

CFAMC Devotional Page May Supplementary

Okay, the picture doesn't make sense yet, but bear with me...

Faroe Stamp 329 White Whale, released into the Public Domain by the Faroe Islands Post Office



I am probably the last person I expected to have much to say about the death of Osama bin Laden, but it seems to me that thoughtful Christian artists and composers ought to have something to say, if for no other reason than to counterbalance the mindless and excessive media coverage about the death of the man, and also to counterbalance scenes of celebration that are chillingly reminiscent of the kinds of celebrations some people in the Arab world had when the Twin Towers fell.

Maybe we DO need to have something to say, as I imagine many of us expressed ourselves personally and artistically in 2001. That time was an obvious national tragedy that affected us all in a lot of ways. This is the death of the man who took credit for masterminding that tragedy. It is very easy to sigh with relief, pump the fist for justice done, and move on ... but as usual, I'm suggesting a little different reaction.

I'm an eclectic reader, as some of you may have guessed; I picked up and went through a book called *Nixonland*, by Rick Perlstein, as a sort of counterbalance to all the coverage around Mr. bin Laden's death. *Nixonland* is not so much about President Nixon as about how politicians and others of that era learned how to play the fears and desires for security and revenge of the American people first against suspected Communists, then in a backlash against African Americans and others who were working in the 1960s for their civil rights. President Nixon and those like him had plenty of help in their game, of course, from the other side. The Watts riots were not helpful, for one example.

The author of *Nixonland* points out that although President Nixon passed in 1994, the legacy of himself

and many of his opponents is still with us -- a legacy of a polarized country that has elements that tend to see their ideological opponents as enemies to be defeated and destroyed. Sound familiar? Today we have an endless supply of "terrorists" and "terrorist sympathizers" instead of Communists, and within the country, bipartisan wrangling carries on to the point that the country is in danger of having its government shutdown over budget spats -- with large cross-sections of our fellow citizens rooting on the madness.

After *Nixonland*, my mind went back to a fictional favorite of both myself and my sister -- *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville's masterpiece. That's why there's a white whale sitting at the top of the page. You know the story -- Captain Ahab loses leg to Moby Dick, goes mad, chases whale around the world (leaving behind wife and very young son), gets himself and everyone but Ishmael killed, and Moby Dick goes on his merry way. My sister and I went on to put together an entire sequel based on what happens to the children of Captain Ahab and his Christian first mate, Mr. Starbuck (coming someday to a bookstore near you).

But before we started writing, my sister and I had a conversation that happened not too long before Sept. 11, 2001, on this subject: "If Captain Ahab had caught Moby Dick, what do you think would have happened? Would he have been okay?" We were late teenagers trying to figure this out based on our knowledge of human nature.



The answer ended up being no, both purposely and by what we ourselves intended to do -- the first idea was to have the sons of Ahab and Starbuck go out and finally kill that white whale. But we decided we had to get past that, and we knew we could, because Starbuck had been a Christian. Anybody could go

out and continue the madness of revenge; anybody could have a family break down after such a tragedy ... but if the Lord Jesus Christ was in the picture, we knew we could transcend all that and get to the happy ending Melville's story simply could not have. For the Lord Jesus is fairly well ignored in *Moby Dick*, and pointedly ignored in *Nixonland* and *Burn, Baby, Burn*; all three are accurate conceptions (or reports) of a scenario in which His lordship is not acknowledged.

That is the reason why I am speaking up in this supplementary, in this country in which Mr. bin Laden is not the first or last enemy to capture our country's collective emotions, and who presents us with opportunity to react without thinking things through and thinking, "Where is the opportunity here to manifest the Lord Jesus Christ in this situation?" Mr. bin Laden is gone to be judged by our just God: we that remain need to remember, even while the fist-pumping is going on:

Matthew 5:44-45

44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

John 3:16-17

16. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Our God is so gracious that He would have saved Osama bin Laden if the man had believed on our Lord Jesus Christ -- we need to remember that as we go out and deal with people we don't agree with. We represent a gracious God Who does not celebrate over the loss of a single soul -- we need to remember that. We also need to remember to be sensitive to those around us whose emotions differ at times like these:

Romans 12:15 -- Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Balance is necessary, following the Spirit's leading is mandatory. Of course you all know that... but I have written this to remind us ... if we do not manifest the life of God in this situation and all others that face our country now, no one else will. The death of Osama bin Laden can serve a good purpose beyond the fact that an enemy of the country is dead. It is a moment to stay focused or re-focus on what we're here to do -- glorify God, enjoy Him forever, and introduce other folks to Him in such a way that they will want to know Him too!