

No Trespassing

Robert Frost remarked that good fences make good neighbors. Maybe that explains why Canada dislikes us. Bracken and brambles have obscured the five-thousand mile boundary to the point that officials dither about where we end and they begin. What with terrorists and illegal immigration and undocumented moose, a blurred boundary is a bad boundary.

The feds have forked over \$67 million to Boeing for a technocratic tightening of the gateway to the Lower Forty-Eight: motion-activated cameras, sensors, drone aircraft, the works. The International Boundary Commission, by contrast, gets \$3.5 million to whack away the weeds and paint the cement structures that mark the Maginot Line in the pines. Simply put, you can't defend a border you can't define.

This whole riff reminds us of the blessing of boundaries. The police barricade tape of biblical prohibitions serves as a visible sign of God's grace. A generation unaccustomed to taking orders interprets all laws as legalism. We fail to understand that God fences off only what proves spiritually fatal. It's no mistake that eight out of ten Commandments surveyed begin "Thou shalt not," or that one of the basic Greek words for sin means "trespass."

Jesus, an inveterate boundary-jumper from way back, dismissed the Pharisaic fine-tuning of theological property lines, but respected the truer and fewer lines laid down by the Lord. He described the judgment day as a sort of last round-up in which a single fence of saving faith separates souls into the only two groups that matter.

So break out your weed-whacker and white paint. God's people should resurrect and respect the wise fences that protect us from the infiltration of evil. Elizabeth Barrett Browning claims that "'Nay' is worse/From God than from all others." But not always, Liz, not always.

Eh?
Doug