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“The Irony of It All”

Recently, I was reading a book re-recommended to me by Rev. Estee Valendy titled *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* by the late Eugene H. Peterson who readers best known for his paraphrase of the Bible called *The Message*. In a nutshell the book reminds us that simply being busy is not a faithful answer to God’s call. We know that for example that doing the right things is as important as doing things right. Because we can never be “enough” for our world, guilt and regret too often lead us down a path on which we would rather not travel.

Peterson tries to help us return to the essentials of faith. For Christians this basically means returning to prayer, scripture study, and having holy conversations with other believers who are seeking spiritual direction. Clearly, the tempting distractions that surround us constantly we cannot simply ignore—they press us down on all sides. Yet it is good for someone like Peterson to remind us that we are more than those who run an institution—we are people set apart for God’s serious work of making broken people and a sick world whole and healthy again.

Imagine after reading this kind of “heavy stuff,” I noticed an article tucked in the back of the Peterson book that someone had anonymously (I now know why anonymously) slipped to me. Here is the gist of a much longer commercial notice:

Many people in the U.S.—perhaps 20 million to 40 million—believe there will be a Second Coming in their lifetimes, followed by the Rapture. In this event, they say, the righteous will be spirited away to a better place while the godless remain on Earth. But what will become of all the pets?

Bart Centre, 61, a retired retail executive in New Hampshire, says many people are troubled by this question, and he wants to help. He started a service called Eternal Earth-Bound Pets that promises to rescue and care for animals left behind by the saved.

Promoted on the Web as “the next best thing to pet salvation in a Post Rapture World,” the service has attracted more than 100 clients, who pay \$110 for a 10-year contract (\$15 for each additional pet.) If the Rapture happens in that time, the pets left behind will have homes—with atheists. Centre has set up a national network of godless humans to carry out the mission. “If you love your pets, I can’t understand how you could not consider this” (www.businessweek.com/magazine).

When we lay bare, side by side, Peterson and “pet salvation in a Post Rapture World,” I can understand that non-believers might be a little hard pressed as to what to make of this religion business. This suggests that people like us may make all the difference.