
Kevin J. O’Brien’s *The Violence of Climate Change* is an inspiring read that provokes imaginative, embodied, and risk-taking engagement with the “wicked problem” (O’Brien’s terms) of ecological catastrophe. In an effort to feel and flesh a response to both O’Brien’s work and the specter of earth’s crucifixion, I crafted the following poem.

With prayers, and honey
we take and eat a cloud
of witnesses, asking the
holy ones to turn
in us, feeding divine discontent
in a time of wickedness,
this age of ecocide.

In they go, one by one,
tripping tastes, and
stretching us wide.
A Woolman and Addams,
a Day, King, and Chavez.
Five brave fools who foil
worldly wisdom with wild idealism,
speaking what few want to hear,
fearlessly uttering truth.
And they live it. They actually do!

With low wages and prayer,
habits of fasting and
clothes that hearten the great soul.
They, “by faith,” choose
hospitality, enduring “cold rooms and
lack of privacy,”
deserting the pleasures
of “cigarettes, liquor, coffee, [and] candy.”
Modesty embodied, wrapped in

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2 O’Brien, 126.
the garments of poverty and militant action, 
the saints secure moral authority through 
  self-surrender 
self-purification 
self-sacrifice 
with the people, 
and the earth, 
and with Christ.

We cannot be them. And we should not. 
But like them, drawing strength from 
despair and patience for the prospect of change 
for the morrow.

And the mystery is this. 
Never once—not often—do our witnesses let 
loose of the structural for the personal. 
Always together, never bewitched by stupid conversations of 
separation, they know the fullness of being, the 
interconnectedness of life, and the 
responsibility such entails. 
Take shorter showers and 
fight the industrial machine. Do both, for they are 
one.

Our common home is in trouble, unspeakable. 
And Pope Francis, a blessed witness himself, 
states the obvious. “‘Tyrannical’ anthropocentrism 
contributes to the problem of climate change.”3 
But “in [this] house where all cry out I see! and 
proceed to do the works of darkness”4 
another fool counsels creative response to 
this complex problem. “There is one classic 
action open to the wise; strike yourself 
blind, and explore that kingdom” 
(Daniel Berrigan, d. 2016, 
yet more alive).5

3 O’Brien, 104. 
4 Daniel Berrigan, The Dark Night of Resistance (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 
1971), 67. 
5 Berrigan, 67.
The most influential people
are the wildly idealistic. The most
beloved by creation, those who
give back—love and
life and dreams—
more than they take.
Pray, O God, that we may live it.
Pray, O God, that I actually do.

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In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Dan Nighswander sets out to unite his love of academic scholarship and pastoral ministry. Describing the biblical letter as “one of the richest sources of practical advice [in the scriptures],” Nighswander not only seeks to provide the reader with relevant cultural context, language study, and awareness of form, but also practical advice for the use of 1 Corinthians in our ministerial context today (19).

Nighswander’s intent comes through clearly in how he divides the sections of commentary for each part of the letter he examines. Along with the explanatory notes and basic outlines to be expected in any commentary, he includes two larger sections: the “Text in Biblical Context” and the “Text in the Life of the Church.”

As I read through the commentary, I was particularly pulled toward “the Text in the Life of the Church” sections. In these sections, Nighswander identifies themes that can be developed for preaching and teaching (113–14), book recommendations (125, 157), reflections on pastoral care (123–24), and suggestions on using a chapter from 1 Corinthians as a case study for church discernment (189). These ideas are a jumping-off point for the reader to continue looking at 1 Corinthians through a creative lens. I enjoyed Nighswander’s ideas for how 1 Corinthians can be engaged by congregations, as well as his liturgical awareness to point out which parts of 1 Corinthians are a part of the regular lectionary rotation and which are never read when strictly following the lectionary.

Nighswander’s attention to the practical applications and studies available to churches from 1 Corinthians, as well as his attention to lectionary inclusion of parts of the text, have caused me to reflect on how churches curate which scriptures are used in worship and study and which are not. I have only been at Lima