

MM email Blue Sheet — Our 33rd Year

Moment Ministries — Corvallis OR — a-morgan@peak.org

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Morgan's Moment...

*Why didn't Moses think of that?
a passing thought
as Mubarak flew away.*

*You remember Moses of course...
the kid floating in a basket
in Egyptian bulrushes.*

*He had good luck
raised like a prince
before murdering a guy.*

*Then he had bad luck
seeing a burning bush
and getting a summons from God.*

*A little job for his people
moaning in bondage in Egypt
under a mean old Pharaoh.*

*God conspired with Moses
to convince a proud Pharaoh
"Let my people go."*

*That's when Moses should have said:
"No, your Honor God...
Let's tell Pharaoh to go!"*

*That was my passing thought
as Egyptian crowds triumphed
and the President flew away.*

*Think of all the drowned soldiers
and wilderness wandering
that could have been avoided.*

*It's a story of biblical proportions...
how God finally got it right in Egypt
without plagues or bloodshed..*

— Art Morgan

SPEAKING OF STEPHEN HAWKING

We went to Eugene to hear Stephen Hawking several years ago. It was a remarkable experience to be in the presence of this genius. My background did not include much science. If I were doing it again I would have at least studied physics and surely astronomy. I have read widely in the various sciences through the years. For some time a former science teacher, Grace Ford, coached me and guided me to some good reading that I could understand.

My Eugene experience was my first with a renowned scholar like Hawking.

But his scientific brilliance was not what I remembered. He was introduced, then came onto the stage through the curtains on his motorized scooter which he guided with one finger. You probably know that he is a long time Parkinson's patient. His ability to walk and speak is long gone. But his mind travels the universe. Using a computerized voice device he presented a succinct lecture, followed by a question and answer time. Questions were submitted, sorted, then responded to with brief clarity and often with humor.

I mention this fact in tribute to several long-time friends who have lived with this disease and continue to live with it. Each has inspired me with courage and grace, and often the same humor that appears in the writing and "speech" of Hawking. He is an inspiration to all who share that journey. I'm thinking of five on this list that I know of right now. Blessings!

THURSDAY NIGHT MOMENT FOR FEBRUARY February 17

*"Go down Moses way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh to let my people go!"*

**5:30 – 6:30 Gathering and Social Time
6:30 Shared Potluck Supper
Singing, Paul's Song, Art's Moment**

BOOK CORNER

Our next book club read is Stephen Hawking's "Grand Design." Couldn't help getting a head start on it. I heard Hawking a few years ago after reading "A Brief History of Time." He's profound (meaning there's much I can't comprehend) and simple (meaning that he takes me beyond anything I've ever understood before). He is also surprisingly humorous. "Grand Design" gets attention because Hawking declares that the Big Bang does not require God. One speaks of God with less familiarity and more reverence after this.

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REAGAN, REICH AND RELIGION

To name drop and not betray any major confidences, let me say that I have been in email conversation with Cliff Cole about his father Myron's pastoral association with Ronald Reagan.

Thus I was forwarded a copy of the dad's book, "Myron Here." I knew Myron Cole as a minister in both Portland and Los Angeles. The book included some things I wasn't quite sure about regarding Ronald Reagan's roots in the Christian Church (Disciples) and his subsequent transfer to the Bel-Air Presbyterian Church (although he continued financial contributions to the Hollywood-Beverly Christian Church where his mother and ex-wife remained members).

Somewhere during that period Reagan evolved from a moderate Christian to a more conservative one, which corresponded to his political evolution.

Then, on Reagan's 100th birth date, I noted a guest editorial in our local paper by Dick Polman of the Philadelphia Inquirer entitled: "**Reagan idolatry doesn't square with History.**" He hooked me with his first line: "**Ronald Reagan, one of America's least-known liberals.**" Liberal?

"Reagan the icon — the one feted by conservatives on his centennial on Sunday — is very different from the Reagan of reality... The myth can be reduced to a sentence: 'Reagan cut taxes and ended the cold war.'" Myth?

Polman continues as follows:

"In his first year as governor of California, he broke a tax-cut campaign promise and signed the largest tax hike in state history... The increase was worth \$6 billion in today's money."

Then, as President...

"In 1982 Reagan signed into law two tax increases — one of which later was characterized in a Treasury Department report as the heftiest peacetime tax hike in American history. All told, he gave back roughly one-third of the tax cuts enacted a year earlier. Then in 1983, breaking a promise to go after entitlement programs, he saved Social Security with a \$165 billion bailout by signing a hike in payroll taxes... That year he also hiked the federal gasoline tax. In 1984, he signed a deficit-reduction bill that mandated yet another tax increase."

He also reports Reagan's signing of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 imposing the highest corporate tax hike in history while closing a \$300 billion corporate loophole. Reagan was not a Tea Party type conservative.

Like other things I read (including the Bible) I wonder whether what I am reading is true. Is that what really happened?

I wonder why the popular mantra repeated on many news networks and talk shows is that the national problem is high taxes and government spending. Is it true? I'm not an economist, but when the revered Ronald Reagan thought balancing a budget sometimes required more taxes, I have to wonder. Maybe he had a deeper sense of justice than most today.

I didn't get to the Earl Lectures in Berkeley this year, but I looked up some of what was said by the keynote speaker, former Secretary of Labor, Robert Reich. His topic was: "*The Real Meaning of Economic Justice.*" With my newly discovered revelations about Ronald Reagan (who was raised in the Christian Church — Disciples, and was taught Sunday School by the grandmother of my friend, Bill Bonner), I was startled to read an almost carbon copy of what Reagan did.

"Reich's prescription was to recalibrate the economy to make the tax system more progressive, lowering taxes on the working and middle classes, and raising rates on top earners. He stated that this was the only way to spread the benefits of the economy more widely and stimulate sustained growth. 'I'm not a class warrior. I'm a class worrier,' he said." (January 31, 2011, Pacific School of Religion Earl Lectures)

I mentioned religion in my title mostly because it added up to 3 "R's." But a key factor in most religions is the call for justice. It claims God as siding with the poor. It is never easy on the wealthy that are "at ease in Zion," who "oppress the poor and crush the needy." If one is a Christian the issue is even more pressing. The metaphor Jesus chooses for God is "father," the keeper of the household, who divides the bread so that all in his family shares. That's the kind of justice we should be talking about.

Today I think about Ronald Reagan and Robert Reich and the teachings of religion. If those three are on the same page, then on what page are the rest of us? — Art Morgan, February 13, 2011