

The most-read Then & Now posts

December 29, 2015

Here are this year's most-read posts from Then & Now, a weekly blog edited by Edward Carson, Beth Shalom Hessel, and John D. Wilsey and presented in partnership with the [Kripke Center](#) of Creighton University.

- 1) [**What's the biblical definition of marriage?**](#) by **Ronald A. Simkins**. Often behind the "traditional definition of marriage" is the biblical tradition where, it is claimed, marriage was created by God between one male and one female. But this is not the only definition endorsed by the biblical tradition.
- 2) [**What the Bible does and does not say about sexuality**](#), by **Randall Balmer**. I suggested that the ratio of evangelical denunciations about divorce and about same-sex orientation was directly inverse that in scripture. I've been responding to irate, indignant e-mails ever since.
- 3) [**The historical roots of evangelical anti-environmentalism**](#), by **Mark Stoll**. Since the environmental movement's peak in the 1970s, evangelicals have pilloried environmentalists and cast doubt on problems like global warming.
- 4) [**The rise of smiling preacher Joel Osteen**](#), by **Philip Luke Sinitiere**. In 2005, Osteen was a familiar name in Houston, but only mildly recognizable outside Texas. That would soon change.
- 5) [**Why Francis favors reality over ideas**](#), by **Christopher M. Bellitto**. Reality is superior to ideas. That simple sentence is central to why this pope is rejuvenating so many inside and outside Catholicism.
- 6) [**George Whitefield's troubled relationship to race and slavery**](#), by **Thomas S. Kidd**. Georgia trustees had banned slavery from the colony. Whitefield thought the ban was silly.

7) [When the founders looked to Moses](#), by **James P. Byrd**. The issue with the Texas State Board of Education is not only about Moses. It is about the place of religion, specifically Christianity and the Bible, in American politics.

8) [How my students learned to think historically about Revelation](#), by **Todd M. Brenneman**. If the symbolism of the book was not already a challenge, the history of how people have read it makes engaging Revelation a difficult enterprise.

9) [Two films about Mormons in Africa](#), by **Margaret Blair Young**. In 19th-century Utah, Africa was a mystery, but the belief in humanity's divine nature apparently persuaded Mormons that even "benighted" Africans could be converted.

10) [Why Gulf Coast Catholics aren't looking to the pope on climate change](#), by **Michael Pasquier**. Generally speaking, American Catholics are ignorant of the church's position on the human and natural causes of climate change.

11) [When MLK responded to an "all lives matter" argument](#), by **Eric A. Weed**. Fifty-two years ago, eight white clergy penned their version of "all lives matter."

12) [What's in a president's faith?](#) by **Gary Scott Smith**. Should prospective voters care about candidates' religious convictions? Do the religious commitments of politicians significantly impact their worldviews, political philosophies, policies, and actions?

13) [Obama's God is loving. Is this God just?](#) by **Kathryn Gin Lum**. Obama's theology is telling. He urges humility not just about our past but also before a loving but inscrutable God.

14) [Why blessing animals has become popular in recent decades](#), by **Patricia Appelbaum**. Shortly after Pope Francis visited the United States in September, many churches invoked his namesake, St. Francis of Assisi, in services of blessing animals.

15) How Selma helped me appreciate organ pipes, by Edward J. Blum.

Selma was an experience: visceral, soulful, inspiring, and shocking. One visual image that struck me was based in sound.