

Go Sox, go Cubs: Not either-or but both-and

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [November 29, 2005](#) issue

This is not an easy time to be a Chicago Cubs fan. Chicago is still celebrating the stunning World Series sweep by the Chicago White Sox. Baseball championships may happen regularly in cities like New York or Los Angeles, but not here. The White Sox last won the World Series in 1917. The Cubs' last World Series victory was in 1908. With the Sox victory, the Cubs are now alone in the realm of futility. The Boston Red Sox used to share the humiliation of the Cubs, but last year they rose up and won it all—after an 86-year dry spell. And now the White Sox have done it.

Alone now, the Cubs bear the heavy responsibility of trusting that life emerges from death, of believing in the promise of resurrection. All the rest, including White Sox fans, must contend with hubris and the temptation of pride, which, as we know, is the essence of sin.

Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard wrote a book titled *Either-Or*, which suggests that authentic human life is always a product of critical decisions: either this or that. In Chicago the Kierkegaardian existential dynamic presents itself in the local mantra: Sox or Cubs. If you love one you have to hate the other.

The local media promote the contrast in terms of a geographic/ economic/social paradigm. Sox fans live on the South Side and are blue-collar, lunch-pail, beer-and-brats people. Cubs fans are North Side yuppies, bankers and Mercantile Exchange traders who prefer sushi and Chardonnay. It is said that you can't love both teams. It's either-or.

Maybe. But I'm a Cubs fan who likes the White Sox and always have. I arrived in Chicago to attend divinity school in 1959 on the night the White Sox last won the American League pennant. The city went wild. The fire commissioner set off the air raid sirens to celebrate. We thought that the city was under attack and that our first night in Chicago was going to be our last on earth. Two years later, I was at Comiskey Park watching the White Sox play the Yankees when my wife went into

labor. (The White Sox lost, but I made it to the hospital on time.) So I do have a few White Sox credentials.

It's not either-or for me but both-and. I find no conflict at all in sustaining my position—unless, of course, the two teams should meet in the World Series.

James Forbes, speaking recently at McCormick Seminary on “Preaching the Gospel in a Pluralistic Culture,” described how religious exclusivism is not only responsible for a lot of tragedy in the world but is the very opposite of the spirit of Jesus, who refused to acknowledge the dichotomies insisted on in his culture. The most important word in the Bible, Forbes said, quoting Quaker theologian Elton Trueblood, is *and*. This *and* that; my way *and* your way.

The White Sox triumph brought joy to the city and a little light into a Cubs fan's darkness. Who knows? Maybe next year will be the Cubs' year. In the meantime, it is both-and, not either-or.