

Third Saturday Seminar 2003-2004
Seventh Meeting - On Being Human
20 March 2004

If you wanted to save the world,
where would you start?

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Current Events

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'Really, it was kind of a pitiful thing, to go to a movie like that and fight about it. I think they missed the point.'

Gene McDaniel, chief sheriff's deputy

Movie fires couple's passion, leads to violence, jail, regrets

Associated Press

STATESBORO, Ga. — A couple who got into a dispute over a theological point after watching *The Passion of the Christ* were arrested after the argument turned violent.

The two left the movie theater debating whether God the Father in the Holy Trinity was hu-

man or symbolic, and the argument heated up when they got home, Melissa Davidson said.

"It was the dumbest thing we've ever done," she said.

Davidson, 34, and her husband, Sean Davidson, 33, were charged with simple battery on March 11 after the two called police on each other. They were released on \$1,000 bail.

According to a police report,

Melissa Davidson suffered injuries on her arm and face, while her husband had a scissors stab wound on his hand and his shirt was ripped off. He also allegedly punched a hole in a wall.

"Really, it was kind of a pitiful thing, to go to a movie like that and fight about it. I think they missed the point," said Gene McDaniel, chief Bulloch County sheriff's deputy.

Questions, doubts swirl in war's wake

By **MICHAEL HEDGES**

Houston Chronicle Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The gut-wrenching images from one year ago today have faded, along with the eerie green nighttime flashes of explosions and fiery strings of tracer bullets that announced America was once again at war with Iraq.

But certain questions echo louder than ever on the war's anniversary: Was the conflict timely, moral, justified? Has it made the United States safer? And, can Iraq overcome its factionalism and insurgency to build a democracy?

One year after the first U.S. troops streamed across the Kuwaiti border into Iraq, more than 560 soldiers and Marines have been killed and more than 2,800 have been injured, some with permanently disabling wounds.

The large stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction — which the Bush administration had predicted would be found and could be used in an alliance with terrorists — have not yet materialized.

But Saddam Hussein himself was rooted out of a hole near Tikrit by troops of Fort Hood's 4th Infantry Division last December. Jailed under U.S. guard, the former dictator now awaits trial as a war criminal.

On Wednesday and Thursday, Baghdad and

See IRAQ on Page 20A.

INSIDE



NEW VIOLENCE

Three U.S. soldiers die in mortar attacks and a convoy of Iraqi trucks, seen above, is ambushed: **Page 21A.**

UNSTEADY ALLIES

Poland considers withdrawing troops as South Korea cancels plans to send forces to northern Iraq: **Page 22A.**

DEALING WITH LOSS

Two Texas families recall the sacrifice of their sons: **Page 20A.**

NATO orders reinforcements to Kosovo as violence worsens

By **NICHOLAS WOOD**
New York Times

PRISTINA, Kosovo — NATO ordered reinforcements to Kosovo on Thursday as peacekeepers struggled to stem a wave of ethnic violence across the province, in southern Serbia.

The additional 1,000 troops, which will bring the overall NATO force to 11,600, began arriving Thursday evening, at the end of a second day of violence between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in which at least 31 people have been killed and hundreds injured, according to U.N. officials. Most of the dead were ethnic Serbs.

Security forces appeared at a loss as to how to reassert their control over the predominantly Albanian province as crowds attacked Serbian neighborhoods for a second night.

Throughout the day, scores of Serbian houses were set on fire, and according to a spokesman for the Serbian Orthodox Church, at least 20 churches were burned.

"There is a pattern emerging," said the Rev. Sava Janjic, speaking by phone from Decani monastery in western Kosovo. "The U.N. evacuates Serbs, and immediately afterwards Albanians come in and burn" houses and religious sites. Most Albanians are Muslim.

In one of the most serious incidents on Thursday, Swedish soldiers opened fire when gunmen emerged from a large group of Albanian protesters near the ethnically mixed village of Caglavica, south of Pristina, the provincial capital. The demonstrators had been trying to force their way through a barricade set up to protect Serbs' houses.

The shooting appeared to reflect a toughening of the peacekeepers' response to the violence. Earlier in the day, the German commander of the force, Gen. Haldger Kummerhoff, announced at a news conference that "proportionate force" would be used to ensure the troops' safety.

Gunmen exchanged fire with U.N. police in Pristina and in Lipljan, according to a police spokesman, Derek Chappell.

Many Serbian leaders voiced outrage that the United Nations seems unable to protect Serbs,

Q&A on Kosovo

Some commonly asked questions about the volatile region's past and its uncertain future:

Is Kosovo a country?

No. Although the province has been administered by the United Nations and NATO since the end of its 1998-99 war, it remains part of Serbia-Montenegro.

What caused the war?

The war began when ethnic Albanian militants took up arms to fight for independence following years of oppression by former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, who then sent Serb forces into Kosovo to crush the rebellion. It ended in 1999 after NATO launched 78 days of punishing airstrikes on Serbia to halt Milosevic's crackdown.

Why are peacekeepers still in the country, and how many are there?

A NATO-led peacekeeping force deployed in Kosovo after the war to ensure hostilities didn't re-ignite and to help maintain law and order. The force originally numbered about 50,000 troops, including 5,000 Americans; it has been drawn down gradually to 18,000, including about 2,000 U.S. soldiers. NATO plans to deploy 1,000 more troops.



What caused this week's clashes to erupt?

The violence began when ethnic Albanians blamed Serbs for the drowning deaths of two children and began rampaging in revenge. Ethnic Albanians set fire to Serb homes and churches, and Serbs elsewhere in Serbia responded by torching mosques.

What do both sides want, and why can't they get along?

Ethnic Albanians, most of whom are Muslim, dominate Kosovo and want independence from Serbia. Serbs, who are Orthodox Christians, consider the province hallowed ground and the birthplace of Serbian identity, and have refused to yield the territory.

Source: Associated Press

who make up just under 10 percent of the population. But local leaders also noted that some Albanians had gone out of their way to save Serbian neighbors from attack.

In Decani, the Albanian mayor intervened to prevent youths from marching on the monastery, Janjic said.

In Kosovo Polje, a town three miles west of Pristina, heavily armed U.N. police evacuated up to 50 Serbs who had sought refuge in the town headquarters. Riot police lined the road as, one by one, three white buses carried the Serbs, most of whom appeared to be elderly, out of the town.

As they drove down the road, groups of Albanian youths gathered by the side of the road and stared. Nearby, smoke rose from the remains of six houses that had been set afire the night before.

The scenes were reminiscent of the evacuation of Serbian refugees at the end of the Kosovo war, in 1999, when about 100,000 fled the province.

In the same town, forensic teams began to pick their way through the remains of burned houses and the Serbian hospital in search of human remains. None had been found by Thursday evening.

Adamant Scalia won't pull out of Cheney case

By CHARLES LANE
Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia fired back at critics of his recent duck-hunting trip with Vice President Dick Cheney Thursday, issuing an unusual 21-page memorandum rejecting demands that he disqualify himself from a pending case involving Cheney.

Responding to a motion for his recusal filed by the Sierra Club, which is suing for access to records of a White House energy task force Cheney headed, Scalia said the justices have never been required to sit out cases involving friends in government who are being sued in their official capacities — and that for him to do so now would set a dangerous precedent.

"(While friendship is a ground for recusal of a Justice where the personal fortune or personal freedom of the friend is at issue, it has traditionally not been a ground for recusal where official action is at issue, no matter how important the official action was to the ambitions or the reputation of the Government officer," Scalia wrote.

"A rule that required Members of this Court to remove themselves from cases in which the official actions of friends were at issue would be utterly disabling."

Scalia said that, historically, justices have frequently been appointed precisely because they are close to the president or other members of an incumbent administration.

Scalia's point-by-point rebuttal of both the Sierra Club's motion and much of the press coverage of his trip with Cheney was unusual, both because he was not required to explain his decision publicly — justices rarely do so — and because of the combative manner in which a sitting justice

took on what he called "a good deal of embarrassing criticism and adverse publicity."

Scalia's statement means that he will be on the bench April 27 when the court hears oral arguments in the case, *Cheney vs. U.S. District Court*, No. 03-475. His decision cannot be appealed to the full court, because on March 1 the justices issued an order saying that Scalia alone would rule on the Sierra Club's motion.

"It is probably over at this point," said David Bookbinder, Washington legal director of the Sierra Club. "Obviously we are going to consider and think about it, but we think it is probably time for the Sierra Club to move on to the merits of the case against Dick Cheney."

Still, Scalia's memorandum did not end the debate over his contacts with the vice president and the Supreme Court's recusal procedures.

The justice's statement set out "the reasons to stay in the case if one wanted to stay in the case," said Steven Lubet, a professor of legal ethics at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., who has previously called on Scalia to recuse. "But one would have a lot more confidence in it if it had been made by the other eight members of the court."

Lubet said that although Scalia wrote that his conduct was consistent with such past friendships as those between Justice Byron White and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and between Justice Robert Jackson and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which did not lead to calls for recusal, those cases took place before the enactment of the current federal law on judicial recusal. That statute, cited by the Sierra Club as the basis of its motion, requires judges to recuse when their impartiality might "reasonably be questioned."

Ginsburg ties to activist group under fire

Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — Thirteen Republican members of Congress on Thursday asked Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg to withdraw from all future cases having to do with abortion because of her affiliation with the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund.

The House lawmakers said in a letter to the liberal justice that they were concerned about her lending her name and presence to the Justice Ruth Bader Gins-

burg Distinguished Lecture Series, which is co-sponsored by the defense fund, because the fund often files legal briefs in cases before the Supreme Court.

"As legislators, we believe your actions call into question your ability to rule with impartiality on any case involving abortion," the 13 lawmakers wrote.

Ginsburg, in a speech last week, defended her relationship with the legal defense fund and said Supreme Court justices are reluctant to recuse themselves in individual cases because it

could lead to tie votes in the Supreme Court.

Similarly, some Democratic members of Congress urged conservative Justice Antonin Scalia to step aside in deciding a case involving Vice President Dick Cheney's energy task force because Cheney and Scalia recently shared a hunting trip together in Louisiana. On Thursday, Scalia declined to recuse himself.

However, Democrats have raised no objections to Ginsburg's relationship with the pro-choice legal defense fund, and

Republicans have raised no objections to Scalia participating in the Cheney case.

The 13 House Republicans who wrote Ginsburg are Joseph R. Pitts of Pennsylvania; Dave Weldon of Florida; Walter B. Jones and Sue Wilkins Myrick of North Carolina; Kevin Brady of Texas; Barbara Cubin of Wyoming; Paul Ryan of Wisconsin; W. Todd Akin of Missouri; Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee; Mike Pence of Indiana; Roscoe G. Bartlett of Maryland; Steve King of Iowa; and Christopher H. Smith of New Jersey.

Asteroid heading past Earth was closest one ever recorded

Associated Press

PASADENA, Calif. — A 100-foot-diameter asteroid passed close, but harmlessly, by Earth on Thursday, astronomers said.

The hurtling rock passed about 26,500 miles above the southern Atlantic Ocean at 4:08 p.m. CST.

It was the closest recorded encounter between Earth and an asteroid, said Steven Chesley, an astronomer at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory who works on a program looking for such objects.

Such encounters, however, are actually believed to occur at the rate of one every two years and simply have not been detected, he said.

"There certainly have been closer encounters that we didn't know about," he added.

Astronomers were continuing to observe the asteroid, 2004 FH, which was expected to be beyond the moon by early today.

It won't come fairly close to Earth again until 2044, when it will be within 930,000 miles.

Chesley said there was a lingering chance, on the order of one in a million, that it could hit sometime in the future, but that possibility is expected to be eliminated as its orbit is further refined.

The asteroid was close enough to Earth on Thursday to be visible through binoculars from vantage points in the Southern Hemisphere, Asia and Europe, Chesley said.

Butterfly study backs theory of 6th worldwide extinction

By **PAUL RECER**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A steep decline in birds, butterflies and native plants in Britain supports the theory that humans are pushing the natural world into the Earth's sixth big extinction event and the future may see more animal species disappearing.

In an effort that sent more than 20,000 volunteers into every corner of England, Scotland and Wales to survey wildlife and plants, researchers found that many native populations are in big trouble and some are gone altogether.

"This is the first time, for instance, that we can answer the question, 'Have butterflies declined as badly as birds?'" said Jeremy A. Thomas, an ecologist with the National Environment Research Council in Dorchester, England, and the first author of a study appearing in the journal *Science*.

A survey of 58 butterfly species found that some had experienced a 71 percent population swoon since similar surveys taken from 1970 through 1982.

Some 261 bird species were tracked between 1968 and 1971, and then again from 1988 to 1991, with a population decline of about 54 percent.

Two surveys of 1,254 native plant species showed a decrease of about 28 percent over 40 years.

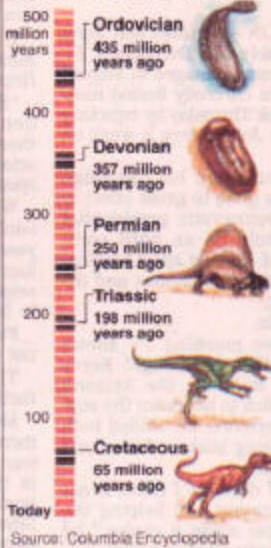
Thomas said that other scientists, noting losses of mammals and other animals, have speculated about the loss of insects, but the British butterfly study is the first to actually document over decades such a steep decline.

"Population extinctions were recorded in all the main ecosystems of Britain," Thomas and

DEADLY DATA

A severe decline in birds, butterflies and native plants supports the hypothesis that a global extinction is under way in the natural world. If so, it would be the sixth in Earth's history.

Five greatest extinctions



Associated Press

his co-authors wrote. This supports the theory, they said, that "the biological world is approaching the sixth major extinction event in its history."

Thomas said that some past extinctions have killed off more than 90 percent of all life forms and "nobody is suggesting we are at that point."

But, he said, "if this goes on for the foreseeable future, then within a short period in geological time we will be getting toward the level of a major extinction."

Scott Miller, a biologist with the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, said the British study was impressive in its thoroughness. He said, "They may not be representative of the world as a whole, but they have the best data."

The data support the idea that the rise of humans over tens of thousands of years — along with climate changes — is reshaping the natural world in ways that aren't thoroughly understood.

Scientists have identified five extinction events in Earth's history, with some so severe that more than 90 percent of all life forms died.

The last and most famous extinction was the Cretaceous-Tertiary event some 65 million years ago that killed the dinosaurs and allowed the rise of mammals. It is thought to have been caused by an asteroid hitting Earth.

"We are in the middle of a sixth extinction event that began about 50,000 years ago" with the expanding role in the world of human beings, said Paul S. Martin, a zoologist and geochemist at the University of Arizona in Tucson. "It's happening, but it's slower and it is not clear it will be as severe as some of the others."

Stuart Pimm, an ecologist at Duke University, said in *Science* that the British study results "show that we have likely underestimated the magnitude of the pending extinctions."

Miller and Martin both point to the hundreds of species, mostly large animals and birds, that already are gone, some wiped out directly through human action.

Martin said the fossil records show that the disappearance of many animals in Australia, Madagascar and North America started about the time that humans arrived.

Hunters contracting retrovirus found in African apes

Associated Press

LONDON — African ape hunters are being infected by the same class of viruses that causes AIDS, scientists say, raising fears of a possible epidemic of new disease in the future.

The finding was the first study to confirm the transmission of a retrovirus from primates to humans in natural settings. The transmission has been seen

previously among animal researchers and zoo workers.

"The hunting and butchering of primates plays a role in retroviral emergence," said Dr. Nathan Wolfe, lead author of the study and an assistant professor at the School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University.

He said it raises the risk "that ongoing cross-species transmission of retroviruses and other pathogens could spark future epidemics similar to HIV."

The study, which also involved researchers from Cameroon, was published in *The Lancet* medical journal today.

It said the hunters infected by simian foamy virus, SFV, had shown no symptoms of disease.

More research is needed to discover if it is harmful to humans or can be passed between them.

Scientists say the AIDS epidemic that emerged in the 1980s was the result of

cross-species transmissions of another monkey virus, simian immunodeficiency viruses, or SIV, to people several decades earlier.

They based their theory on genetic analyses of the AIDS virus and similar viruses found in chimps.

Wolfe said researchers have already documented animal-to-human transmission of retroviruses like SFV and SIV in the laboratory, "but our study is the first to demonstrate that these

retroviruses are actively crossing into people" in natural settings.

Scientists from Johns Hopkins, the Cameroon Ministry of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other institutions studied blood samples from 1,099 individuals from Cameroon who were taking part in an HIV prevention program.

They reported the presence of SFV antibodies in 1 percent of the people tested.

"God called me into ordained ministry,
and I just can't believe that God makes a mistake."

The Rev. Karen Dammann

Lesbian minister on trial says she followed God's call

Associated Press

BOTHELL, Wash. — A Methodist minister on trial for declaring herself a lesbian said Thursday that God called her into the ministry, "and I just can't believe that God makes a mistake."

The Rev. Karen Dammann, 47, has been charged with violating church law by living in a homosexual relationship, which United Methodist Church law says is incompatible with Christian teachings. She has pleaded not guilty and is being tried before a jury of 12 pastors.

Nine votes are needed for conviction, which could mean a loss of ministry.

"God called me into ordained ministry, and I just can't believe that God makes a mistake," Dammann said during a break in the second day of her trial at Bothell United Methodist Church.

Dammann, on leave as pastor of First United Methodist Church in Ellensburg, 96 miles east of Seattle, also said she was hopeful about the trial's outcome. "It's possible that this will be a prophetic moment for the church," she said.

During Thursday's testimony, Dammann's defense team tried to show that church officials knew Dammann was a lesbian five years ago — and took no action against her.

The Rev. Elaine Stanevsky, who supervised Dammann when she was a pastor at a Seattle church, said she visited Dammann and her partner, Meredith Savage, shortly after Savage had a baby boy, who is now 5.

Stanevsky said Dammann told her she was considering asking for family leave to care for Savage, who also was having problems with her hip.

Stanevsky said she did not believe Dammann was admitting her homosexuality, but was aware they were a family. "They



Associated Press

The Rev. Karen Dammann, right, and her partner, Meredith Savage, watch people protesting the trial Wednesday in Bothell, Wash.

sent a letter to church officials acknowledging her sexual orientation.

Bishop Elias Galvan of the church's Pacific Northwest Conference received the letter and forwarded a complaint against her. He said he was simply following church rules.

The calm nature of Thursday's testimony contrasted with Wednesday's protests. About 100 people from as far as Florida, Arizona and Oklahoma, including members of Souforce, an interfaith organization that supports gay rights, protested the trial. Police arrested 31. A handful of people protesting homosexuality also demonstrated.

United Methodist officials have said the trial is the first against a homosexual pastor in the denomination since 1987, when the credentials of the Rev. Rose Mary Denman of New Hampshire were revoked.

Subject: Worst President In History? (an email from one of our members...)

AND.....(now a word of caution because I'm not positive these numbers are precise) but if I read it correctly, there were 39 combat related killings in Iraq during the month of January....in the fair city of Detroit there were 35 murders in the month of January. That's one American city folks, about as deadly as the entire war torn country of Iraq. The following appeared in the Durham, NC local paper as a letter to the editor. Please forward to all on your list as this will put things in perspective:

Liberals claim President Bush shouldn't have started this war. They complain about his prosecution of it. One liberal recently claimed Bush was the worst president in U.S. history. Let's clear up one point: We didn't start the war on terror. Try to remember, it was started by terrorists BEFORE 9/11. Let's look at the "worst" president and mismanagement claims.

FDR led us into World War II. Germany never attacked us: Japan did. From 1941-1945, 450,000 lives were lost, an average of 112,500 per year.

Truman finished that war and started one in Korea, North Korea never attacked us. From 1950-1953, 55,000 lives were lost, an average of 18,333 per year.

John F. Kennedy started the Vietnam conflict in 1962. Vietnam never attacked us.

Johnson turned Vietnam into a quagmire. From 1965-1975, 58,000 lives were lost, an average of 5,800 per year.

Clinton went to war in Bosnia without UN or French consent, Bosnia never attacked us. He was offered Osama bin Laden's head on a platter three times by Sudan and did nothing. Osama has attacked us on multiple occasions.

In the two years since terrorists attacked us, President Bush has liberated two countries, crushed the Taliban, crippled al-Qaida, put nuclear inspectors in Lybia, Iran and North Korea without firing a shot, and captured a terrorist who slaughtered 300,000 of his own people. We lost 600 soldiers, an average of 30 a year. Bush did all this abroad while not allowing another terrorist attack at home. Worst president in history?

Come on!