhower saw Soviet proposals to let Arabs rule their own territories after World War II as a threat to U.S. oil interests. "Instead, the CIA mounted a clandestine war against Arab nationalism," Kennedy wrote. "As early as September 1957, Eisenhower advised the CIA in its efforts to undermine Arab self-rule that 'We should do everything possible to stress the "holy war" aspect.'"

Kennedy suggests that the current war in Syria against Bashar Assad really began in 2000 when Assad opposed a ten billion dollar, 1,500-kilometer pipeline through Saudi Arabia,

<sup>1</sup> Norman Jameson, "Holding the Line on Sacred Land and Water and All Who Inhabit It," *Herald* (Baptist News Global), Winter 2017, 20-27.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ecowatch.com/syria-another-pipeline-war-1882180532.html>

Jordan, Syria and Turkey proposed by Qatar, an American ally. Instead, Assad endorsed a Russian-approved pipeline running from Iran's side of the gas field through Syria into the ports of Lebanon.

Kennedy asserts that in 2009, soon after Assad rejected the Qatar pipeline, the CIA



began funding opposition groups in Syria: “If we are to have an effective foreign policy, we must recognize the Syrian conflict is a war over control of resources indistinguishable from the myriad clandestine and undeclared oil wars we have been fighting in the Middle East for 65 years,” Kennedy said. “And only when we see this conflict as a proxy war over a pipeline do events become comprehensible.”

It is in this way that the Lakota blockade in Standing Rock becomes a stand against the primacy of industrial interests when they desire to run roughshod over icons of identity, nurtured by people who trace their ancestry to centuries before the first Europeans arrived in North America. The protesters are declaring not just that there are matters more important than oil, but that alternatives to oil dependence exist that are not being explored . . . because oil is easy.

John Floberg, an Episcopal priest who has worked in the Standing Rock area for twenty-five years, has noted that “the Christian church has an obligation to support tribal nations when they are asserting treaty rights and to call upon governments to fulfill treaty obligations. We can’t let any daylight be between us and people who are victims of racism. Racism has to be challenged in all of its forms.”

I am sure that the observations above are subject to varying interpretations; but at the very least, I encourage you to read Kennedy’s article. I’ve provided the link in a footnote.

And, while I’m being controversial, I commend to you the survey graphic on the next page as well. I don’t agree with everything presented there, and you probably won’t, either. But it is instructive to ponder which theological affirmations you agree with, which you disagree with, and why. Most importantly, can you support your position from the Bible?

If you’d like some software to help you in your quest, you can find a FREE version of the software I use at this link: <https://www.wordsearchbible.com/basic>. Now aren’t you glad you read to the end?

Dave

## OUR FAVORITE HERESIES

LifeWay Research and Ligonier Ministries have once again examined the theological awareness, or lack thereof, of American evangelicals. This time, instead of defining “evangelical” by whether participants identify as such, they used a four-part definition endorsed by the National Association of Evangelicals. Below are the 12 areas where believers have most gone astray in their theology:



People have the ability to turn to God on their own initiative.<sup>1</sup>



Individuals must contribute to their own salvation.<sup>2</sup>



Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God.



God knows all that happens, but doesn't determine all that happens.



My local church has the authority to withhold Communion and excommunicate me. (Asked of evangelicals who attend church at least once a year.)



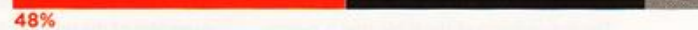
The Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being.<sup>3</sup>



Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.



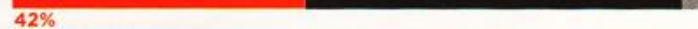
God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.



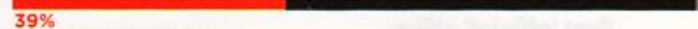
Even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation.



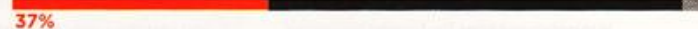
Worshiping alone or with one's family is a way to replace church.



My good deeds help to earn my place in heaven.<sup>1</sup>



God will always reward faith with material blessings.



**1** Ruled out by Council of Orange (A.D. 529); **2** Ruled out by First Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325); **3** Ruled out by First Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381).

**NOTES** Evangelicals are defined as those who strongly agree that: **A** the Bible is the highest authority; **B** evangelism is very important; **C** sin can only be removed by Jesus' death; and **D** salvation comes only through trusting in Jesus as Savior.