MERE ORTHODOXY

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T.S. ELIOT

I confess, however, that I am not myself very much concerned with the question of influence, or with those publicists who have impressed their names upon the public by catching the morning tide and rowing very fast in the direction in which the current was flowing; but rather that there should always be a few writers preoccupied in penetrating to the core of the matter, in trying to arrive at the truth and to set it forth, without too much hope, without ambition to alter the immediate course of affairs, and without being downcast or defeated when nothing appears to ensue.

The late John Webster once remarked that we do not have the luxury of speaking about God as if he is not listening. This simple acknowledgement can protect us from two dangers. First, it guards against dead religiosity, which professes all the right beliefs with none of the real-world fruit that should follow. Recognizing that all that we do is lived before the eyes of God can and should jolt us out of our lethargy. The prophets as well as Our Lord himself have much to say about this. But neither should we accept a pious do-goodism, an indifference to questions of truth and principle. Webster's words remind us that the way we speak of God makes us more or less fit to behold him, indeed more or less able to behold him. A know-nothing piety will wither and die unless it is anchored to a keen desire to speak and think God's thoughts after him, to whatever degree our admittedly great limitations allow us.

And so we begin the first print issue of Mere Orthodoxy with this simple concern: We desire to speak the truth in pursuit of knowing Truth Himself. We believe that God's world is worth knowing and worth loving. It is that desire to know reality truly and to know the God who is responsible for it that animates our work.

Perhaps it sounds banal to suggest that a magazine's core purpose is simply to say true things about God and his works in a loud, distracted, and ideological era. I understand that impulse, but it is mistaken. A professor once suggested to a friend of mine that discerning truth "is not as difficult as you think. It is far more difficult than that."

He was right. The reasons why are legion. Ordinary human finitude is one, of course, along with human sinfulness, which turns even our good desires toward perverse ends. Further obstacles are unique to our day. The seemingly infinite demands on our attention, and the culture of distraction this produces, is a great threat. And, of course, there is the fact of our current political and cultural climate, a climate in which many of our neighbors and virtually all of our leaders have long since lost interest in truth, lusting instead for power and control.

We need truth, however, for the simple reason that no person can live without love, and love requires truth; love's life is drawn from the life of God and to know God we must know truth. "Only in truth does charity shine forth, only in truth can charity be authentically lived," wrote Benedict XVI in his encyclical "Caritas in Veritate." Without truth, love languishes. Benedict went on to say that, "without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality. Love becomes an empty shell, to be filled in an arbitrary way. In a culture without truth, this is the fatal risk facing love."

Our hope for this inaugural issue is that it would bear witness to the truth. Kirsten Sanders reminds us in her essay that because time belongs to God (and not to us) it is God's to spend, not ours. Through a careful consideration of God himself she leads us to the truth that a felt sense of urgency, either to

JAKE MEADOR

reach back toward a lost golden age or forward into progress realized, is itself a sort of idol, a God-substitute. As such, it will always thwart our good ambitions. Our work and public advocacy will only become effective when we rest confidently in the benevolence of God.

Oliver O'Donovan helps us to better understand what we do when we reason over questions of morality and specifically considers that central question in the Christian story: how can sinful people like you and I be made fit for union with God? Matthew Lee Anderson then considers a similar question, asking how the idea of orthodoxy applies to questions concerning sexuality and gender and whether we can speak of such a thing as "moral orthodoxy." Tara Ann Thieke, meanwhile, draws our attention to the tangible and concrete world of sense and sensibility, a world that feels ever more distant as we become more immersed in smartphones and other technology.

Christian Schmidt asks the simple question "what does love have to do with citizenship?" and answers it by profiling an unknown couple in a remote Alaskan town whose love has helped sustain the town through many trials. Onsi A. Kamel confronts the hard question of what it means to suffer one's children and how we make sense of things when our emotional life is out of step with what we know to be true.

We also consider a variety of recent books on topics ranging from boredom to parenting to America's political realignment.

I don't yet know if there is a large enough market for what we do, but I do know that this issue is representative of what we do well. I hope that this inaugural issue of *Mere Orthodoxy* will help you to slow down your mind, to practice what one friend of mine calls "a Sabbath of the soul," and to consider both God and his works with a reverent joy that you cannot help but carry into your day long after you have set the magazine down. Christianity has always been a religion of words, and so it is with hope that we offer you the words our contributors have written for our first foray into print.

Thank you for reading.

JAKE MEADOR

JAKE MEADOR IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF MERE ORTHODOXY. HE LIVES IN HIS HOMETOWN OF LINCOLN, NE WITH HIS WIFE AND FOUR CHILDREN.

Christian Hope

BY: KIRSTEN SANDERS

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth
and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.
— Psalm 90:1–20

I have often thought that anyone who ate at a Cracker Barrel should have predicted Donald Trump's election in 2016. There they would have eaten nostalgic food amid relics of "days gone by" — antique washbasins, vintage scrub boards, old posters advertising laundry soap and vinegar and bleach. At least a few journalists likely sat under these artifacts, chewing their biscuits and gravy with an ambience provided by dead women's chores.

Few, it seems, made any connection with this meal and the 2016 election. Perhaps hardly anyone would. And yet there is something worth investigating about a culture that saves antique washbasins and clothing irons and implements of premodern housekeeping. These are not gilded washbasins or jewel-encrusted scrub boards. Such objects are saved for reasons other than their essential worth. Their value lies in memory alone.

NOSTALGIA AND PROGRESS

Memory is, of course, a way to treasure things and people who were loved and who brought value to our lives. But memory can slip quickly into the trap of nostalgia; trading the complicated realities of the present for a representation of times-gone-by. The hope that a nation would be "made great again" certainly misremembers the greatness of the past.

Christians must learn how to avoid the pitfalls of nostalgia and progress both, even as we commit ourselves to the work of bettering our communities. In the noise of partisan debate, we can lose sight of how calls, both to restore national greatness and to institute new social changes toward a better social vision, can come unmoored. Right Christian hope in the eternal God can serve as a corrective to a swing in either direction: either overemphasis on what has been lost or an overemphasis on human possibility. Nostalgia and Progress are equally tempting and can be equally dangerous; as Martin Luther once said, it is possible to fall off a horse in either direction.

Nostalgia is a perennial danger for the Christian, with its memory of a past that perhaps never was.

Take the example above of nostalgia for laundry implements. "Washing day" would have been a long and grueling affair, to be repeated again almost immediately after it was finished. The dirt and grime of agrarian communities especially was not insubstantial, and so removing it required scrubbing and soaking and wringing out, only to repeat them again. The water would quickly soil, filled with particles and debris, and washwomen would find their hands stirring the slurry. The basins would need to be filled, then emptied, then filled again, the clothes immersed and scrubbed and wrung out and hung out to dry. The physical work combined with the grimy cast-off debris made this work, I imagine, at least a bit undesirable.

This was also work done by those without other options. Women who did their own washing did so because they had to. But it was also servants — and even slaves — who did the housework of the well-to-do, whose hands touched those washbasins that traveled through time and landed in interstate restaurants. What we memorialize when we save washbasins is nostalgia for a simpler life made possible by another's labor. With this kind of nostalgia, we risk memorializing also the conditions that led to such a lack of options; the despair of menial work and low pay, day upon day of cracking dry skin and sediment swirling in greasy gray water.

The danger of nostalgia lies in imagining the past as without moral complication, without despair, without sorrow. It is the memory of a thing without its inconvenience, its burden, its strenuous detail. It confuses the good that has resulted from time gone by for the reality of that time itself, valuing the fruits of another's labor as our own inheritance.

Now we have washing machines that free us to tend to other things. This, we are told, is Progress. What is called "Progress" provides the second pole of the social imaginary and its own dangers besides. The ideal of progress pulls individuals not toward a mythic past but to a better, brighter future. But progress, if it exists at all, is no less complicated than nostalgia. According to the idea of progress, the current social order is judged to be objectively better than the past, and the goal of social life is judged to be the actualization of further improvements. The idea of "social progress" often carries with it a view of moral improvement that has its roots in Darwinian thought and its logical extension branching into eugenics. The view that the condition we find ourselves in — one of weakness, frailty, and need — could be improved or eliminated quickly leads to viewing weakness, frailty, and need as moral deficiencies. It is not a far leap from eliminating weakness to eliminating the weak.

Further, the gains of progress are often coupled with losses. All too often the achievements of "progress" veil within them a darker cost. New industry promises jobs but brings with it low wages and poor working conditions. Greener technology promises to reduce carbon emissions but inadvertently contributes to other forms of environmental degradation. Advanced targeted military technology removes the moral clarity of war from soldiers and replaces it instead with an invisible, soul-crushing sorrow. Additionally, progress often judges the modern individual to have unchallenged knowledge of what is good and beautiful about human experience and the natural world. Such beliefs are naive at best and deeply colonizing at their worst.

Christian theology at its best should serve as a corrective to naïve notions of "progress" and "nostalgia" both. But we are caught between nostalgia, with its false memory, and progress, with

its vision of human improvement far removed from the reality of human sin. Christian hope is properly neither.

THE SHAPE HOPE TAKES

The object of Christian hope is, as Thomas Aquinas writes, "a future good, difficult but possible to obtain." But it is not a generic hope; rather, hope is only properly Christian when its source is God himself and its end the eternal happiness found in communion with God. Hope, therefore, is not the correct word to speak about human optimism or the desire for the betterment of the human condition, conceived in human terms. It is not remote wish fulfillment ("I hope the sun comes out today") or vague future desires ("I hope next year's markets are stronger"). Christian hope is not a theological emotion. It is, at least in the Catholic tradition, considered a theological virtue.

Aquinas was clear that hope is a virtue of the will. But unlike the acquired virtues, hope is infused, given by God as a gift of grace. Hope works to nurture and urge the soul on its journey toward God; it is a virtue that both invigorates the soul and prevents it from moving toward presumption or despair. As David Elliot memorably writes, the task of the Christian is "to get hope's leaning right," to lean on God alone, in order that our human action might be rightly ordered as we sojourn toward God.

Further, for Aquinas, hope is not a passion, but is located in the will. Therefore, it moves the creature toward reliance on God. The theological virtue of hope, rooted in the will, keeps the soul from going off course, from running ashore, or from eagerly pursuing something other than a theological good.

These definitions orient Christian hope as something other than the human desire for whatever it is that is judged to be a cultural good. Both nostalgia and progress can grant humans a vision of a world they wish for, but according to these definitions, both can fail to be adequately Christian. But Christian hope joins itself to charity, that chief theological virtue. It unites the individual soul to God through love, and this love spills over into seeking the bettering of one's neighbor.

Christians have a somewhat notorious reputation for using the language of hope to ignore other people's problems, deferring relief of suffering to the life to come. But a properly Christian hope cannot become lazily disposed toward the tragedy of this world. Rooted as it is in God, and ordered therefore toward the good, hope possesses the soul by ordering it toward the virtues. Therefore, hoping in God is not separate from ordering one's life toward neighbor-love, which entails seeking the betterment of one's neighbor.

This is where the shape of Christian action, ordered by Christian hope, provides a corrective to simplistic nostalgia or bloated views of progress based in human achievement. Christian hope is both confident and modest. Vested in God, hope orders the soul toward growth in virtue and therefore seeks to secure the good of one's neighbor by the demonstration of such virtues. And yet it is not frenetic, self-involved, frantic, or exhausted. It recognizes that God provides both the means and the mechanism, the sail and the wind that orders the soul toward its end. As Elliot notes, Christian hope recognizes that happiness is possible but future, and that attaining it is arduous. This tension keeps the pilgrim on the right and narrow path.

Our current cultural moment finds Christians

terribly divided over the question of how to pursue justice. It is difficult to imagine a worse witness to Christian hope. The work of neighbor-love to which all Christians are called must be peculiarly Christian work; its effectiveness marked not by its speed or volume or emotional decibel level. The exhaustion that perpetual outrage and unrelenting sorrow generate results in part from the persistent occasion of violence against the powerless. The exhaustion stems, however, not only from the barrage of violence but from the perpetually urgent call to respond and react in real time. This equates action with emotional response. It makes us weary, thinning the space to weep, to listen, to pray, to talk, and reflect together. It requires that we move quickly, when justice often requires slow, plodding, persistent work. It also demands that our emotions respond at a level commensurate with the violation — and truly, there is no anger that could match such sorrow.

Certainly we should not do *nothing*; quietism is the enemy of the gospel. But to say something is not necessarily to do something, and so often nothing gets done. In our current moment it is easy to live as those who exist only in the Now, in the urgent, in the response after the incident about which we must have something, right now, to say.

We must instead act as those who, having placed our hope in God, have time on our side. Between the stultifying morass of nostalgia and the frenetic emotionalism of progress, the Christian work of neighbor-love keeps God's eternity first at hand. This is not an argument on the side of either resistance or accommodation. Those studying the Black church have often noted the tendency of activists to choose one side or the other; to move swiftly to oppose this world's structures, or to moderate and work within them, accepting the slower cost of change. To keep in mind divine eternity is to reject both options as absolutes and lodge our action instead in the character of the God who Is.

THE GOD WHO IS

Divine eternity may seem a strange place to end a discussion of Christian social action. Discussions of divine eternity are often treated as one of theology's many Rumpelstiltskin questions, a matter of initial value that is turned into naught through endless, fruitless spinning. But God's eternity grounds Christian hope as something other than a choice between nostalgia and optimism, between a grab at regaining what's been lost and a strategic race to accomplish what is beyond our grasp.

To say that God is eternal is not to simply say that God possesses all the time in the world, as if the question were merely quantitative. Rather, it is to be reminded that time is God's to take. The Genesis account records God making the world "in the beginning." This is less a matter of origins than it is a statement of fact — this was the beginning; before it time was not. To create time is chief among God's acts. Indeed Eternity is the name God gives himself, in the Tetragrammaton, where God's naming of himself as the One "who was and is and will be" casts Israel as always in God's care. God as "I am who I am" is not a statement of God's self-evident obviousness ("It is I, who else would it be?"), but of God's eternity.

Christian hope vested in an eternal God offers us three things. Because all of time is God's own, we can move in it without hurry. The constant drumbeat of waking to fight another day is an important reminder of the necessity of justice work. But hurried movement often lacks disciplined reflection and communal insight.

Moving as those with Chrsitian hope reminds us that all our lives are in God's hand, and that we can move in the world without the fear of not having enough time to accomplish God's will. God both has all the time in the world and yet is without need of it; time is but a tool that God uses for his purpose. Time is God's to enter, in the shape of the divine Son, and then heartbreakingly to leave again, to the right hand of the Father. But this entry and exit of God into time is the way the world has always been, filled to bursting with the possibility of grace breaking through. God binds all creatures to himself, makes and remakes them in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It takes as long as it takes, because time is God's to take.

Second, God's eternity can allow us to act with rest. The deep brokenness of the world all around can spin the unquiet soil into a frenzied cycle of exhaustion. Truly the task is too great, and we are not up to complete it. And yet God's naming of himself as the Eternal One sets all our days in his hands. It is, Augustine writes, "our refuge," "that we may fly there from the mutability of time, there to remain for evermore." Finding God as the One whose strength is never diminished allows us to find rest in him. Christian hope does not allow for quietism, for the deferral of happiness to the life to come. But it reminds us that our hope is properly in *God* and the improbable economics of his reign.

Finally, divine eternity can afford us the opportunity to live without fear of tiring. Because the task is so large, the wounds so deep and persistent throughout generations, it is easy to give up before the day is over. Working with rest is itself a theological commitment. It is the acknowledgement that all we have, our creaturely abilities and our daily energy, is given by God. This same God who gave the initial gift of grace will continue to give again, as we cooperate with his work in the world. The trick is discerning which work is God's, and not ours alone.

We are given a hint of what the shape of Christian hope lived out in the world might look like. It comes in Matthew 20, with the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

This parable is a story about work and reward. There are three groups of workers, those called early in the day, those called at midday, and those called toward the end of the day. At the end of their work, they are all paid the same wage. Those who worked longer, in the heat of the day, begrudge the landowner's generosity. The parable's claim is stark: the wage is not up to our discretion. We must not begrudge generosity that comes from the divine hand. Indeed, in this work of the vineyard, which I take to mean kingdom work, we must work irrespective of whether we receive a wage proportionate to our labor, or whether others are rewarded more generously.

The parable, however, can also tell us something about time, and about how we approach the kingdom of God in light of it. It is easy, when faced with the challenges of racial injustice especially, to feel that we are running out of time and that we are not up to the task. The suffering is so great and has gone on for so long, and yet solutions available to us seem both inadequate and increasingly impossible to actualize. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard is not only a corrective to pay attention to the latecomers. It is a reminder that evil will not prevail, because God has all the time in the world — time that he will use to remake it.

We live, all of us, inside oppression's thousand-year day. It is late in the afternoon and the shadows have grown long. Night will come soon. The laborers are exhausted, but there is so much

work yet to be done. When in 1 Peter 3:8 the apostle says a day is like a thousand years, John Swinton notes, he is not saying that a thousand years *feels* like a day — but that it *is* a day. This is the riddle of the workers in the vineyard who reap a reward far outweighing their effort. This is the riddle of God's relation to time — not that abundance means God has "so much" — but that God's plenty is only God's to give. The wage given to the workers is the same because it is given at God's hand.

It is not just that there is a disparity between the wage given to one and the wage given to another. It is that God's time is not our own. Faithful consistent labor is rewarded, but so is that of those who show up near the end of the day, when it seems far too late for their response. God rewards the latecomers, too. The parable is not merely about due wages or generosity, but about God's working in the world in ways that defy our understanding of both.

Time casts a long shadow over our nation's sorrow. It has been so long, and it seems it will be yet longer, before its injustice is erased. So many spirituals bemoan, "how long, O Lord" and "soon and very soon," placing the persistence of sorrow adjacent to the echo of divine response. It has been so long — too long — and we cannot hasten the morning. It is only true Christian hope, vested in the eternal God, that can help us to act. Time is God's creation, itself a creature, and the God who never goes out of fashion has as much of it to spend as he needs. The Christian called to labor must move beyond the false promises of both, regaining what was lost or a future untainted by sin. We must hope as those who live lives nested in the God who was, who is, and who will be, whose own name is the Eternal One.

KIRSTEN SANDERS IS A THEOLOGIAN AND WRITER. SHE LIVES IN MASSACHUSETTS WITH HER FAMILY.

Punishment & Exchange

BY: OLIVER O'DONOVAN

It seems to some the very epitome of a "mere" orthodoxy in the worst sense — too juridical for God's mercy and too arbitrary for God's justice — even to those who are not in the habit of yielding too quickly to theological fashions, it is a puzzling thought that God could accept the sufferings of the innocent as an atonement for the offences of the guilty. But it is worth thinking further about how far such puzzled and outraged reactions can take us.

We are puzzled whenever reason confronts a difficulty. It presents us with a threat; we fear the loss of contact with reality. For it is the function of reason in every aspect of its operations - intuitive, discursive, logical, imaginative, prescriptive, etc. — to keep us in touch with reality. If reason sometimes dares to loosen its ties with reality, it is only in order to tie them again more tightly. Reason can explore counter-factual hypotheses, can imagine alternative worlds, can frame purposes and intentions that are to change the world it knows; but all these explorations, imaginations and purposes have to be "realistic," bound by the conditions of logical consistency and conceivable possibility. And yet reason is not immune to the threat of a breach with reality. It can find itself challenged, astonished, bewildered, even outraged by reality, for reality is always much wider and deeper than reason can accommodate. Kierkegaard described this dramatic affront of reason as "the paradox."

We experience "paradoxical passion" when reason has run to its limits, and is stopped dead in its tracks. And we can, he believed, respond in one of two ways to this. We can recoil from the paradoxical reality in "offence," or we can embrace the paradox in a "leap of faith," suspending the assumptions of reason that stand in its way. Reason then steps back, and looks for a new and more adequate approach to reality. There are some quite ordinary rational processes that illustrate this kind of rational re-calibration. The defeat and revision of scientific theories is one commonplace example, when prevailing theoretical understandings have to give way to new observations, and an imaginative leap is needed to frame new theoretical perspectives. But Kierkegaard's own interest in the phenomenon was theological. The term "paradox" was suggested to him by Saint Paul's reference to the "scandal" of the cross.

We are bound to wonder: can *moral* paradox ever be met by such a leap of faith? Reason, as we have been taught since Aristotle, proceeds on two fronts, theoretical and practical; it considers not only what is the case, but what is to be done. And while theoretical reason *follows* reality, describing it in the light

of observations, practical reason *leads* reality, forming prescriptions for action out of moral first principles. So it may seem that practical reason, at least in its higher form as moral reason, cannot respond to perplexity simply by surrendering its ground. That would be morally inconsistent, and so irrational. Moral reason is sometimes said to be "unconditional," by which is meant that its intuitions of good and evil, right and wrong, come first. They set the conditions for whatever it may subsequently learn from engagement with empirical reality. Right is right and wrong is wrong; it makes no difference if we learn that very many people in fact do wrong and only a few do right. Moral reason must stick to its principles and defy the world, as the proverb says, "even though the sky falls!"

That objection would be decisive, if it were in fact true that the sole function of moral reason was to prescribe. Our moral discourse is not confined to saying "Do this!" and "Don't do that!" It describes the moral quality of actions, events and states of affairs, and it can do it more attentively or less attentively, more selectively, more comprehensively, and so on. It is a mistake to think of moral thinking as a kind of peremptory pronouncement, a rhetorically defiant first and last word. There are, in fact, two operations involved in moral reason.

One, which we call "reflection," does things like "praising," "blaming," "evaluating," "recognising," "admiring," "deploring," and so on, attending to morally significant realities, to good and evil, beauty and ugliness, importance and triviality, etc., as they show up in the situations around us.

The other, which we call "deliberation," brings these reflective appreciations to the point of action: it "seeks" goals, "avoids" mistakes, forms purposes, "plans" courses of action, "decides" between alternatives. We ask first whether a situation is good or evil, and only then what is to be done about it. "He has shown you, o man, what is good…" says the prophet (Micah 6:8), "now, what does the Lord require of you...?"
There are two questions, "what is good" and "what does the Lord require." Two answers are required, connected by a "now," or a "therefore," which makes the second answer coherent with the first. Moral reason is a process of inference, not simply an intuition. Its descriptions and its prescriptions correct one another. And that is how moral reason, too, may confront "paradoxes," realities that it does not know how to describe adequately and so cannot prescribe for. Moral paradoxes arise in the most ordinary day-to-day experience of facing a dilemma.

Dilemmas have not been well treated by recent moral philosophy. It has preferred to focus our thoughts on the high ground of virtues and ideals, and has encouraged us to relegate dilemmas to the margins as a kind of anomaly, a disturbance on the calm surface of virtuous practice. But this is a dangerous temptation, for dilemmas are part and parcel of our real moral condition. Conducting ourselves well in the real world is often a puzzling business. Authentic moral conviction is rarely given us in a flash, but usually has to be searched for, sometimes with great anxiety. There are dilemmas that are purely deliberative, concerned with finding means to achieve ends: I know what I want to achieve, but I must look hard for the most suitable ways to achieve it. Others arise on the borderline between reflection and deliberation, when an unusual situation demands something that goes against the grain of an ordinarily virtuous habit of mind:

I am used to thinking carefully about decisions, but must now be decisive and resolute; I am used to speaking frankly, but must now be guarded

and evasive. Others again arise wholly within the reflective sphere. Others again are true "paradoxes," challenges to settled moral belief, which create the suspicion that the world is morally at odds with itself, inhospitable to virtue: I may believe that force is opposed to peace, and yet realise that peace may require force to defend it; I may believe in candid speech, and yet recognise situations in which only lying can protect someone who depends on me, and so on. The paradoxes associated with the death of Christ belong to this third type: we believe in the inviolability of innocence, but cannot deny the truth of what Saint John called the "prophecy" of Caiaphas: "It is expedient that one man should die for the people." In these conflicting pairs of principles, each appears valid on its own terms, and neither can be simply refused. Moral reason seems to contradict itself, and so we may come to doubt the ground of moral reasoning itself, the faith that good undergirds the world of action. This is the moment of "offence," which will leave us either sceptical or desperate.

There is, however, a theological strategy on which we may pin hopes of escaping from the perplexity. There is one absolute limit on the competence of moral reflection: it cannot tell us about the being and action of God. Moral reason thinks by analogy, judges every particular situation and action in the light of features it shares with other situations or actions of a similar kind. God's sovereign action, however, allows no comparisons. Can we not resolve the paradox, then, simply by removing God from the scene in which it arises, insisting that he is, as some medieval theologians liked to say, *exlex*, "exempt from all laws?"

We should not expect to trace the outskirts of God's ways. "Let earth adore!" we may conclude. "Let angel minds enquire no more!" But then we face a problem: if earth can and must *adore*, can it also *praise*? To "praise" is to declare that what the sovereign God does is supremely *good*, but if moral reason is dumb before the mystery of God's will, it is clearly impertinent to praise God for his goodness. Of course, there are moral questions about God's acts that are so badly conceived that they should never be asked. "Would God not have done better by creating the world earlier than he did?" was one such question that used to annoy the church fathers. But not all moral questions about God's deeds are like that. If the praise of God's goodness is to have any place in creaturely worship, there must be ground for the moral faith that God upholds and vindicates the moral order. Which is not to deny, of course, that we must learn about the order God upholds and vindicates from what he actually does. Yet the reason we *can* learn is that we can recognise him as the sovereign good. "Good art thou, and doest good," said the Psalmist, and continued, "teach me thy statutes!" (Psa. 119:68). The good that God *is*, leads to the good God *does*, and then to the good God *teaches us*. Moral reason is not left dumb in the face of his works and commands.

So much in general about moral reason and its paradoxes. Now we must focus on the particular paradox presented by the theologians' theory of "penal substitution," that on the cross Christ suffered punishment for the world's offences, the innocent for the guilty. Not everything that is said and thought about Christ's death need, or should, be a "theory" in this sense. Catechetical teaching is often formed non-theoretically, as a simple string of declarations, and the language of praise often revels in paradoxes that it makes no effort to resolve. The famous hymn of Venantius Fortunatus, "Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle" parades a string of unresolved paradoxes about battles won by dying on a cross; it would be foolish to criticise it for that. It is precisely the rhetorical

genius of praise to evoke a deeper sense of the mystery by heightening paradox. But it would be foolish, too, to think of these paradoxes as a *kind* of theory.

Theological textbooks have sometimes claimed to discover in such texts a "theory" of the atonement as a victory. Whatever this language does, it does not *theorise*. Theory is not all-important to theology, but it does have its own limited importance. It is responsible for the rational consistency of faith, resolving paradoxes that can be resolved, and accounting for those that cannot be resolved in terms of the basic mysteries of faith itself. It does this in order to help us think, and if our praise is to amount to more than exuberant rhetoric, we are wise not to ignore the help it offers. Where Scripture uses many terms to describe the death of Christ — "sacrifice," "judgment," "ransom," "remission," "reconciliation," "victory," "payment," "humiliation," etc. — a hymn, a prayer or a sermon may select, or may cheerfully mix them up together, while a theoretical account seeks to set them in order, deciding which have exegetical and logical priority, suggesting how those that appear to be in tension can shed light on one another, and so on. And though an account of Christ's death is not primarily a task of moral theory, if it is to speak of God's overcoming of the sin and meaninglessness of human action, it must at least satisfy moral reason.

When we speak of the redemption wrought by the cross of Christ, we speak of a wholly unique act, one for which there are no general types, no regular explanatory patterns, no set of premises on which it might have been predicted. Here God acted once and decisively, to determine the ultimate fate of the created universe. That is why this act creates a paradox for a reason accustomed to look for regularities and patterns. But there are other explanatory resources than regularities. There is a logic proper to narrative, which treats every event as unique, yet displays the consistency and intelligibility in a sequence of events. This is the logic we recognise in God's faithfulness to his own covenanted acts: "he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). The unique can be made intelligible by analogies. The language used by Scripture to speak of Christ's death draws on a range of analogies. These are real likenesses, not fanciful metaphors, and each identify different aspects of what the atoning event *is*, while none of them identifies *everything* that the atoning event is. In justice to the uniqueness of God's act one analogy is qualified by others. Valid analogies may be many, and in revealing the truth of such an event as that many are needed. The appearance of this language as conceptually rather over-furnished is only an appearance; the reconciliation of all things is not treated extravagantly by being viewed from many angles. Theological theory, which seeks to organise this multiplicity of analogies, does not have the decisiveness of either Scriptural or credal formulations, and different ways of weighing the different elements, alternative theories of equal validity can often co-exist.

The textbooks and encyclopedias are fond of saying that theories of the Atonement were a late arrival in theology, and a speciality of the West. Two twelfth-century examples provided by Anselm and Abelard, one founded on the idea of exchange, the other on the idea of Christ as archetype, were the source of all subsequent atonement theory. I would hesitate to put it quite like that, and cannot imagine how any account of Christ's death could have proceeded without the presence in the tradition of a great essay from the fourth-century Eastern church, Athanasius' *On the Incarnation*. However, the twelfth century was a moment when new questions were prompted by the rediscovery of law, especially questions about the relationship of law to morality. These

elaborations of the going accounts of Christ's death respond especially, and in very different ways, to the demand for a juridical account of it.

Out of the centuries of subsequent discussion, I would like to draw attention to one text in particular. It is the work of Hugo Grotius, *On the Satisfaction of Christ,* written in 1617 to refute a sceptical attack on the soteriology of the cross by the anti-trinitarian Faustus Socinus, and it is notable for the emphasis it lays on the analogy of punishment. One of the interesting aspects of Grotius' essay is that the author introduced it by disavowing any pretension to be a theologian. To his contemporaries he was known internationally as a classical scholar of distinction, while in his native Netherlands he was known also as a controversial lawyer and politician.[1] That he was a distinguished philologist affects every page of this frankly rather dry work, which pursues Socinus exhaustively — to the reader, exhaustingly — through the Greek New Testament text by text and word by word, starting with a review of the uses of the Greek prepositions *dia*, *huper* and *anti*, "on account of," "for the sake of," and "instead of." What makes it dry to us made it the gold standard for preachers of the next two centuries with any pretensions to scholarship. Yet the main thrust of the essay lies not in its contribution to New Testament philology, but in the legal point of view it takes: Grotius reminds theologians that when speaking of the justice of God they need to think in terms of *public* law, not *private* law. Socinus had seen the relation of the human race to God as that of a debtor to a creditor, which was why he could make no moral sense of it. A creditor who enforces his debt at all costs (including costs to the innocent) is not a morally admirable figure. But God is not a private creditor who could perfectly well write off his debt, Grotius insists, but a ruler and a judge, upholding the moral order of the universe.

In that light, Grotius understands the self-imposed moral necessity under which God acts. For if he is not a private creditor, neither is he an "absolute" ruler, who may impose his will arbitrarily. It is the covenant he has made with creation that extends the two limits of justice and mercy that determine his action. We cannot help noticing here that Grotius has something to say by implication about the justice not only of God, but of human governments. Constituted order, as opposed to arbitrariness, is essential; so is the prudent and compassionate elaboration of constituted order to meet emerging needs. Ordinary public justice knows of a "merciful judgment," as it knows of a "remission" or "mitigation" of criminal liability. Ordinary public justice knows, too, of representative status, an exchange of positions in which one person fulfils the office of acting and suffering on behalf of

[1] His international reputation came to rest later on his masterpiece of international law, *The Right of War and Peace*. A major edition of *The Satisfaction of Christ* by Edwin Rabbie, with Latin text and English translation, appeared in 1990 as the first volume in a series of Grotius' *Opera Theologica* projected by the Royal Netherlands Academy (Assen & Maastricht, Van Gorcum, 1990). For an overview of the man and his work see *The Cambridge Companion to Hugo Grotius*, edited by Randall Lesaffer and Janne Nijman and due to appear imminently, to which I have contributed a chapter on "The Theological Works". Grotius's services to theology were, in fact, considerable. He was the author of the first all-Bible commentary conceived as a philological and historical commentary for the use of preachers. His apologetic work on *The Truth of the Christian Religion* was no less influential than *The Satisfaction of Christ.*

many persons. This is not a fiction, but the basis of all political order. It is what constitutes *public* action and *public* events.

Public justice has as its further goal not simply the enforcement of legal liabilities but evoking and sustaining a general will for civil obedience and good order. Only God, Grotius holds, could punish without a prospective view to enabling a social life, and God has covenanted that he will not do so. This implies something he is prepared, in defiance of the going Calvinist orthodoxy of his day, to call the "conditionality" of atonement, i.e. the demand it lays on human faith in appropriating it. The point of this language, anticipating the theological path later to be followed by the Wesleys, is not to set a limit on the redemptive power of God, but to safeguard the resolution of the paradox of the cross in the restoration of human fellowship with God. Like many other Western reflections on the redemptive work of Christ, Grotius' account focuses too sharply on the cross at the expense of the resurrection. Nevertheless, he is prepared to say that the exchange of the cross, with its "imputing" of righteousness, is not the last word in God's dealings with man, but the next-to-last word; the last word rests with the transformation of moral life by the "imparting" of the Spirit of righteousness.

Yet if we take the decisive character of God's act with full seriousness, the "next-to-last" is really the presenting aspect of the ultimate. There are not two redemptive acts, but one. Once again the analogy of political life comes to our aid. To be a member of a community is to be represented; it is to be subject to the representative roles in which actions and sufferings are undertaken by one "on behalf of" everyone. Yet to be represented in this way is not to be left out of the action and suffering, but to be really involved in it. The many are identified with the sufferings and actions of the one. When soldiers fall in battle, we speak, quite properly, both of their suffering *on behalf* of those whose safety they defend, and *of* the people's suffering *in* the loss of their soldiers. Through their suffering, the suffering of the community becomes a real fact of history.

To achieve a view of what was accomplished by this approach to the question, we need to ask two questions of it. Why should a political analogy of God as a ruler be more illuminating of what he has done than a private-law analogy of God as a creditor? And why should punishment be taken as the paradigm case of political judgment?

The answer to the first question is that the political analogy directs us to a sphere of quite ordinary experience in which the very tensions that trouble us in relation to the paradox of the cross are typically experienced as a matter of course: tensions between the demands of justice and the demands of prudence. Neither justice nor prudence can be dispensed with in political life; it is a condition of political authority that they should be safeguarded together.

The answer to the second question is that punishment is the model of justice in its most purely retrospective aspect, at its farthest remove from prudence. There are kinds of justice that can be assimilated to prudence — "distributive" or "social" justice especially so — but there is no just punishment except in relation to something that has been done. Though human justice cannot, and divine justice will not, punish simply for punishment's sake with no proportionate good to be achieved, punishment as such enacts the logic of what is due to past deeds. Without that retrospective reference it is not punishment at all, merely persecution.

The concept of representation belongs primarily to the prudential aspect of political authority. That selected representatives are authorised to take initiatives on behalf of the many is the way the action of a whole people takes form. By such representative action great historical innovations are launched. But the bond of political representation is not an occasional bond, assumed to get a project started and then put aside. Continuity is of its essence. And a bond formed to allow collective action is also a bond that allows collective suffering, too. The mishaps of the representative agent become the mishaps of the people, and especially those mishaps that occur precisely through the failures of the representative action.

One such failure, and perhaps the most fundamental one, is when it incurs liability for blame and censure. We are not used to associating the idea of representation with that of blame and punishment. We act together to positive ends, we assume, but incur blame separately by our individual faults. But that is an illusion, and it is one virtue of the idea of a penal substitution that it calls our bluff on that illusion. Guilt is woven into our social communications. Wrongdoing is done by community and suffered by community more fundamentally, in fact, than it is done and suffered by individuals. In all moral transactions we represent one another. Grotius believed that he could produce examples of representative punishment from the political life of his age; our own, with its fondness for holding that somebody must be to blame for every accident, certainly offers many more.

Yet since the prophet Ezekiel we have been told that each person shall suffer for his or her own sin. There is to be a perfect correspondence between judgment and deed, and between deed and agent. In practice, human justice hardly satisfies this condition, and probably never has satisfied it. We have neither the judges nor the criminals we need in order to make it a reality: judges who understand *exactly* what has been done, criminals who *wholly* express themselves in their crime. Pure retribution presupposes pure innocence, pure guilt, and pure discrimination between them, without remainder or qualification, contrary to all our experience. So elusive is the idea of pure retributive justice, in fact, that philosophers often write it off as incomprehensible.

Yet we are not in a position to set the idea aside and do without it. The expectation that each person should be judged by what he or she has done retains its hold upon our consciences. It articulates a principle to which we know ourselves bound, that suffering may be knowingly inflicted only in respect of deserts. The denial of that principle creates insurmountable offence. So we are left with the thought that the ideal of just retribution is one form in which *eschatological hope* is given to us. In a social world where collusion in guilt is the primary moral reality, hope could be justified only by the demonstration of an innocence that stands outside that circle of collusion and of a retribution adequate to condemn it. Faith in the event of pure innocence and pure retribution is the act that anticipates the era of which Ezekiel spoke, an act in which we are at last set free to answer for ourselves.

What the analogy of public justice contributes to our thought about Christ's death, then, is to make us aware of a wider range of moral responses than we might at first have suspected we were capable of. Not only are we encouraged to let our experience of public justice shed light on God's justice, but we are encouraged to let our bewilderment at the paradoxes of public justice shed light on the bewilderment we experience at God's action. Wider and more self-questioning

moral judgments then call our immediate and intuitive ones to account. That alone, even if there were nothing more to say, would be a recommendation for this whole train of thought as an exercise of moral education. It is as though we are taken again through the logic of the parable of the unforgiving servant. Faced initially with the abstract question of an infinitely wealthy sovereign confronted by a debtor who cannot pay, we know the answer at once: the infinitely wealthy sovereign must be infinitely generous and forgiving. But when that situation is extended in time, and we are faced with the concrete problem of a forgiven debtor who does not know how to forgive, we are forced, like the sovereign of the story, to complicate the situation with an act of condemnation.

The penal-substitution theory of the death of Christ is itself a kind of parable, though it is a parable about a real historical action which intends to make us think about its significance in real world-history. It points us to an act that reconciles and fulfils all history, and asks us about the moral conditions on which such an act is conceivable, probing our readiness to understand history as a moral history, a story of the overcoming of good and evil by a final good. It presents us with ourselves in a state of irresolvable tension, constituted by a past of performance and a future of aspiration that are quite incompatible; each of which is, nevertheless, wholly and essentially *ourselves*. We are asked how we may establish any moral coherence between these two aspects of our existence.

In the end, such a reconciliation does not lie within our powers, but must be effected by one who purposes and directs history, and yet, since it is precisely our *moral* history that is at stake, it must be possible for us to participate in it willingly and from the heart. It must be accomplished at the heart of history once and for all, but in a form open to imitation and appropriation in every period of history. It must be accomplished through an act in which evil is truthfully and unsparingly judged for what it is, and good is upheld in the face of it. And to help us discern and understand such a unique act, we are told of a punishment willingly accepted on our behalf by an innocent representative. Such a conception inevitably conveys less than the whole truth of that act, but not something *other* than the truth. It displays together and in one view the scope of evil and the power of generosity in the bonded, social reality of human existence where we constantly represent, and are represented by, each other.

It is a striking feature of the times we are living through that we do not know how to deal with the evils of history, and that we struggle, through frankly symbolic gestures such as demolishing statues, impotently to bring the past under the control of a justice that will somehow set the wrongs of the past right. If any times *ought* to understand intuitively the moral need that a representative punishment addresses, surely they are ours!

OLIVER O'DONOVAN IS A FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY AND PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH. HIS OTHER BOOKS INCLUDE THE DESIRE OF THE NATIONS, THE WAYS OF JUDGMENT, AND RESURRECTION AND MORAL ORDER

LESSLIE NEWBIGIN AND A MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER WITH WESTERN CULTURE

BY: MICHAEL GOHEEN

Lesslie Newbigin has been characterized by a leading church historian as "probably the most influential British theologian of the twentieth century." [1] He spent 40 years in India as a missionary. When he returned to Europe, he had fresh eyes to see Western culture in a new way. In the last decades of his life, he insisted that "the most urgent task facing the universal church at this time" is to recover a missionary encounter with Western culture. [2]

THE URGENCY OF A MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE GOSPEL AND WESTERN CULTURE

Why did he believe this task was so urgent? Western culture is the *most powerful* global force at work in the world today. In the process of globalization Western culture now "has more worldwide influence than any other culture, including that of Islam." [3] It is the *most pervasive* cultural force in today's world. It has spread through the process of globalization to dominate all the urban areas of the world. Western culture is the *most dangerous* foe the church has faced in its long history. "The church is awakening slowly to the fact that modernity is the most powerful enemy it has faced in its two thousand years of history." [4] Wherever "it goes it becomes the controlling doctrine for public life and drives religion into a smaller and smaller enclave." [5] It is also "precisely this powerful culture which is *most resistant* to the Gospel." [6] The long association of Western culture with the Christian faith appears to make it immune to the critique of the gospel. And finally, the church in the West is living in a state of syncretism with this culture. Instead of challenging its idolatry, it has been content to live in a "cozy domestication with the 'modern' worldview."[7]

And so Newbigin does not primarily address his challenge to the unbelieving world, but the church

[1] Andrew F. Walls, 'Newbigin, James Edward Lesslie (1909-98)', in: Davie Marin, et al., New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic, Second Edition (Downers Grove: IVP, 2016), 615

[2] Lesslie Newbigin, "Culture of Modernity," in Karl Muller et. al. eds., Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 98. For an extended elaboration this article, see Michael W. Goheen, The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 163-196.

[3] Newbigin, "Culture of Modernity," 98-99.

[4] Lesslie Newbigin, Living Hope In a Changing World (London: Alpha International Holy Trinity Brompton, 2003), 83.

[5] Newbigin, "Gospel and Culture – But Which Culture?" Missionalia, 17, 3 (1989): 213

[6] Lesslie Newbigin, Mission and the Crisis of Western Culture (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1989), 1.

[7] Lesslie Newbigin, "Pluralism in the Church," ReNews (Presbyterians for Renewal), 4, 1 (May): 1.

so they might again gain confidence in their own gospel — "everything depends on a recovery of confidence in the gospel." [8] The only way anyone will believe the gospel is if there is a church that believes and lives by it.

LIBERATING THE WESTERN CHURCH FOR A MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER

Martin Luther has said "the gospel is like a caged lion. It does not need to be defended, just released." Newbigin brings insight from the cross-cultural missionary experience to the task of releasing the gospel and the church from its cultural captivity. There are at least three tasks that will equip the church for a missionary encounter: cultural, theological, and ecclesiological.

CULTURAL TASK: UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN CREDO

The first task of any missionary is a diagnosis of culture. This task is a matter of life and death if the church is not to be unwittingly seduced into a syncretistic alliance with the reigning religious vision of the culture.

Incomparably the most urgent missionary task for the next few decades is the mission to 'modernity'... It calls for the use of sharp intellectual tools, to probe behind the unquestioned assumptions of modernity and uncover the hidden credo which supports them. … [9]

The task is difficult because we hold unquestioned assumptions. A Chinese proverb says, "if you want to know about water don't ask a fish." If you want to know about Western culture don't ask a Western person. We are swimming in cultural water and that is all we know.

For the church the problem is far more serious since the waters in which we swim are polluted by idolatry. Yet we are seduced by the myth that our culture is not religious. If the church is to be freed from its cultural captivity to the idolatry of Western culture, one of the first tasks is to expose the deeply religious nature of our culture's public doctrine.

Religion is not one more cultural expression alongside others but a directing power at the root of culture that integrates and shapes all other areas. It is a hidden *credo,* "a whole worldview, a way of understanding the whole of human experience" [10] and a "set of beliefs, experiences, and practices that seek to grasp and express the ultimate nature of things, that which gives shape and meaning to human life, that which claims final loyalty." [11]

The problem in the West is that there is the dangerous myth that we live in a neutral culture: "modernity pretends to have no creed. … It applies to itself the adjective *secular,* with the implication that it is neutral in respect to beliefs that come under the name 'religion.'" [12] Thus, it conceals its own religious nature.

[8] Newbigin, A Word in Season: Perspectives of World Missions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1994), 187.

[9] Lesslie Newbigin, "Gospel and Culture – But Which Culture?" Missionalia, 17, 3 (1989): 214.

[10] Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel in a Pluralist Society (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 172.

[11] Lesslie Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 3.

[12] Newbigin, Word in Season, 194

These religious beliefs that enslave Western culture, and sadly often the church, lie hidden below the surface level of culture like tectonic plates, unseen, yet shaping all that is above. It requires sharp tools to dig below the surface level of our lived culture to uncover the hidden credo that gives form, unity, and significance to the inhabitants of Western culture.

Unmasking the Religious Story of Our Culture

Newbigin employs two digging tools: historical and epistemological analysis. One way to gain critical distance on your culture is to tell the story of just how this particular vision of the world came to be historically constructed. The illusion of self-evident truth can be unmasked by telling the story.

There is an African proverb that says: "Until the lions have their historians the hunter will always be the hero of the story." The way we tell our cultural story is not simply a neutral recording of the facts, but a way of understanding the story that gives meaning to human life. It offers a soteriology and an eschatology. It is a religious narrative.

Like the biblical story, the metanarrative of Western humanism offers a comprehensive vision of life that demands ultimate allegiance. There is a clash between two religiously ultimate and comprehensive, yet incompatible, stories. "The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What is the real story of which my life story is part? … In our contemporary culture … two quite different stories are told." [13] The first is the humanist story of our culture and the second is the biblical narrative. These are two incompatible narratives. Seminal to the Western master-narrative is the notion of progress which interprets the purpose of universal history. We hear how humanity might be saved and there is an eschatological vision of the end of history. The Western story is progress toward the paradise of freedom, prosperity, and peace created by humanity.

It is humanistic in the deeply religious sense of confidence that human beings can save themselves. In this "metanarrative" of modernity, the way humanity builds this paradise and so save themselves is by science, technology, economics, and politics. Universal reason is emancipated from dogma and superstition, and disciplined by the scientific method to conquer all the evils that enslave men and women. This happens as science is translated into technology to subdue nature, and into economic and political social organization to control human culture.

This vision of universal history came to maturity in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The religious nature of this story is signalled by noting the term 'enlightenment.' There is a "collective conversion" as Europe is converted to a new religious vision. [14] "Light had dawned. Darkness had passed away. … 'Enlightenment' is a word with profound religious overtones. It is the word used to describe the decisive experience of Buddha. It is the word used in the Johannine writings to describe the coming of Jesus: 'The Light had come into the world' (John 3:19)." [15] What we call modern Western culture is a whole way of organizing human life that is shaped in the light of this religious vision.

[13] Newbigin, Gospel in a Pluralist Society, 15-16.

[14] Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks, 23.

[15] Newbigin, Other Side of 1984, 7.

What happens in the Enlightenment is a profound conversion. It is "the substitution of one *credo* by another. It is a conversion. … of one creed to another." [16] And so the "long period of the Christianization of Europe was now seen as the dark ages, or — at best — the middle ages between two periods when reason reigned, the ancient classical world and the present." [17]

While the Enlightenment is the focal point of Newbigin's analysis, his writings abound in clues for the way he would construct the whole Western narrative. He refers to the source of Western culture in terms of two incompatible streams — classical rationalistic humanism and the biblical story.[18] The difference between these streams is the location of reliable truth. In the humanist vision truth is timeless ideas, while in the Bible truth is found in a story of historical events centered in Jesus. These two streams are brought together in Augustine and, for the better part of one thousand years, it is the biblical story that provides the context for the operation of reason. These two traditions begin to be pried apart in the work of Aquinas and the scholastics when Aristotle is introduced into Western European culture.[19] The humanist vision begins to grow in cultural power as a flood of classical ideas that pour into Europe during the Renaissance,[20] in the religious wars following the Reformation that discredit the Christian faith,[21] and especially in triumph of the new physics of the scientific revolution.[22] All of this leads to the conversion of the West in the Enlightenment.

He also offers much on the way the Enlightenment vision develops after the Enlightenment, especially in the 20th century. The events in 20th century Europe led to a growing loss of confidence in promises of Enlightenment progress since it "failed disastrously to deliver what was promised." [23] In one part of our culture – the private sphere – there is the collapse of modernity into postmodernity: a growing relativism, pluralism, and the reduction of truth claims to power. [24] However, the bigger threat is that the public life of Western culture still embodies the modern vision of life, albeit in a new global and economic form. And therefore, modernism is still the major challenge the world faces.[25]

This economic form of modernity has its roots in the 18th century: it is in economics that "the Enlightenment was to have perhaps its most far-reaching consequences."[26] The "new economics" of the Enlightenment would "create unlimited

[16] Lesslie Newbigin, The Bible: Good News for Secularised People (1991), 2. Unpublished speech, Eisenach, Germany, April 1991.

[17] Lesslie Newbigin, Mission Agenda (Unpublished lecture, 1992), 3-4.

[18] Newbigin, Gospel in a Pluralist Society, 1-3; Proper Confidence, 3.

[19] Newbigin, Gospel and Culture (1995), 6; The Gospel and the University (1993), 2. Unpublished sermon at the Chapel of Royal Holloway, 27 June 1993.

[20] Newbigin, Other Side of 1984, 6-7.

[21] Newbigin, Proper Confidence, 30.

[22] Newbigin, Other Side of 1984, 10.

[23] Lesslie Newbigin, Truth and Authority in Modernity (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 73-74.

[24] Newbigin, Proper Confidence, 27; "Religious Pluralism: A Missiological Approach," Studia Missionalia 42 (1993): 231-234; Truth and Authority in Modernity, 7-9, 82.[17] Lesslie Newbigin, Mission Agenda (Unpublished lecture, 1992), 3-4.

[25] Lesslie Newbigin "Modernity in Context," in John Reid, Lesslie Newbigin and David Pullinger ed., Modern, Postmodern and Christian. Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 27 (Carberry, Scotland: Handsel Press, 1996), 8.

[26] Newbigin, Other Side of 1984, 11.

material growth" and "higher levels of fulfilment and happiness" through the operation of the free market. This economic idolatry reshapes all of cultural life and becomes a global culture under globalization. This is modernization on a global scale, and to understand it we must dig to a level deeper than political and economic systems, down to "the level of fundamental beliefs, of ultimate commitments, in fact of idolatries." [27] Economic modernity has produced in the latter 20th century the "meaningless hedonism of a consumer society." [28] We are dealing with the "depth and power of a religion whose cathedrals are the great shopping malls and supermarkets where families come week by week for the liturgy of consumerism." This religious vision is creating a growing divide between rich and poor and destroying the environment. Global economic modernity and consumerism [29] — this is the central idolatrous threat to the church today.

There may be much to quibble about in Newbigin's analysis of Western culture. However, to understand what he is doing, we must recognize that he sees himself as a missionary attempting to expose the roots of a culture that is enervating the church's witness. He wants the church to gain confidence to embody and tell the gospel as the true story unencumbered by the debilitating idols of the West.

Unmasking the Idol of Reason

The real issue is whether the gospel is *true*. If so, the church needs confidence that it is so. So, the myth of neutral reason needs to be exposed. The public doctrine of Western culture was the march of autonomous reason to master the world and build a paradise on earth. But our confidence to build paradise is based squarely on our trust that scientific reason tells us the truth that gives power. The enthronement of reason challenged the truth of the gospel, and Christians succumbed, becoming timid and losing confidence in the gospel. That confidence had to be recovered if there was to be a missionary encounter.

Why does a missionary spend so much time on epistemology? Because we live in a culture that "has prized above all the autonomy of reason."[30] This idol must be exposed to liberate a church that has become captive to this vision. A misunderstanding of the nature of knowledge has constructed a cage which imprisons the gospel and confines the church's mission. Epistemological analysis may help to remove those bars.

Newbigin's removes the bars first by challenging the unquestioned epistemology that lies at the heart of western culture. The hero of his story is Augustine, for whom reason worked in the context of faith. And the primary villains are Rene Descartes, John Locke, and Francis Bacon who turned that around. His analysis also draws on the insights of post-empiricist philosophy and history of science to show the naiveté of assuming neutral reason. Second, he offers a more truthful model of the way we know the truth, drawing on such philosophers as Michael Polanyi, Alasdaire MacIntyre, and Nicholas Wolterstorff.

In the work of the Enlightenment philosophers, scientific reason is extracted from its proper

[27] Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel as Public Truth: Swanwick Opening Statement (1992), 6. Unpublished address.

[28] Lesslie Newbigin, "It Seems to Me," Transmission (Spring 1997): 4; cf. Foolishness to the Greeks, 30-31.

[29] Newbigin, Gospel as Public Truth: Swanwick, 6.

[30] Newbigin, Other Side of 1984, 51.

creational place amidst the faith commitments of a communally embodied tradition. It is crowned the final arbiter of all truth claims. This set up artificial dichotomies: reason and revelation, knowing and believing, fact and value, doubt and dogma, public and private, truth and opinion, and objective and subjective. In each case, the first term represents scientific knowledge and the second the gospel.

These are not simply the theoretical dualisms of scholars, but deep-rooted assumptions at the foundation of our culture. Only truth claims validated by reason may play a role in the public square. All others must be relegated to the private realm of values and opinion. They are mere tastes, like chocolate ice cream, that are subjective but have no claim to universal validity.

The idol of autonomous reason has been masked by a false claim to objectivity. Disciplined by the scientific method, it rises above our subjectivity to gain objective knowledge. It judges all traditions and beliefs with an air of invincible authority. Yet this is simply not how scientific knowledge works. Rather, post-empiricist history and philosophy of science makes it clear that scientific knowing operates within a communally embodied tradition. Autonomous reason is an illusion; even scientific reason works in the context of the authority of some tradition with its own beliefs and assumptions.

Newbigin draws an analogy between the scientific and the Christian tradition.[31] In both cases, reason makes sense of the world within the context of a continuing socially embodied tradition; the tradition is shaped by a faith commitment which functions as the ultimate light in which the community works and lives; and the tradition continues as that community brings light to bear on new contexts and situations. The only questions are: Which community? What tradition? Whose light? Is it the light of scientific reason shaping the Western cultural community? Or the light of the gospel shaping the Christian community?

Not only are these dichotomies false; they are dangerous and destructive. When we put our "trust in the findings of science" we may well gain insight into the structure of our world but will be "left with no answer to the question of ultimate meaning." Thus, the way is open "to develop a pantheon of idols"[32] that guide our public life. Moreover, critical doubt engendered by scientific rationality is destroying Western culture. We are being led inexorably to a nihilistic relativism and subjectivism that threatens our society. Descartes inevitably begets Nietzsche.[33]

Newbigin wants to return to the insights of Augustine: *credo ut intelligam* (I believe so that I may understand). There is a need for a new starting point or *arche*, and the church offers this in the gospel. Religion has been wrongly imprisoned within the bounds of reason for two centuries. This must be reversed: reason must be liberated to rightly function within the bounds of true religion.

THEOLOGICAL TASK: GOSPEL AS PUBLIC TRUTH

If there is to be a missionary encounter with Western culture, there is an "urgent need for

[31] Newbigin, Gospel in a Pluralist Society, 52-65.

[32] Newbigin, Word in Season, 150.

[33] Lesslie Newbigin, The Gospel and the University, 3.

the development of a coherent and intellectually tenable doctrine of Scriptural authority."[34] The Bible has been part of the culture for so long that it has accommodated itself to the fundamental assumptions of the culture and appears unable to challenge them.

Newbigin tells the story of biblical authority in the West to give a perspective on the problem. For a one-thousand year period, the Bible was read and interpreted "from within the Christian tradition."[35] This means that Jesus must be the key to understand the biblical story and the biblical story must be the context to understand Jesus.[36] For a millennium, Scripture was interpreted within the commitment that it is the true story of the whole world that finds its climactic point in Jesus Christ.

This all changed in the 18th century when a new creed took hold of Europe with a faith commitment to scientific reason. The Bible was interpreted now from within another belief-system, another creed, another dogma.[37] The Bible moved from the church to the university, from ordinary Christians into the hands of scholars who could deploy this scientific method in interpreting Scripture.[38]

The new world of biblical scholarship claimed the high ground of truth by distinguishing "a scientific approach to the Bible from the confessional approach." But "this move is misunderstood if it is seen as a move to a more objective understanding of the Bible. It is a move from one confessional stance to another, a move from one creed to another."[39] This is unbelieving scholarship, a decision to not believe the gospel and embrace a rival *credo*.

And scholars were faithful to their new *credo*. "Modern scholarship, following the models of modern science, has worked by analysing and dissecting the material into smaller and smaller units and then re-classifying and re-combining them — obviously on the basis of a modern understanding of 'how things really are.'"[40] And when you break the big story into bits, those bits are absorbed into the modern worldview. There is no authoritative Scripture, and no missionary encounter with modern idolatry.

The triumph of the Enlightenment's religious vision split the church into liberal and fundamentalist camps. Liberals reduced the Bible to a mere "collection of records and religious experience … having … no unique authority which sets it apart from all other books."[41] This brought forth the rightful reaction of conservative Christians who want to preserve the Bible's authority. They did so, however, with the very Enlightenment tools that produced the liberal tradition. The conservative churches defend the truth of Scripture by reducing it to an account of timeless dogmas about God, nature, and humankind. Both undermine the given narrative unity, instead producing their own construct:

[34] Newbigin, New Birth Into a Living Hope, 7.

[35] Newbigin, "Good News for Secularised People," 1.

[36] Newbigin, Biblical Authority, 2.

[37] Newbigin employs various terms – belief-system, creed, dogma, worldview, and credo – to describe the Enlightenment approach to biblical studies.

[38] Newbigin, "Good News for Secularised People", 1.

[39] Newbigin, Proper Confidence, 79-80.

[40] Newbigin, "Bible and Our Contemporary Mission," 14. Cf. Lesslie Newbigin, Notes of a Contribution on the Role of the Bible in Our Church, 1. Unpublished speech given for URC Forward Policy Group, April 1985.

[41] Newbigin, "Good News for Secularised Man," 6; cf. Truth to Tell, 43-44.

a historical-critical construct or a systematic-apologetical one.

Newbigin offers a threefold response if there is to be a missionary encounter. The Bible has been relegated to the private realm but must be recovered *as truth*; the Bible has lost its comprehensive authority and must be recovered *as public truth*; the Bible has been reduced to either a record of religious experiences or a collection of theological propositions and must be recovered *as narrative truth*.

Newbigin does not want to cast aside all the gains in post-Enlightenment biblical scholarship. Much has been gained in this history. Yet the way forward is to recover the Bible as public truth in its narrative and comprehensive authority so that there might be a missionary encounter with the religious vision of Western culture.

ECCLESIOLOGICAL TASK: A MISSIONARY CHURCH BEYOND PRIVATIZATION AND CHRISTENDOM

Newbigin often concludes his analyses with the question to the church: "What must we be?"[42]
Neither Privatization Nor Christendom

There are two paths barred for a faithful church: privatization and Christendom. Privatization is not an option. Newbigin believes the gospel and the church had been consigned to the private realm of values. However, the gospel is not a private religious message, but a public announcement of what God is doing for the whole world. The church is not a private religious community. but a new humankind called to embody the comprehensive sovereignty of God in all of life.

There are three reasons that the church has accepted its relegation the private realm, and each must be challenged. The first is that the church has often misunderstood biblical eschatology. The biblical vision of the restored humanity inhabiting resurrected bodies in the new creation has been replaced by a Greek one of souls returning to heaven. Only the biblical vision of restoration of creational life gives meaning to the church's engagement with public life.
Moreover, privatization arises when the gospel is misconstrued as simply a message of individual salvation rather than the kingdom. The gospel declares the revelation and accomplishment of God's cosmic purpose in Christ for the entire life of humanity. Thus, the gospel calls the church to a far-reaching mission that engages all cultural life.

Finally, privatization emerges when the church does not rightly understand the religious nature of Western culture. The spiritual power of secularism has led the church to accept the presumed neutrality of the public square. But, of course, the "truth is that, in those areas of our human living which we do not submit to the rule of Christ, we do not remain free to make our own decisions: we fall under another power."[43] The shrine of the public square is neither empty nor neutral: it has fallen under the power of other gods.

Privatization is not a legitimate option, but neither is a return to Christendom. Newbigin's primary concern with Christendom is that the church lost its critical relationship to culture. The church has two relationships to its culture: solidarity in cultural involvement and

[42] Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks, 124-150; cf. also Other Side of 1984, 55-62; Gospel in a Pluralist Society, 222-232.
[43] Newbigin, Other Side of 1984, 39.

dissent from its idolatrous direction. While the Christendom-church takes responsibility for cultural development, it forgets the antithetical tension that comes with it. When it loses its prophetic-critical stance, it accepts a role as the "protected and well decorated chaplaincy in the camp of the dominant power." [44]

Unlike many, Newbigin is not entirely negative about Christendom. He believes that the church was right in taking responsibility for the cultural, social, and political life of mediaeval Europe.[45] Christendom was the "first great attempt to translate the universal claim of Christ into political terms"[46] allowing "the Gospel [to be] wrought into the very stuff of [Europe's] social and political life" [47] and "we still live largely on the spiritual capital it generated."[48] Yet we cannot go back. The challenge for us is to "learn how to embody in the life of the church a witness to the kingship of Christ over all life – its politics and economics no less than its personal and domestic morals – yet without falling into the Constantinian trap. That is the new, unprecedented, and immensely challenging task given to our generation."[49]

Distinctive People: Alternative Social Order and Callings in Public Life of Culture

As the people of God living in Western culture today, we ask 'what must we be?' We must be a people … who believe the gospel of the kingdom and live in the Bible as the true story of the world; … whose lives, deeds, and word bear witness to the gospel of the kingdom both nearby and far away; … whose worship, leadership, and structures nourish a comprehensive obedience; … who understand the religious core and the controlling story of our culture to joyfully affirm God's creational gifts and resolutely reject our idolatrous way. All of this answers the question "what must we be?" But there are at least two emphases in Newbigin that deserve mention when discussing a missionary encounter with Western culture.

If the church is to tell and embody the gospel as *public truth* this will take two forms: the church as an alternative social order and its callings in the public life of culture. Both stress the importance of the church being distinctive in the public square and emphasize the comprehensive breadth of the gospel's authority across the spectrum of human life. This is the way beyond privatization and Christendom.

In a lecture on speaking the truth to Caesar, he sketches what it means to embody the gospel as public truth. The church must take responsibility "to equip its members for active and informed participation in public life in such a way that the Christian faith shapes participation."[50] And "if such training were widely available, we could look for a time when many of those holding responsible positions of leadership in public life were committed Christians equipped to raise the questions and make the innovations in these areas which the gospel requires."[51] But "the

[44] Lesslie Newbigin, Christ, Kingdom, and Church: A Reflection on the Papers of George Yule and Andrew Kirk (1983), 4. Unpublished paper.

[45] Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks, 100-101.

[46] Newbigin, Sign of the Kingdom, 47.

[47] Newbigin, Household of God, 1. Cf. Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks, 124.

[48] Lesslie Newbigin, Priorities for a New Decade (National Student Christian Press and Resource Centre, Birmingham, 1980), 6.7.

[49] Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks, 102.

[50] Newbigin, Truth to Tell, 81.

[51] Newbigin, Truth to Tell, 84.

most important contribution which the Church can make to a new social order is to be itself a new social order."[52] These two things — being a distinctive community and our vocations in public life — enable the church to speak the truth to Caesar.

Does stressing the distinctiveness of the church in its gathered and scattered life really move us beyond Christendom? Three things may be said. First, Newbigin offers the notion of "committed pluralism" as a way of thinking about participation in the public life of culture. This acknowledges a plurality of religious communities called to cooperatively live together to build a just society, yet without surrendering their truth claims in the process. Second, Newbigin sees potential in the Dutch neo-calvinist notion of sphere sovereignty, which interprets the problem with Christendom not as Christians exercising power in their particular vocations but the institutionalized church coercively exercising power. Individual Christians may rightly exercise cultural power aligned with the gospel in the various cultural spheres. And finally, the story of the Bible that the church is called to embody in the public realm has as its center the cross of Christ. The cross pictures for us that God does not coerce but gives freedom for rejection and opposition. The metanarrative of the Bible does not look for an intrahistorical triumph for the church. God's victory is beyond history, and until then, suffering love is the way power is exercised.

CONCLUSION

In C.S. Lewis' *The Silver Chair* from the Chronicles of Narnia series, the Lady of the Green Kirtle, the Witch-Queen of the Underland, begins to seduce and hypnotize Rilian, Eustace, and Jill. With soothing words and music, and with magic smoke produced by the powder she throws in the fire, she begins to gradually take them under her spell. As they listen to the music and inhale the smoke they are slowly enslaved and drawn under her power. They stop believing in Aslan, forget their mission, and turn to serve the Witch-Queen. The Marshwiggle Puddleglum realizes what is going on. He rouses himself from his own enchantment and attempts to foil her plan by stomping his webbed foot on the fire to put it out. The children come to their senses and are awakened from their enchantment. They rise up and slay the Queen whose true self is revealed to be a serpent.

Newbigin is like Puddleglum. With the fresh eyes of someone who has lived in another culture for decades, Newbigin sees how the Western church has been seduced and enslaved by cultural idolatry. He has awakened many of us to see ways in which we have come under the spell of other gods. But this is only a small beginning. Surely Newbigin was right: the most powerful, pervasive, and dangerous culture to the gospel is the West, which has now spread its seductive gospel to every part of the urban world. The church is called to rouse itself from its enchantment, and rooted in Christ and empowered by the Spirit, show what it really means to be human.

MICHAEL GOHEEN IS DIRECTOR OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AT THE MISSIONAL TRAINING CENTER, SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE FOR THE SURGE NETWORK OF CHURCHES (PHOENIX), AND PROFESSOR OF MISSIONAL THEOLOGY AT COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY (ST LOUIS). HE IS MARRIED TO MARNIE AND TOGETHER THEY HAVE FOUR ADULT MARRIED CHILDREN AND ELEVEN GRANDCHILDREN.

[52] Newbigin, Truth to Tell, 85.

Marriage as "MORAL ORTHODOXY?"

MATTHEW LEE ANDERSON

As evangelicals watch megachurches and other institutions wobble in their convictions about marriage, we have sought to buttress support by elevating the traditional view of the doctrine to a matter of orthodoxy. Always up for a good statement — or even a mediocre one — evangelicals in 2017 attempted to codify their views on marriage and sexuality in *The Nashville Statement*. Controversy, as they say, ensued. Despite the organizer's plea several weeks after the statement was released that it was "never our aim to make signing the Statement a test of orthodoxy," those same organizers celebrated when churches and universities adopted it as a litmus test for employment. Indeed, the Statement's initial press release suggests the organizers were more comfortable equating it with orthodoxy than their later protestations would indicate. "I am signing *The Nashville Statement,*" Rosaria Butterfield announced, "because I stand with biblical orthodoxy, the only witness for hope and peace and God's blessing." Her modest endorsement even claimed the mantle of Martin Luther: "By God through the merit and power of Jesus Christ, here I stand."

There is much we could say about the valence of appealing to "orthodoxy" while evangelicals' social capital erodes and confidence in our institutions evaporates. While trust in authorities has diminished everywhere, evangelicals have chronic problems maintaining their boundaries across their diffuse networks and parachurch ministries. While some evangelical-adjacent denominations have reasonably effective means of maintaining internal discipline, congregationalist polities have fewer mechanisms of control. On matters of sex and marriage, evangelical churches have long accepted contraception, made their peace with remarriage after divorce, silently acquiesced to the whole gamut of artificial reproductive technologies, and have raised a generation who shrug at cohabitation and premarital sex. The combination of widespread evangelical complicity with the severing of sex and procreation and the scandal of evangelical divorces have together undermined our confidence that our institutions will maintain fidelity to Scripture on same-sex marriage. Such anxieties have intensified debates about which doctrines are regarded as necessary to participate in the evangelical world.

Of course, this is not the first time evangelicals have strengthened their rhetoric in response to a theological crisis — which makes it easy for critics to dismiss the idea that marriage is a matter of orthodoxy. It has become customary in some quarters to invoke historical analogies to debunk moral views without investigating the accuracy of the underlying claims. It is enough to know that a community

that once discriminated on the basis of race now discriminates on the basis of sex: one need ask no further questions about the *reasons* for each position, as both can be subsumed under the idea that the community is merely trying to maintain its "privilege." In the same way, one can trace a line from fundamentalists' efforts to make six-day creation a matter of orthodoxy through inerrancy to marriage, without ever having to consider the respective plausibility of each position. Instead, the internal politics of evangelicalism are dismissed as reaction, all the way down.

There are aspects of this worry that resonate, to be sure. Conservative Christians frequently buttress their opposition to same-sex unions by arguing that theirs is the stable and consistent position of Christians throughout history. Augustine prohibited same-sex unions — we prohibit same-sex unions. The line of continuity is clear and unambiguous. That story is accurate so far as it goes. But it also obscures how the significance of those prohibitions have changed as their cultural contexts have changed. As the distinction between acts and persons has eroded, the possibility of judging wrongful acts has been displaced by a pervasive and unrelenting therapeuticization of our moral lives — which renders the prohibition on same-sex unions almost unintelligible today in a way they would not have been during Augustine's time.

Christians have not been immune from such trends: mainline Protestants have long accommodated them, and given them a social legitimacy they would have never attained otherwise. Mainline denominations have often functioned as a foil for evangelicals who sought to build a bulwark against the world's encroachment into the church. Some corners of evangelicalism self-consciously adopted the dictum that an institution that is not proactively being conservative will soon become progressive. Despite their invocations of tradition against Protestant liberalism, though, such communities are not so much 'conserving' as instrumentalizing what they have received while reacting against perceived threats. Social pressures on traditional religious believers have sometimes prompted us to inflate our rhetoric regarding the clarity and certainty of our positions. But the use of intensifiers in an argument is often indicative of anxiety rather than real confidence. At some point, the reactionary does protest too much. Moreover, starting theological reflection in an oppositional context tends to distort one's own commitments by creating emphases that would not be needed otherwise. Evangelicals in the 1980s and 90s anxious about feminism sought maximal theological protection in the Trinity, only to discover in the 2010s that they had endorsed actual heresies (the irony needs no comment). So it sometimes goes when the sociological horse drives the theological cart.

Such are the dangers of invoking "orthodoxy" to settle matters of contested moral or doctrinal significance. Yet those difficulties do not entail that the category is never warranted, or that there is no such thing as a 'moral orthodoxy.' For all the struggles along the church's path into "all truth," the convergence of Christians' judgment on marriage and sexuality is as much an article of faith as is our belief that we will be united in any other respect. As even Aristotle understood, practical action has its own criterion of truth. The unity on moral judgment to which the church is called may only be finally achieved in the eschaton: but it is incumbent upon Christians here and now to preserve what unity they already enjoy, and seek to embody what unity remains.

At the outset of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he appeals that they would "all of

you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment." The ESV's use of "agree" at the beginning of the verse, though, misses the brute literalism of Paul's exhortation. The King James Version is nearer his thought: Paul wants the Corinthians to "all speak the same thing." The difference is crucial. Public speech binds the church together: it is the visible manifestation of the church's invisible life, the exterior sign of her internal substance.

That internal substance certainly includes the church's "mind:" there is to be no disagreement about how the church sees the world. But Paul's concern for unity is not limited to sound doctrine: he also includes 'judgment' within his commendation, a term that connotes the intentionality or directedness of an opinion, its practical orientation. In 1 Corinthians 7:40, Paul issues his judgment that a widow will be happier if she does not remarry, a conclusion he supports by appealing to his dependency upon the Spirit. The unity Paul wants for the church is expansive, not minimalistic: the integrity of the body of Christ includes the community's speech, its doctrine, *and* its moral life.

That integrity demands a coherent and common moral outlook, which the church embodies through her judgments. We understand well how contradictions function in speech. It is a basic and inviolable rule of logic that "Suzy is red-haired" and "Suzy is not red-haired" cannot both be true at the same time. Such a norm is no false importation of Hellenistic thought into the Scriptures: every sentence of the divine revelation depends upon it. If a community attempted to affirm both sides of the contradiction, it would soon lose its purchase on reality and its ability to communicate. But practical reason also has its laws, and its own contradictions: it is morally wrong to take an innocent human life, and affirming that one may do so contradicts the norm.[1]

The possibility of practical contradictions, though, means that communities must concur in their moral judgments in order to remain both coherent and united. Just as a community cannot sustain itself while affirming both that the sky is blue and not blue, so it cannot survive if it affirms both that innocents may be killed and that they may not. For several generations, starting with the affirmation of contraception at Lambeth in 1930, Protestant moral theologians have attempted to escape this problem by endorsing moral exceptions to practical norms. The attempt to quarantine exceptions, though, was doomed to fail from the outset. An exception to a rule is simply an absurdity, as Oliver O'Donovan argues. Once we say there is an 'exception' to the prohibition on killing innocent individuals, we have "in effect, abandoned our responsibilities to reality."

The imperative to pursue practical unity arises from the *vicarious* character of life within the people of God: as "members of one another" (Romans 12:5), what one person does implicates us all, demanding either our affirmation or renunciation. In Paul's only explicit judgment on sexual sin, he hands over a man in an incestuous relationship to Satan (1 Corinthians 5). Yet there is

[1] To be sure, there are important difference between the theoretical rationality that grasps such a law and the practical reason that comes to judgments about action: practical judgments sometimes lack the surety and concreteness that theoretical conclusions have, especially when they are about particular situations.

no individualism in Paul's thought; no sense that the community is free from its own responsibility for the matter. As he pointedly asks him, "Ought you not rather to mourn?" (5:2). In this case, the leaven of the incestuous relationship will infect the whole church if it is not actively renounced (5:7). Publicly naming a sin creates a context that establishes the terms for full participation in the community, and that demands affirmation by all its members.

At the heart of this vicariousness is the fact that Christians are bound together in a common life through love. While 1 Corinthians 5 lays out the negative dimension of this principle, there is a positive aspect as well. For Augustine, loving the good within another person's life means the benefits that they enjoy become ours — which, on his view, eradicates whatever superiority monastics might have over the laity. "Love is a powerful thing," he writes in his commentary on Psalm 121(120), "a powerful thing." In loving the celibate, a person "fulfils it *through* that other." In affirming the good within a monastic's life, the married person accrues the same benefits to themselves. "He marks those who have taken this course, he loves them for it, and in them he carries out what he is unable to do himself."
We can see how vicariousness matters in friendships. When one person loves another, neutrality toward their choices is ultimately impossible. Moral disagreements (which are inevitable) become an invitation to deepen our understanding of the moral field and of both persons' perception of it. But if differences persist, friendship will be impaired: love requires us to affirm the person, whose identity is irrevocably shaped by the moral choices they make. The more fundamental the moral choice is, the more difficult it will be to sustain friendship through disagreement. Moreover, when we love someone, their moral choices become plausible for us in a unique way. If we both face difficult financial circumstances, our friend's choice to defraud their neighbor invites us to do the same — or demands our renunciation. As Paul also writes in 1 Corinthians, "Bad company corrupts good morals" (15:33).

The imperative to remain unified in moral judgment is especially important in trans-generational communities, which are responsible to both their past and future. While a community might be able to manage disagreement about a fundamental question for one generation, the formation of future generations requires a clarity that affirming multiple positions destroys. To that extent, correctness in morals is measured across generations: the fruitfulness of a community arises out of the seeds of judgment it plants. Fidelity to God's moral order will only become clear after the second or third generation.

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Still, even if a canon of correctness is required for communities to remain coherent, invoking 'orthodoxy' ends disagreement about what that canon is and alienates those who disagree from full participation in the community's life. Such a stance is doubtlessly hazardous. Unlike in matters of faith, it seems plausible that the church could encounter a situation that is genuinely novel, which would demand a discernment that invocations of 'orthodoxy' would prematurely foreclose. The advent of genetic engineering might be one such crisis: the ability to directly alter the genetic makeup of future generations is a deep challenge to Christian theological anthropology. An answer to such a question must find, in one important sense, a new path — a path limited, but not obviously marked out by, an orthodox Christology.

Other criterial troubles also arise once we begin down the path of determining what moral views are 'in' or 'out.' Theoretically, every moral conviction imaginable can be held to a standard of correctness. Yet that would be so exacting as to be practically untenable. To be sure, 'orthodoxy' signifies centrality: all manner of doctrinal positions might be correct (or incorrect), without themselves rising to the level at which we would want to invoke such a freighted term. But sorting out what practical commitments are sufficiently central to the church's witness is itself an impossible tangle. Why should marriage make the list, but opposition to slavery not?

Still, opposition to a 'moral orthodoxy' cannot devolve into a creedal minimalism, which bifurcates the communities' verbal expression of the faith from the practices that have embodied it. The church says the creed, yes: but in doing so, she makes what theologian David Kelsey calls an "existential commitment" to its contents. As Austin Farrer once wrote, "no Christian deserves his dogmas who does not pray them." By naming the reality within which the church lives and moves and has her being, the creeds set the practical context out of which she acts. They are both descriptive and formative, as they concentrate the Christian imagination on those aspects of our story to which we must steadfastly adhere. The creeds carve the path through the landscape of doctrines that we all must walk. We announce that we 'believe in one God' to all who have ears to hear, and so bind ourselves to the contents of God's revelation before the world. The creeds are not statements of morals, but with every phrase they implicate those who say them in ways that demand certain moral stances and preclude others. The thought that moral judgments are permissible for the church because they are not named in the creeds deflates their significance, reducing them to abstract, intellectualized statements of belief instead of morally formative distillations of the reality that demands our obedient conformity.

At the same time, it is odd to defend some standard of 'moral orthodoxy' when Christians who broadly affirm the creed remain deeply divided about the nature and importance of practices *internal* to the church's witness, namely, baptism and communion. As long as disagreements about practices fundamental to the church's inner life are not taken with sufficient seriousness, appeals to a 'moral orthodoxy' on marriage will necessarily sound like special pleading that is animated by culture-war anxieties. This is especially true for Baptists, who in the American context often eagerly appeal to the univocal witness of the church to buttress their convictions on marriage. Yet Baptists are almost totally alone among the major Christian communities in their willingness to rebaptize other Christians — Catholics, Orthodox, and even other Protestants — who have been baptized in the name of the Triune God. Rebaptism is a rejection of the bedrock practice for Christian unity: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). Neither Catholics nor the Eastern Orthodox require it of Protestants. A "conservative" form of creedal minimalism lurks here, which regards the unity of the church's witness on moral issues as little more than a backstop against an encroaching progressivism. If our conviction about a 'moral orthodoxy' is to be genuine and powerful, it must arise out of a commitment to the church's unified witness that goes deeper than a mere *modus vivendi*. If the ecumenical project of the 1960s and 1970s floundered on the shoals of a vapid liberalism that was beholden to the pieties of a progressive global politics, the coalition of evangelicals and Catholics that forged a conservative political witness was on no better footing.

Still, if there is such a thing as a 'moral orthodoxy,' baptism and communion would be natural places to look for criteria to identify the practices that belong to it. Both are doctrinally-saturated moments in the church's life that bind her together and demand acknowledgment from her members. They are intrinsically tied to the contents of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as they make manifest the gift of His life through His death and resurrection and, in so doing, invite and empower us to conform the pattern of our own existence to the same.

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Is a commitment to marriage as an exclusive, lifelong union between a male and a female a matter for Christian orthodoxy? Not for those who would affirm a so-called "inclusive orthodoxy," which regards the affirmation of same-sex unions as an expansion — rather than a repudiation — of the church's teaching on marriage. Such an approach attempts to preserve the theological significance of marriage by moving its covenantal dimension to the foreground, and relegating sex-differentiation and the procreative powers otherwise inherent to the union as optional. In that way, the link between the positive description of marriage and the negative prohibition on same-sex unions is broken: if marriage means nothing more than a 'covenant,' anyone may enter it. In some cases, the 'generativity' or 'fruitfulness' that covenantal unions are supposed to lead to is redescribed in ways that bear no relation (typological or otherwise) to the birth of a child from the union of male and female. As a result, the rationale for limiting the 'covenants' of 'marriage' to only two individuals is lost along with almost any other theological grounds for norming sexual activity within those covenants.

The debate over marriage's relationship to Scripture lies here, in the theological significance we ascribe to the union of male and female and to the 'fruit' of their union, rather than in the meaning of the various prohibitions on same-sex sexual activity. It is a mistake to think of marriage as a matter of (mere) morals: it has its own doctrinal valence, such that altering its form or content will reverberate throughout one's theological and doctrinal framework. As David Torrance has written, marriage is "grounded in God's own creative activity; it has its true place within God's redemptive work; and it belongs to the inner structure of the Church as the Body of Christ." At the center of a doctrine of marriage lies the beatitude of God, which overflows into his creative work — a work that is confirmed and, in a limited way, repeated through the procreation of the child who is the external manifestation of the male and female's inner love for each other alone.

To invoke God in the context of marriage is, of course, to wade into a morass of difficulties. While some quarters have responded to the abuse of such invocations by denying their legitimacy altogether, Paul's torturous explication of male and female's togetherness in Christ in 1 Corinthians 11 depends upon just such a move: "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, *and the head of Christ is God*." Paul underwrites his normative ethics in the chapter with appeals that range from Christ's relationship to God to the angels to the deliverances of 'nature.' New Testament scholars will caution us against reading later Trinitarian doctrines back into early texts. Yet it was the repudiation of those doctrines that left certain evangelicals without the appropriate safeguards against *misemploying* Paul's teachings about the sexes: whatever else 'head' might mean, one can only accept a hierarchy between the sexes

by introducing an illegitimate subordination into the inner life of the Trinity.[2]

At the same time, marriage is a practice of the church in which she confirms her position between Creation and Consummation through bearing witness to unions that bind together the covenant and the procreative power intrinsic to male and female. In witnessing the blessing of marital unions, the church confesses that they are consecrated unto God, and that they have been swept up into God's plan to bless the world through the birth of children and the new birth of saints. Because the community stands witness, every member of the body has a stake in the marriage's outcome and is given an opportunity to vicariously participate in its goods through their affirmation and approval. Insofar as such a union is sacralized by the church, it is brought into correspondence with the Gospel of Jesus Christ: the joy that attends such a union is itself a harbinger and foretaste of the joy that will mark the consummation of Christ and his bride. That eschatological union, though, is not barren: it opens up into an endless fecundity of *time*, which the generation of children here and now participates in 'as in a mirror darkly.' The Gospel gives marriage unique content, and establishes special moral demands upon those who enter it. Those who marry are charged with looking beyond this world, the form of which is fading away, and regarding themselves as not married (1 Cor. 7:31). Crucially, though, this demand upon Christian marriages does not contradict the good of procreation, but confirms and intensifies it. Procreation within the kingdom means the child is on loan to the parents, and it is their privilege and task to refer their child to God.

Such a sketch is hazardous, of course, and leaves much unsaid. Yet such a thick, doctrinally-saturated context is necessary to see how prohibitions on alternate forms of sexual practice arise, and why they are important to maintain. The absence of children is not necessarily a contradiction of procreation: if the couple maintains a willingness to have children in the way God has ordained, neither incapacity nor voluntary renunciation of their sexual powers contradicts that order. At the same time, enjoying the sexual pleasures of this world while foreclosing or denying procreation's possibility entangles them in a practical contradiction, in which they attempt to simultaneously affirm the temporal, bodily character of their marital life while rejecting the form of fruitfulness (children) that God ordains to accompany it here and now. Protestant churches have tried to embrace that contradiction by affirming contraception, instead of empowering their members to conform their sexual lives to the order of time that God has inscribed within them. The affirmation of same-sex unions simply builds on this structural incoherency, by regarding as licit a form of sexuality that declines to honor fecundity as an end of marriage. The church that affirms same-sex unions must regard natural sterility as a feature of marriage, rather than a radical disclosure of the sovereignty and grace of God in giving children to whom He will.

The theological implications of affirming such unions are vast. Severing the interconnection between creation and covenant leaves the former

[2] While a doctrine of marriage needs at some point to be filled out to include answers to what Paul means in 1 Corinthians 11, that task is distinct from determining whether male and female are necessary to its structure. That is a much easier job, and one on which there is much wider ecumenical agreement.

without its proper theological ordering, and empties its theological significance. Fertility and fecundity can no longer function as natural signs for the blessing of God, as "fruitfulness" need no longer remain tethered to the paradigm of conception, gestation, and birth that marks the origination of human life from the loving union of male and female. Moreover, such a move demands we overhaul the grammar of filial bonds: mother and father would no longer have the same determinate conceptual content, as what constitutes 'parenthood' no longer remains uniquely tied to marriage.[3] Such a wholesale reconfiguration of our anthropology would be inefficient in the extreme, as it would demand reinventing kinship bonds from the ground up. But it would also reconfigure the significance of our creedal commitments, which open with the scandalous claim that "We believe in One God, the Father Almighty." While the eternal generation of the Son from the Father is a begetting unlike human procreation, the iconoclasm required to emphasize the difference only has purchase if they are analogous.

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At some level, doctrine and practice do come apart. A 'moral orthodoxy' must, in the last analysis, be an orthodoxy that is constituted by the church's affirmation of the reality created by God and the prohibitions that derive from it. That affirmation is embodied within our practices: who we agree to marry (or refuse to) is a mark of our fidelity to the truth. The church's manifest failure to abide by the reality of God's creation through its consecration of remarriage and its sanctioning of contraception has undermined the integrity of its witness on the centrality of sexual differentiation to marriage. In that light, her appeals to 'orthodoxy' at this juncture will invariably be a clanging gong to a world that can only see the exclusion of gay people as arbitrary and unfounded.

It is true that marriage is a central doctrine for the church, then. But abstracting that truth from the whole context of both Scripture's witness and the historical moment we find ourselves in will lead to distortions. A non-reactionary appeal to a 'moral orthodoxy' must be comprehensive: fragmentary appeals that comfort Christians in our pews by cloaking their views in the grammar of 'orthodoxy' are merely stones disguised as bread. This is not an apologetic concern, at least not primarily: the church should be anxious for its standing before God for violating the pattern for marriage and procreation that he has laid down in creation, rather than concerned about its witness to the world. The real question before us is how Christian churches can recover the life of God that undergirds our practices of marriage, and so embody an orthodoxy within them that is, in fact, good news to those around us.

Ultimately, the question of whether the church can sustain its coherence while endorsing same-sex unions can only be finally answered on the far side of the eschaton. But while we wait for the great disclosure of the meaning of history, the church is also empowered to judge in the interim the fruit of our choices. And at this juncture, we can only be blunt. Those who relentlessly invoke history to expose Christians' complicity in racism, sexism, and all other manner of evils have been reluctant to name the history of the affirmation of same-

[3] The claim that such a view poses a problem for adoptive relationships is a mistake, and indicative of how little those who affirm an 'inclusive orthodoxy' have understood the traditional view.

sex unions within Protestant communities for what it is: a tragic season full of animosity, rancor, distrust, subterfuge, and hostility. It has divided communions, and in some cases broken them outright. Has the affirmation of same-sex unions borne fruit within the church? Have its advocates practiced forbearance as they have sought the recognition of same-sex unions — or have they, in effect, adopted the sub-Christian grammar of rights in their demand for recognition? If an ecclesiastically-centered 'fruitfulness' is the mark of Christian marriage, have those communions that have affirmed same-sex unions borne it by winning the nations to Christ? The answers to these questions seem apparent to this writer. There is little about the legacy of the church's incorporation of gay marriage to rejoice about. Even if this were a movement of God, the divisions and disunion it has wrought is a terrible judgment upon us.

Still, asking those who affirm same-sex unions to forbear with the church as she discerns the path forward can only be just if the church meaningfully accompanies them in their distress, and empowers them for a life of chaste and joyful service to the kingdom of God. The manifest failures of our churches to do so have left many gay Christians feeling isolated and alone, wondering whether there *is* a meaningful life for them within the boundaries of a 'moral orthodoxy.' There is an urgent need for discernment about the ways Christians have alienated such individuals, and for meaningful ways they can make them feel fully at home in our churches.

That history has sown confusion and uncertainty, which have diminished many believers' convictions about traditional understandings of marriage. For many conservatives, the arguments against same-sex unions seem more weighty because they are backed by the tradition. Now, though, widespread disagreement makes the arguments against same-sex unions seem less secure than they would otherwise. The seeds of those early arguments have now flowered into the impression in some quarters that the arguments are more or less equally persuasive. One option for the church would be to ignore this recent history, and evaluate the arguments for same-sex unions independently. Another path would be to excavate that historical context, and lay bare the ways such arguments came into currency. Whatever approach the church takes, the persistence of disagreement is a reason to urgently come to a resolution, rather than diminish the centrality of marriage to the church's witness. Sustaining unity across disagreement on such questions is a temporary moment of the church's life, as she learns to negotiate a present that is distorted by sin (on every side). Maintaining that unity demands forbearing with those who disagree, recognizing the church's own failure to form imaginations in accordance with the Gospel. The confusion of the laity lies at the feet of those shepherds of the faith who gave sanction to practices like divorce and contraception that have deformed Christians' imaginations. At this juncture, there can be no accusations of disingenuousness or bad faith toward those who object to the 'traditional' account of marriage. The church's responsibility on these questions is to heal what wounds of division she can, through firmly recovering the deep reasons for her views. The patient work of deliberation demands reaching behind our current presuppositions, and retrieving forgotten resources in order to renew the Christian witness on these questions.

Still, the affirmation of same-sex unions cannot bear fruit for the church, because it entangles her in a contradiction and asks her to renounce the creation that God has deemed 'good.' Good Christians will doubtlessly disagree with this

claim. Yet those who do so walk a path that departs from what Scripture reveals and what Christian churches have taught regarding the inter-dependency of sex, procreation and marriage. Such a path is hazardous to themselves, and scandalous to others: by introducing dissension on marriage, they have undermined countless believers' confidence in the authority of the institutions they have claimed to defend. Perhaps advocates of same-sex unions within the church would do better if they followed Karl Barth's counsel to those theologians who rejected the Virgin Birth: even if they cannot understand the doctrine, they might instead "treat their private road as a private road and…not make it an object of their proclamation," such that if they "cannot affirm it and so (unfortunately) withhold it from their congregations, they must at least pay the dogma the respect of keeping silence about it."

MATTHEW LEE ANDERSON IS AN ASSISTANT RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF ETHICS AND THEOLOGY AT BAYLOR UNIVERSITY'S INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES OF RELIGION AND THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF BAYLOR IN WASHINGTON. HE IS AN ASSOCIATE FELLOW AT THE MCDONALD CENTRE FOR THEOLOGY, ETHICS, AND PUBLIC LIFE AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE COMPLETED A D.PHIL. IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

Our Fugitive
SENSES & SENSIBILITIES

Author TARA THIEKE

Throughout the archaeological, biological, and literary records of *homo sapiens* emerges a common trait: the species best capable of lifting eyes and mind heavenward has not found this earth to be enough. However murkily understood, the great mounds of earth and stone dragged around by our ancestors witness to an innate impulse to create rituals and places of worship pointing to some other reality. We could perhaps be called "*Homo duo mundos*," or: "man of two worlds". From the Dreaming to the Gothic cathedral, we are a species with a foot here and a foot… there.

That history has enough conflict and resolutions to keep an historian busy many lifetimes. Yet this history also appears uniform in its common valuation of the relationship between the transcendent and the earth, the need for stories which acknowledge that relationship, and the recognition of a creator. Despite the many iterations of these beliefs, which have vitally significant differences, their commonality appears overarching when contrasted to the flattened worldviews which have come to dominate our mental framework in modernity. The revolution of cleverness has brought strange tools, tools which make the Buddhist monk, the Catholic monk, and the shaman all more akin to one another than to a 21st century student attending a comparative religion Zoom seminar.

This revolution began at a date unknown though the Apple in the Garden is a fairly good place to start and has the convenience of symbolic continuity up to the bitten apple logo of the Apple corporation. This revolution has come in many guises: as gift-bearer, de-mystifier, magic-worker, and tyrant. It has promised a new model of man, a striver free of the shackles of the past. While he is descended from those who used the stars to make tools he declines to worry about their disappearance from common sight. There was this earth and none other, and we owed it to ourselves to make it a paradise.

But there are multiple ways of interpreting sapiens. Are we clever or wise? Are we defined by our tools aiming to conquer the stars, or by our quest for communion with them? If the machinations of the ancients in stacking stones is notable, is it no less notable why they did so?

The cleavage of cleverness from wonder has wrought a long diminishment of our understanding of the complexity of homo sapiens. Wonder gives birth to many fuzzy sensibilities which resist quantification and thus tend to wither under utilitarian problem-solving. When the question is how to build bigger and higher, then our sensibilities stemming from wonder begin to slow us down. The pursuit of beauty, questions of virtue ethics — they are not quickly measurable and so there is no place for them in profit or power-maximizing frameworks.

The denial of these measurement-resisting qualities leaves us with an infinitely poorer metric for happiness. Our advertisement-drenched society cannot promise us the Good and so our products seem to claim our loyalty solely by their escalating attempts to shock and awe our bodily senses. Nothing on a billboard means anything, but there sure is a lot of whatever it is: bigger meals, stronger granite countertops, louder explosions, faster wireless.

Being a whole rather than a part means our instinct to build temples remains, only now it is shorn of reverence for that which the temple houses. In this state of befuddlement we spend billions of dollars shooting a few people in rockets into the outer atmosphere for a few minutes. They will see no angels. They don't know how.

The loss of angels is no trivial matter. The place in the heart once reserved for angels, for meaning, for God has been bulldozed over by a new priesthood that does not recognize that there is no neutrality. They do not realize that it is not so easy to remove gods, because the truth is there was not one place in the heart but rather the whole of our being was permeated and transformed by the perception that matter had meaning. It is not a gene which can be plucked out or hypnotized into inoffensiveness via a smartphone.

Rather, this ongoing revolution of cleverness is forced to offer louder and more frantic distractions because we are not a collection of parts but a living whole. By denying one aspect of our being the whole is changed; as the rates of self-acknowledged happiness and wellness testify, the change seems to be for the worse. The great dystopian writers could sense these changes many decades ago, realizing that in the quest for efficiency and knowledge something significant was absent: what was it all for? They posited some potential answers and the leaders of the revolution tut-tutted. It's not about that and will never come to that, Silicon Valley said, as they scratched "Soma" off the list of names for new biotech companies.

WHAT DOES IT COME TO?

The reduced understanding of *homo sapiens* as strivers for maximized power and efficiency is at the heart of our discontent, but this is not the sort of amusing error in a comedy of manners. The flattened interpretation of our being leads to a worldview which cannot ask itself questions about ends because it is so consumed with means, and this is the root of manifold horrors.

With the power summoned from the deep we can make the mineral kingdom dance at our command, play with embryos of animals and man, dive in and out of DNA, and weave webs of wires and satellites round the globe to bring thoughts together quick as lightning. Where magic ends and science begins is no longer clear (if it ever was), for from CERN to nanoparticles it's beyond the layman's capacity to understand.

The common motivation through all this is a fanatical belief that if something can be done it should be done ("fanatical" is a strong word but what else should we call those who mix human embryos with pigs because it is possible?) No other principle seems at work except the manic obsession with accumulating more power for the sake of power.

With a clap of your hands you may turn on the light; with a push of your pointer finger you set in motion a wave of action which will deliver a bit of plastic made halfway around the globe to your doorstep. All these earthly miracles will be advertised and sold through a world you spend ever more hours in: little black holes never more than a few feet from your fingers and eyes.

As the hands and eyes are drawn into the screen,

the body grows heavy with the lack of movement. The screen, and all the labor for its upkeep, has slipped between us and our own bodies. We may have been dreaming of the heavens for millennia, but the dream imbued our own reality with a fundamental unity between matter and meaning. Legs were made for walking and we walked. Now, to stay on the healthy side of cause-and-effect, we must replace activities which had been effortlessly intertwined with daily life with artificial efforts often unavailable to the masses. It is the wealthy who can afford to ask, "is this neighborhood walkable?" To exercise the function of our own bodies is now a luxury in a world stuffed with magic devices.

The revolution has denied the value of wonder or communion with a transcendent reality, but it offers us a substitute virtual one. God is no more, but we can be Player One in a new, updated model. Unfortunately it requires a strange sacrifice: our relation to the given reality we were born into. Attention to this world interferes with attention to the virtual alternative. Despite ever-escalating ingenious ways of capturing our time, this artificial reality and the mechanomorphic worldview it is built upon are not content to stay put. It wishes to cross through the screen and claim this world as well.

This is not too surprising if wonder is not incidental but rather fundamental to our identity. The revolution promised that after our sensibility of the heavens was diminished we would appreciate this world as our only home and greatly improve upon it. But *homo duos mundos* cannot live this way: if our tool-making capabilities are no longer limited by a sense of reverence towards the reality the tools are made for, and become ends in themselves, then we lose the sense of direction which is vital for our well-being. In this way a new home comes with the promise of restoration, it only requires the increasing loss of our bodily senses. Once matter is denied meaning, we unavoidably set out on a path which eventually denies matter as well.

LIFE IN THE LIBERATED LAND

The promised land must become an artificial one as the current landscape has become disorienting in the extreme. We experience more stimulation in seconds than our ancestors did in a lifetime. Millennia ago the ancients built temples with an eye towards Venus, waiting years for its light to shine through the roof in Newgrange for but a day. As for ourselves, we have no reason to wait for anything. There is no cause for patience or hope, and so we make decisions based not upon the Good, or the True, or the Beautiful, but in terms of accumulating power and stimulation.

The result is a virtual world which colonizes the earth with towers, wires, satellites and screens, with glowing billboards and a network of lights to blot out reminders of the heavens. Bitcoin factories, quite real, churn through this-worldly resources to produce digital currency. Child miners delve and bleed to bring up minerals to make the devices ever smaller, ever faster..... the entire world is offered up to those who can afford to fully reap the pleasures these tools sell.

The peasants of old enmeshed their seasons and hours with another reality. The liturgical year, though, did not deconstruct night and day. The quilted pattern of saint days and feasts did not quash the rhythms of daily life. St. John the Baptist's Day was the traditional feast day associated with Midsummer. There were bonfires and water immersions while herbs like St. John's Wort were harvested. The Church, having hollowed the old pagan customs, maintained a balance which drew our hearts to the heavens while allowing our hands to work meaningfully in this world for as long as God let us dwell here. Our attention to the reality of earth and the reality of heaven was fully baptized.

What does midsummer or midwinter's day mean to the Silicon Valley developer working in a temperature-controlled facility at any and all hours, awaiting the hope of eventual uploading to an artificial world with virtual immortality? The setting of the sun becomes a luxury, the content of a weekend flight to Iceland, a glimpse of extremes experienced as a tasting tray of life's delights disconnected from a greater whole. The pilgrim perceived new things which allowed both deeper love of this world and the next. The tourist, as Walker Percy saw many decades ago, can taste. But communion is more than taste.

Tasting is what it offers the lucky; what does midsummer in the advertised utopia mean to the gas station cashier or warehouse worker who enjoys the occasional DoorDash delivery but for whom Iceland is, as it was to her ancestors, a foreign country in the full sense of the word? Will she see the lingering twilight over the Bay, or will the presence of millions of LEDs neuter it? A few pale words in gray etched into the calendar, a note on the Weather app: today is the longest day of the year. It may as well be the shortest, for the digital reality consumes so much attention that before she knows it, it is winter.

The 20th-century Catholic polemicist Solange Hertz wrote, "with night turned into day by electricity, the natural rhythms of alternating darkness and light, with all the God-given regularity and order dependent on them, are profoundly disrupted. There is no rank of society which does not suffer from pathological arrhythmia." The interruptions of technology have indeed become an avalanche and this "pathological arrhythmia" exhausts mind, body, and soul. With the stars obscured, the nights no longer lit by the moon but by daylight-imitating blue streetlights, the body's connection to the natural world is frayed. The spiritual loss coincides with this. The removal of the transcendent second world attacks both our senses and our sensibilities, leaving us with an emotional addiction to the very devices responsible for our confusion.

All feasts become movable and then they become disposable. Historian Jacque Barzun noted Protestants went to church once a week for services while Catholics, possessing a different supernatural sensibility, went to Church at all hours to pray. To the outsider what could be a more marked difference of belief: we give our attention and bodily presence to what we believe is true. It seems after we decided we could pray anywhere we prayed nowhere. When places and times did not have meaning it didn't much matter what we did with our time. The church is shuttered, the midnight vigil left behind for Zoom meetings and television Mass.

With the world liberated from the heavens ever more disordered, we turn to the artificial world for relief. It does not want to share our attention. Data-mining allows it to offer us greater dreams, replacements for a midsummer's twilight obscured by light pollution.

There are hints of the forms these dreams will take in the mumbled reports issued from think tanks, reports which are translated into banalities by the media. Yet what is discernible is that the next steps of the revolution are anything but banal. It seems we are getting closer to something. The devices do get smaller. Hydrogels do promise to be "exciting." Our homes are becoming "smart," and food really does spoil in the fridge if Google has an outage.

The screen rises and the old world falls. Our shared archetypal and symbolic language, our oldest vernacular inheritance, is dying. The orthodoxies of the cyber world, which could perhaps be called "user agreements," hide their expectations of us. We sail through the door between our world and the virtual as if nothing changes but a movement of our eyes; but everything changes. The log-in

screen's ease of access puts sense and sensibility to sleep as we enter an increasingly permanent state of semi-hypnosis.

This trance is the most accessible product of our technological revolutions. It can be interrupted when interfaces are upgraded and people lament old graphics the way we miss childhood homes. We develop muscle memories with a touchpad in the same way we subconsciously avoid a creaky floorboard. But neophilia is the key to capturing attention, and so in the end even the changes we lament keep us logging on and tuning in.

As the screen becomes both the source of discontent and of relief, its demands grow and the world outside is slowly consumed. And as there is less and less to go outside for, the screen becomes the sole source of salvation.

The glowing screen, the greatest achievement of the revolution of cleverness, offers salvation to people deprived of meaning and now matter. It comes in the form of an alternative reality but at the cost of participation in this one. Its demands grow greater and we cannot conceive of a destination. Where is the screen's Beatific vision? Or does the obsession with means and rejection of ends imply that permanent residency in the augmented reality is to be reduced to a cycle of consume-desire-consume?

What is Orthodoxy to do? Swipe left, keep scrolling? How can Orthodoxy trump convenience? The Gospel tells us to be prepared to lose our mothers, our fathers, our children, our lives. How do we lose a place we've never walked in, a place that is truly nowhere? What do we do when the program wants a place in our physical reality, when the efficiency of a system is so highly prized that the concerns of your bodily limits are deemed irrelevant? It's more efficient to monitor your blood sugar levels internally. We must not hinder the demands of the program even if it blurs the boundaries between inner and outer.

From the Internet of Things we reach the proposed Internet of Bodies. We are invited (though behind the invitation is the tense rhetoric of "inevitability") to become a new type of person: homo machina. What do the demands of the new metaphysics mean for people who never had time to understand the Internet of Things, let alone have a say in it? If the Internet of Things demanded our world and our homes, what price will the Internet of Bodies extract? What does it mean to become a machine? These questions are smothered by the trumpets of the new conveniences and the conversation moves on.

SEEKING RE-ORIENTATION

The GPS eroded knowledge of our roads and now we are up to our necks in a strange new no-where. Where is true north now? It is unsurprising that millions testify to a crisis of anxiety. Our psyche is disoriented by the rapid fluctuations of this new model that aims to make us utterly dependent upon its mediation of reality. If we are lost without a phone we are truly lost indeed. Can we enter a Church if it is not displayed on Google Maps? What if the app owners delete Orthodoxy, or the battery fails?

Faith is an unwelcome sojourner in a virtual landscape increasingly hostile to its presence. But comfort! That is not a new development. The virtual world emerged in the same world which received the Incarnation and then saw the Crucifixion. The great contradiction remains: hope lives in the heart of loss. For it is in neither this world of suffering, illness, and death, nor in the promised virtual immortality, that our salvation lies. We may make it to Mars, but still we will take Golgotha with us. We may upload our brains into digital libraries, but still the Cross will linger between the stacks.

He has set upon us a conscience which is both a gift and responsibility regardless of nature, nurture, or machine. Whether we are in a gulag or gilded cage, whether we can move our legs or whether the pattern of development has rendered them inert, the essential things are the same. If the sun is blocked out or the stars, still the eternal law is written in our hearts.

What will happen to this world under the techno-utopians is beyond any one person's control, but sapiens retains an implication of more than cleverness. The wisdom which perceives the otherness of the transcendent cannot be defined away.

This perception is a gift. Despite all the attempts of machines and programs to obscure matter and meaning, the ability to perceive them remains. We can turn off the SmartLights during Advent and accept the night. We can celebrate St. John the Baptist's feast day with flowers and fire. We can recite the Nicene creed and teach our children hymns. We can learn when each flower blooms and to which saint they belong. We can learn how particulars, not just abstractions, give glory to God.

Matter has meaning and the attempt to deny it is really the ancient attempt to escape our own limits under the misguided belief that we're less, not more, with them. The techno-utopians reduce their understanding of our nature because the implication we cannot control everything is frightening.Yes, it is. The world is full of sorrow and death.

Sensibility sits beside the grieving and understands. Our senses echo the pain of being human. But they also call us through the dark night to communion with God's face which can never be replicated by an AI program. Life is not a cold laboratory, but a living romance. The transcendent reality we longed for came to us and conquered death. When we perceive that truth we see how our longing for meaning was a compass. No matter how close the techno-utopians come to turning *homo sapiens* into *homo machina*, the truth is they cannot truly hide the heavens from our sight. In their hearts they, too, dream of seeing God past the stars.

TARA THIEKE IS A HOMEMAKER RAISING THREE DAUGHTERS IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA AFTER WORKING IN CHILDCARE IN THE MID-ATLANTIC FOR OVER A DECADE.

Something There Is That Doesn't Love a Wall: LOVE AS CITIZENSHIP

Author CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT

WELCOME TO UNALASKA. FREE COFFEE DONUTS.

John Honan is in the school bus next to the bridge again, its black on white on yellow greeting lit up in the fog lamps of the ramshackle cars blearily gazing through the dim mist of another Alaskan morning. Likely as not there's someone in there with him — maybe one of his congregants from Unalaska Christian Fellowship, maybe Denise and her grandson Billy stopping in for a smile and a pastry, maybe a young first-time fisherman up from Seattle using it as the makeshift visitor center it's meant to be.

Maybe their conversation will be about God. Maybe it won't be. Regardless, at the end, John will ask them if he can pray for their day and send them off with a blessing. Likely as not, they'll happily take him up on the offer — and they'll go back off into the wind and snow caffeinated, body and soul.

I asked him once why he did the bus thing — it wasn't directly related to any of the three nonprofits he operated, obviously didn't raise any money, and took up a decent chunk of his mornings.

"I went to this healing conference once, Christian, and the speaker said something I thought was pretty canny. 'If you want to heal — truly heal, body and spirit — you've got to be *available, bold*, and *compassionate*.' The ABC's of the trade. That's how you heal."

John turned to me. "I don't know if that's how you heal," he said humbly. "But it's certainly how you help people."

Forty-odd years ago, John Honan wasn't getting up at odd hours of the morning to pray with the stranded folks he puts up for the night over on the other side of the duplex he and his wife Sue live in. He wasn't waiting long hours at the airport to see if he could deliver Christmas turkeys (and presents) to the needy community of St. George — an island in the middle of the Bering Sea two hundred miles northwest of the already remote Unalaska Island. He wasn't doing the bus thing. No, John was living under an Interstate 405 underpass in Los Angeles. He'd been living by the skin of his teeth — enjoying life, but going from odd job to odd job, random town to random town. When his scheme to go buy some land in Canada fell apart, he found himself in L.A., desperate and hungry, with no real plan except to get out of his present

circumstances.

Eventually he summoned up the boldness (the first of the ministerial ABC's he'd acquire) to ask the youth group kids who were providing him with the one peanut butter sandwich a day he'd been subsisting on if there was somewhere he could go and get cleaned up and try to find a job. They pointed him toward a Bible study.

It was there he learned, for the first time, that God had a plan for him. John had grown up Catholic — but in that insubstantial way it seems many people brought up Catholic are — and the news that God had a plan stunned him. What was it? How did he find out what it was? And then what? Back under the 405 that night he heard a voice amongst the rumblings of the cars above him:

"John, if you want the plan God has for you, you have to ask Jesus into your life. Love Me, and serve Me."

Not given any directive beyond love and serve, wherever John went he loved and served. In Oregon, where he met his wife Sue: love and serve. When he moved to Alaska to join his brothers who were profiting handsomely on the crabbing boom of the mid-nineties: love and serve. As he grew with God, he read the Gospel and learned what Jesus meant by "love" and "serve".

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

"For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat… I was in prison and you came and visited me…

Whatever you did for the one of the least of these, you did for me."

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

Available, bold, compassionate. That's how John found himself in a school bus on weekday mornings giving out free coffee and listening, listening, and listening. Trying his best to understand, learn, and love.

* * *

Karol Wojtyła, prior to becoming Pope John Paul II, published the seminal *Love & Responsibility* in 1960. *Love & Responsibility* is an unabashed philosophical defense of the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality and marriage but is perhaps most insightful when it directly links the fundamental claim that every human deserves to be loved and not used as an object with a rigorous description of what it means to respect another's dignity. Love, as Wojtyła tells it, requires an individual to willfully "seek a good together with others, and to subordinate himself to that good for the sake of others, or to others for the sake of that good." In other words, he must put some greater good ahead of his own personal good.

Viktor Frankl, Holocaust survivor, psychiatrist, and author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, stated that humans "need something for the sake of which to live" and that man's purpose is to find meaning in life. If true, it would follow, from both a Biblical and secular perspective, that man is most likely to find fulfillment in the act of loving. Wojtyła and Frankl found themselves realizing the criticality of love to human fulfillment (and simply keeping one's head above water) in the whirlwind horror of World War II. John Honan found it while homeless and desperate under the 405 underpass.

If our trio is correct — that not only being loved

but also *actually loving* is critical to finding that elusive feeling of fulfillment — such a claim demands a societal paradigm shift not just in how we go about attempting to find our own happiness, but also in how we ought to arrange our society itself. Governments, philanthropic institutions, health professionals, etc., should not be supplanting individuals' ability to love: feed the hungry, care for the sick, visit the prisoner, clothe the naked, befriend the stranger. They should be facilitating and encouraging individuals to do this themselves, thus allowing for people to not just be loved, but to love others themselves. The moment citizenship becomes synonymous with love, it's possible to envision a society in which the John Honans of the world, complete with their availability, boldness, compassion, and willingness to sit in a frigid bus to try and effect the good of their neighbors are no longer the exception, but the norm.
The question, then, is *how*.

* * *

How to — yes — love.

An ex-girlfriend once told me that it should be intuitive. Preprogrammed. Her thesis was that if you try to love, then there should be something inherent inside you that will allow you to do so successfully.

Maybe so. But in the end (not metaphorically, sadly — she was an *ex*-girlfriend), why not know more? While intending to do good is unmistakably admirable, imagine how much good can be done if you actually know how to do it. While there is no doubt value in what manifests organically, it is much easier to succeed in doing the right thing if you know how. Gambling on trial and error is just that — a gamble.

So yes. How to love.

Love as citizenship is fairly unexplored. Citizenship, especially in an American context, consists mainly of voting, jury duty, paying taxes, and keeping off of everyone else's grass. "Good fences make good neighbors," NIMBYism ("not in my backyard"), grocery store self-checkouts, and the iconic garage door have become the trademarks of American "neighborliness."

Luckily, Americans haven't yet gotten around to applying the same principles they apply to their neighbors to their spouses. For us, it's not only lucky — it's convenient. While neighbor counseling (it even *sounds* absurd) isn't really a thing, marriage counseling is widespread, as are books about how to start, conduct, or repair marriages. Books like… Karol Wojtyła's *Love & Responsibility*, which he was inspired to write after his interactions with all too many floundering young couples made him decide it might be worth clarifying precisely what it means to love.

To love one's spouse, specifically. Happily, for our purposes, knowing how to love one's spouse provides us a parallel methodology for how to love one's neighbor. A good neighbor is a good member of his community. A good husband is a good member of his marriage, which is a community in its own right. Both good neighbors and good husbands are good citizens — the latter's community is simply smaller and takes precedence over the former.

Wojtyła's prescription for loving well within marriage requires its participants to engage in two forms of love — friendship and betrothal. Both friendship and betrothal are founded on what Wojtyła calls "love as goodwill". Goodwill means desiring not merely one's own good but the good of the other. Not "I long for you as a good," but "I long for that which is good for you." Neither true friendships nor marriages can be relationships "of utility." While both participants no doubt stand to gain, their gain is not why they

participate — it is the gain of the other person in the relationship that motivates them to stay. Placing someone else's needs before yours, as both Viktor Frankl and John Honan so strongly emphasize, is what provides fulfillment.

Of course, it is not enough to simply *intend* the good of the other. Work must be done to actually get to know them and what they consider to be their own good as well. This takes, among other things, time. Given time, it is then possible for one friend to develop Wojtłyan "sympathy"— the emotional recognition of the worth of the other person. Like most emotional things, it takes time to grow and flourish. Once it has, though, sympathy is sticky, and thus useful. If one person is temporarily being, for lack of a better word, difficult, sympathy allows for their friend, spouse, etc. to maintain the necessary goodwill to preserve the relationship. Two peoples' willingness (emphasis on *will*) to stick with their friend through the storms of life is indicative of true friendship. They are, after all, loving their neighbor.

It is only possible to elevate a friendship to a marriage, however, if both friends are willing to betroth themselves to their partner. Betrothal, as Wojtyła explains, requires more than simple goodwill. It requires complete self-surrender — the total giving of oneself to another to do with as they please. Such total surrender, of course, can only be accomplished if one spouse trusts that their partner truly loves them — i.e., fully wills their good. If that trust isn't there, such total surrender opens wide the doors for the most emotionally devastating form of exploitation: betrayal. As such, it is only through this mutual trust and absolute commitment of the will that two people can truly act as one, on the bona fide behalf of each of their constituent parts.

Wojtyła clearly explains that total surrender of oneself to another, given the inseparable nature of human body and soul, is fundamentally a sexual act. I don't disagree. However, it does seem like there are other forms of "betrothal." Jesus on the Cross comes to mind. Or, what about cases where a person doesn't *totally* surrender themselves but surrenders… partially? With conditions, perhaps. What of the relationship between parent and child? Or — perhaps more keenly — between parent and adopted child? Or between mentor and mentee? Master and apprentice? Or, why not, what about best friends?

After all, Jesus asks us not only to love our spouses as ourselves, but all of our neighbors as well. A marital relationship is, of course, special unto itself, but describing a marriage as the only form of betrothed love can undersell other lesser but still extremely necessary forms of conditional betrothal.

* * *

Sue Honan, John's wife and ever-patient Eleanor Roosevelt to his FDR, said as much to me in our conversation about the Honans' various community-enhancing exploits. Being a good citizen and a good spouse both require copious amounts of patience, kindness, and self-sacrifice. However, you only make inviolate vows to your spouse.

"There are times," Sue said wisely, thinking back on all her years of marriage, "where you're not staying in the relationship because of the other person. It's because you made a covenant *with God*." She continued. "Even when it's rough, I know that John will treat me with goodwill. I don't necessarily know that for everyone else. There are some men out there who seem great, but at home are horrible people. In a marriage you know fully. Out in society, less so."

John's more willing to take society's slings and arrows on the chin, but even he has limits with

those he takes care of that he doesn't with his wife. "Each time someone comes to me in need of a place to sleep, help getting a job, whatever, I tell them up front that if they treat me with respect, then I'll do everything in my power to help them," he says. "But if they act like the devil, then I'll have to throw them out." He quotes Luke's Gospel: "If a town refuses to recognize you, go out into its streets and say, 'We wipe even the dust of your town from our feet to show that we have abandoned you to your fate!'"

The Honans embody a spirit of conditional but committed love for their community. A sort of "betrothal-lite." They don't commit themselves to unbinding vows, per se, but it is their word they are giving nonetheless. It's this ironclad commitment, underwritten by their dedication to God, that allows for other folks in Unalaska to trust the Honans — loan them buses to use as early morning visitor centers, fund their shelter ministry, and come to them for anything and everything. Because the Honans love, and do so with such vitality, they encourage other people to do the same. Betrothed love, after all, allows for the other side to give just as much since it's now clear that betrayal won't be right around the corner.

It's the strength of their love that brought me to Unalaska for a third time — not just to intern in the City's Planning Department or to make another attempt to summit the island's resident dormant volcano, but to try and understand precisely how a society could encourage in everyone the same sort of contagious love — citizenship, really — that the Honans pour out on such a regular basis.

* * *

We know three things about the kind of love worth encouraging in citizens. Firstly, it requires an act of the will — it cannot be purely sentimental. Secondly, it must be primarily concerned with the good of the person being loved. And thirdly, it must be trustworthy. If a citizen cannot be relied on to love — well, Paul said it best in his first epistle to the Corinthians. "If I give all I possess to the poor, and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love…"

The siblings that brought John Honan to Unalaska have all come and gone. Crabbing, after the imposition of the individual transferable quota system, became much less lucrative (and much less dangerous), so the Honan brothers moved back to the Lower 48. Less windy, less isolated.

John stayed. Stayed for the youth ministry. Stayed for his congregation. He and his wife aren't as spry as they used to be, though, and Unalaska is a tough place to live; everyone from the newcomer to native Unangan folks who've lived their whole lives on that rock in the ocean say as much. So life on the island gets harder. Nevertheless, John won't leave until he's certain that his stranded ministry will be there even when he's not.

"The poor you will always have with you," he says, quoting Jesus as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew. Then, tongue-in-cheek, he wryly finishes the Lord's exhortation: "But you will not always have me.'

"More seriously, though, Christian — I won't always be around, but God's love always will be. I've promised this community I'll try and see it through, but unless there are people willing to take the baton, the suffering will only get worse."

He's right. Unalaska relies on John and Sue. Beyond their ministry literally providing overflow capacity for the local jail, it is only investments like theirs that allow the town to keep ticking as successfully as it does. Without their enduring, vivacious commitment and its unshakeable foundation in God; without their keen understanding of both the town, its people,

its ailments and their willingness to continuously understand *more*; without their desire to put themselves in occasionally uncomfortable circumstances for the good of their neighbors… where would Unalaska be?

Without people like John and Sue, where would *humankind* be? Good citizens — not just people who always show up to vote and pay taxes, but citizens who truly love — are what keep the emotional gears of society turning. The more good citizens we have, the better society becomes. The more we love — not just "be kind", but truly care about the good of our fellow man — the better the world becomes. Commit to being available, bold, and compassionate. Love your neighbor as you would have your neighbor love you.

* * *

"Good fences make good neighbors" first appears in Robert Frost's "Mending Wall," a poem nominally about two reticent neighbors working to fix the stone wall between their two properties.

> *My apple trees will never get across*
> *And eat the cones on his pines, I tell him.*
> *He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'*
> *Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder*
> *If I could put a notion in his head.*
> *Why do they make good neighbors?*

Let spring be the mischief in you.

CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT STUDIES URBAN PLANNING AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY. YOU CAN FIND HIM ON TWITTER @SCHMIDTIZEN.

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN

ONSI A. KAMEL

It is a hard thing not to love one's children. It is not hard to resent them, to see them as miscreants or burdens, to think them selfish and base, to find their concupiscence by turns infuriating and repugnant. Neither is it hard to love them — it is the easiest thing in the world to see in one's children a simplicity, purity, and goodness which draw up love from one's depths as from a well. To resent or to love them is easy. Not to love them is hard.

It was a truism in my childhood that love is not "a feeling," but "a decision;" love means willing the good for another. This is true, but it is not the last word. As St. Thomas recognized, before we will the good for a thing, we love it first because we find it pleasing to us: the goodness of a thing, "whether real or imaginary, calls forth our love" (ST. Prima Pars, Q. 20, A. 2). The love which resides within us is pulled out of us, so to speak, ravished by the goodness we recognize in the world around us. Thus, to love one's children is easy because one naturally knows them to be good; to resent one's children is easy because one sinfully feels them to be onerous. Not to love one's children is supremely difficult, because it is the state of knowing them to be good but feeling them to be bad. This bespeaks a deep disorder in the soul: the passions rebel against the intellect, and the will's allegiance is constantly shifting from one to the other.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me," Jesus said, "for of such is the kingdom of God." Our Lord suffered the children to come to Him — but he did not suffer them. He took them up in His arms, blessed them, and declared them model subjects in his kingdom. But he did not know what it is not to love them. I do. This is the account of how, in a hospital room where everything matched a beat-up, faux-leather glider that was once pistachio green but had long since browned, I learned the meaning and totality of my soul's disorder, and how hard a thing it is to suffer children.

* * *

I have often wondered if the ubiquitous, hearty, almost manically joyful "Congratulations!" which inevitably accompany an announcement of pregnancy are expressions of genuine joy or attempts to

compensate in some small way for the difficulties ahead. When my wife and I found out that we were having a baby at just 22 years old, we discerned the true feelings underlying so many hearty congratulations as clearly as one sees sunlight through the tree canopy in winter. We hadn't been trying to conceive, but, having an abiding Christian commitment to the ordering of marriage to children, we were not avoiding the possibility either. In keeping with contemporary American mores, our milieu growing up was somewhat inconsistent in its approach to the goodness of children: pro-life, to be sure, but pro-family? Perhaps not.

Our thinking about children shifted decisively in college. We learned to see children as unequivocal goods, and having them as among the highest natural goods in this life, to be pursued and celebrated before most others. In this intellectual conviction, we have never wavered, but I confess that my feelings in those early days of my wife's pregnancy did not align with my supposed convictions.

It was not supposed to be this way. I was supposed to be elated, and there were moments I was. The day after we found out, the man hired to shovel and salt my parents' drive brought his young son along, and I could not stop smiling as they salted together. But as I lay awake at night, the blackness of the room seemed to disclose my future: dark and uncertain, hemmed in, *cramped*. Nature and nature's God had trapped me. Whereas before my life stretched out in front of me full of possibilities and waiting for me to shape it, now it was stifling and murky, waiting to reveal itself to me. For the first time, I realized how total my dependence upon the mercy of nature and Providence really was, and I was terrified. God had given me a vocation whose cost I did not know; he had called me to a definite task fraught with dangers on all sides. This test proved me to be neither Samuel nor David, but Jonah. The Blessed Virgin had said, "behold, the handmaid of the Lord"; I begged God to take my cup from me, and unlike our Lord's, my prayer didn't include the all-important "nevertheless."

Perhaps I could have used a manic "Congratulations," but the jubilation of our officially pro-choice, lapsed Catholic family was little match for the resignation and words of "advice" from our devoutly evangelical family: *Let me get some champagne — I suppose we should celebrate. Your life will be harder. Don't let children distract you from your work. Couldn't you have waited a few years? Did you have to have this child now? Next time, consider using birth control.*

* * *

The Scriptures tend to structure narratives involving children according to a few types: the barren woman desirous of children (Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, Elizabeth), the dead or deathly ill child who is miraculously restored (the Shunnamite widow's son, Jairus' daughter), or the adult children who betray their father, bringing grief and generational calamity (Noah's sons, Lot's daughters, Absalom). To the extent that there are commonalities running through all of these, one seems to be that children are good, and adult children are bad only when they act impiously. The Scripture's refrain is clear: children are to be singularly and fervently desired. "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward."

One kind of narrative conspicuously muted in the Bible but prominent in the whole of human history involves the possibility that children, through no fault of their own, might be occasions of evil to the family. I mean, of course, death by

childbirth. In such a case, the child brings the enemy of the family — death — into the heart of the family, simply by being born. The natural bonds of paternal, maternal, and filial affection are destroyed or severely tested, and unbridled enmity often takes their place. The Bible does not say what we all know already: a child can bring evil to us. Certainly, mine seemed to do so when my wife nearly died.

The labor and delivery were themselves quite smooth. My wife delivered naturally, and the nurses were impressed. They said that she not only comported herself with gravity and dignity, but delivered our daughter more quickly than any other first-time mother they had seen. The other young women in Philadelphia, they intimated, were not nearly so strong. We laughed: "The Irish have always been good at birthing."

My wife recovered normally for the first couple days. She was nursing, walking as well as could reasonably be expected, and getting enough rest. My sister visited, as did my parents and my mother-in-law. One friend brought us pastries, and others organized a walk to the hospital after church. The night before we were set to be discharged, we walked a lap around the hospital with a nurse. The tall, portable machine that measures vitals and keeps IVs running appropriately doubles as a support for patients to hold as they walk. Suddenly, my wife's monitor began beeping loudly and rapidly — her heart rate spiked and her blood pressure plummeted. By the time we got back to the room, she was shaking uncontrollably and could barely walk. Her body drained of color. Teams of nurses and multiple doctors streamed into the room, hustling, shouting clipped sentences, running tests. My wife spiked a fever, tipping them off to the fact that she had an infection. "Sepsis" was a new word for me.

Before they could pump her full of antibiotics, they had to get fluids into her body to prevent shock and rapid multi organ failure. Blood work was difficult because her veins kept collapsing, meaning they had to stick her again and again. The vaginal exams (the infection had caused her tear from delivering to open back up) were excruciating, and we later learned she probably developed PTSD from them; the internal, ultrasound exams focused on discovering whether her womb had retained placental tissue that was supposed to be expelled during delivery. When she had an allergic reaction to the antibiotics, I helped her wipe the refuse from her body; when she began passing blood clots and infected placental tissue, I helped her wipe off the blood.

It is customary for babies to sleep in the rooms with their parents rather than in hospital nurseries. In general, this is all to the good: it allows parents and children to bond, mothers to easily breastfeed, and nurses to assist parents as they adjust to caring for new life. But it also makes recovery less restful. Doctors were checking on my wife all hours of the day and night, and our daughter decided on a schedule of alternate intervals: while she slept, the doctors arrived, and when they left with their infuriating "get some rest," our daughter would awake with an ear-splitting cry.

Most of the time, before she woke up, our daughter would stir, and this rustling or smaller cry alerted me that, if I acted quickly, I could keep her asleep. I would jump out of bed, rush over to her bassinet, pick her up, and begin bouncing her desperately, pleading with her in my mind to sleep just a little while longer, so that my wife, whose face looked at ease only in sleep, might rest. I would look at the clock: *I just need to make it another fifteen minutes*. Look up. *Now fifteen*

more. Look up as my daughter began to cry. *Please. Please. Fifteen more. Please. Please. Don't wake her up. Dear God.* Over time, the heat, sweat, and fatigue produced by my bouncing would become intolerable, and on the first such occasion, I moved over to that horrible green-brown glider to sit and rest without ceasing to rock. In the silence of the room, the metal parts of the glider grinded together, waking my daughter up. I leapt out of the chair and resumed bouncing, cursing both my daughter and God for the first time, but not, I would discover, for the last.

* * *

The medieval Dominican theologian and mystic Albert the Great contended that there is not, properly speaking, any analogy between God and creation. For Albert, "a cause which has nothing in common with what it causes does not share in the predications with what it causes." In other words, when humans predicate the same word of both a cause and the thing caused, we do so because of some commonality between them; but if they have nothing in common, we cannot predicate the same word of them. Unpacking one such kind of analogy (analogy of proportion), the peerless Cajetan gave this example: "to see by corporeal vision and by intellectual vision are indicated by the common term *to see*" because understanding "presents something to the mind" just as sight "presents something to the body." Both kinds of "sight" present something, and it is this common presentation which allows us to predicate the same word of both. Thus, analogies require some common term to unite the two disparate elements, some underlying similarity which holds together the disjunctives. But because God so utterly transcends creation, is so qualitatively other, Albert argued that cannot speak of him according to an analogy of being. So instead of an analogy of being, Albert posited an analogy of imitation: creatures are like their creator insofar as they ever-imperfectly and finitely imitate Him.

It has often been remarked that we imitate God in begetting children by "participating in God's creation." This is true, of course, and some, I am sure, find it ennobling; but it was little comfort to me, a father who could not manage to love his own child, who failed to feel that she was good, let alone to glory that I was imitating God by filling the earth and subduing it. I knew only that my daughter struggled to eat and sleep, and my wife and I struggled to care for her — or even to want to.

A few months ago, as I was wrestling with the nature of love and my failures with respect to it, I recalled that St. Thomas' first discussion of creaturely love in the *Summa Theologia*e is actually in the context of his question on divine love. Whereas for creatures, love is called forth by the goodness in things, God's love is such that it produces the goodness in things. In fact, Luther arrived independently at the same insight. "The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it" (Luther); "God loves everything that exists. Yet not as we love…the love of God infuses and creates goodness" (Thomas).

Despite the fact that I was unable to love as St. Thomas says creatures ought to, even at my lowest moment it was nevertheless the case that I had begotten and nurtured a child, cooperating in bringing goodness into the world. Even in the midst of my suffering, perhaps I imitated, in some small way, the love of God. As Luther put it in *The Estate of Marriage*, Christian faith "opens its eyes, looks upon all these insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties in the Spirit, and is aware that they are all adorned with divine

approval…I am not worthy to rock the little babe or wash its diapers, or to be entrusted with the care of the child and its mother. How is it that I, without any merit, have come to this distinction of being certain that I am serving thy creature and thy most precious will?" From love, God creates the good that pleases Him; from love, I begat a child well-pleasing to God; as I now call her to myself on a daily basis, so God calls her to Himself eternally in the face of Jesus Christ; as I clothe and wash her, so God arrays her more gloriously than Solomon and cleanses her from all unrighteousness.

Or perhaps my application of the analogy of imitation is a fiction, something I tell myself to assuage the guilt I will no doubt feel until I depart this world. It is impossible to tell: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" What I do know is this: months after her birth, when my daughter laughed for the first time, her goodness called forth my love from me, and they met. And together, they danced in the light of her laughter.

ONSI A. KAMEL IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE DAVENANT PRESS. HE LIVES IN CHICAGO WITH HIS WIFE, ELAINA, AND THEIR TWO CHILDREN.

THE PROPHET OF RE-ALIGNMENT

Reading Michael Lind in the Ruins of the Old Republic

BRAD LITTLEJOHN

It has become a tired cliché to lament the polarization of American politics, yet after a year that witnessed a post-election assault on the U.S. capitol, and in which even epidemiology became a partisan issue, few would contest the truth of the lament. Still, while perhaps more polarized than ever, the poles of American politics are not quite what they once were. Everyone has their own pet theory on the precise shape of the "re-alignment" we are witnessing (usually correlated with the priorities of their funding source), but the old orthodoxies, it seems clear, are in a state of uneasy flux.

Few American political commentators can lay such convincing claim to the mantle of "prophet of re-alignment" than Michael Lind, the profoundly insightful Texan essayist who for three decades now has been deploring the laissez-faire takeover of the Republican party and the myopic identity politics of the Left. Through decades of free trade dogma, Lind was a voice crying in the wilderness on behalf of the older protectionist tradition of American conservatism, and long before talk of "industrial policy" suddenly became hip again around 2018, Lind was trumpeting the virtues of the Hamiltonian and Whig policies that turned America into the economic powerhouse of the world. And although today's obsessive debate over "critical race theory" may sound new, Lind sounded alarms about the reverse discrimination of race-based preference policies in 1995, and the "racial mysticism" that glorified "anarchic ghetto violence" *(Next American Nation, 178)* such as American cities witnessed throughout the summer of 2020.

Throughout his career, Lind has presented a vision of American nationalism that avoids any of the ugly racial overtones the term often carries, and an incisive analysis of the profound class dynamics that continue to determine access to economic and political power in twenty-first century America. In the process, he has offered in advance a compelling and persuasive explanation of the Trump phenomenon as a predictable populist backlash against the "divide and conquer" politics of American elites. Lind has been unafraid to grasp the nettle of the third-rail issue of contemporary American politics — immigration — refusing to allow the debate to be drowned out by accusations of "nativism" and "xenophobia," and calling liberal immigration policies by their proper name: the latest in a long string of highly successful wage-suppression strategies undertaken by our governing elites.

The political consensus of recent decades, Lind charges in his 2019 *The New Class War,* has been characterized by "a synthesis of the free market liberalism of the libertarian right and the cultural liberalism of the bohemian/academic left" and works to weaken "both democratic nation-states and national working-class majorities" (48). Despite its dominance of the political discussion and national policy, however, this consensus scarcely represents the bulk of working-class America, which tends to favor traditional values, government entitlement programs, and limits on immigration. In other words, while for decades our two parties have increasingly conspired to champion a laissez-faire approach to

morality, markets, and borders, most Americans — like most human beings throughout history — support well-regulated limits in all three realms. Lind cites one eye-opening study by his New America Foundation which revealed that 40.3% of the US electorate are "populists" supporting Social Security while opposing immigration, while only 6.2% — albeit a very wealthy and influential 6.2% — want to downsize Social Security and increase immigration *(New Class War, 70-71)*.

In the face of such unrepresentative government, a populist uprising was almost inevitable. While sympathizing with the new populism, however, Lind is circumspect about its limitations. "Today's populism," he writes in *The New Class War*, "is a counterculture, not a counterestablishment." As the Trump years depressingly demonstrated, "demagogues are good at channeling popular grievances and bad at redressing them. Populist movements that deride expertise and bureaucracy naturally tend to have few experts of their own to formulate policies and administer agencies. The vacuum of experienced talent is often filled by cronies or relatives of the populist demagogue" (83). In short, "populism is a symptom of a sick body politic, not a cure" (87).

The cure, Lind has argued since his clarion call in 1995, *The Next American Nation*, is a renewal of "liberal nationalism" and "democratic pluralism," which can reforge the bonds of civic unity and meaningful political representation. By thus reversing the decades-long alienation of the American people from one another, he suggests, we can plausibly reverse the concomitant alienation of the American people from their government, which has left conservatives increasingly unwilling to use the levers of power to advance the public good. "The Democrats," he shrewdly observes in the concluding chapter, "believe in the State but not the Nation, while the Republicans believe in the Nation but not the State. Neither party unites the two halves of Hamiltonian nationalism into a theory of the strong and integrated American nation-state" (342).

Lind's project is not free from its own tensions and ambiguities, and even many who sympathize with it may wonder if the hour is not now too late for America's political salvation. Had Lind's proposals for a third-way politics been heeded in 1995, it is quite plausible that the baleful trends he highlights might have been arrested. But after the apocalypse of 2020, hope can feel like foolish naivete. Lind himself, however, is a hard-headed realist, and even if realism can seem delusional in a world dominated by ideologues, it is our only plausible path forward, successful or not.

As Christians interested in political justice and civic renewal, then, we have much to gain, and nothing to lose, from a deep and thoughtful engagement with Lind's corpus. It is too vast, wide-ranging, and provocative to adequately summarize in a single article, so I will here confine myself to three key themes: Lind's staunch rejection of every form political idealism and dogmatism, his apologia for "nationalism," and his call for a "democratic pluralism" that can overcome or at least moderate the real class divisions in our society.

LIND'S REFRESHING REALISM

The first thing that strikes any reader of Lind's work is his unabashed realism, a breath of fresh air after the hand-wringing sanctimony and ideological cant of much contemporary political writing.

First, Lind is a foreign policy realist. Lind takes for granted that for the most successful period of its history and for the foreseeable future, the world has been and will be made up of sovereign

states, each of which will naturally privilege its own interests — the interests of its ruling class, if it is poorly governed, and the interests of its people, if it is well-governed. Prudence and changing circumstances may dictate a more aggressive or pacific approach to foreign policy, a greater reliance on the military or on diplomacy, and a preference for autonomy or international institutions, but any sensible foreign policy will always stand prepared to go it alone and wield a credible threat of force if the national interest demands. Moreover, if states succeed only by a willingness to guard their borders, they also tend to flourish in proportion to their ability to cultivate and protect a shared identity within those borders. Not all states are national states, but those that are have a distinct advantage, since the apparatus of government can act on behalf of what is in some measure a single corporate agency, rather than seeking to oversee "a mere citizenry, a mere collection of individuals who share nothing other than common rulers and common laws" *(Next American Nation, 260)*. Lind's apologia for "nationalism," then, which we shall consider at more length below, stems from no romantic nostalgia for an imagined ideal community, much less any nativist xenophobia, but simply from a sober acknowledgment that national communities really do exist, and are the key to effective self-government.

Lind is also what we might call a "constitutional realist." He has no time whatsoever for debates over originalism and the Founding Fathers, much as he esteems the statecraft of some among them. He takes for granted, as any good historian must, that the effective, practical constitution of any nation must and will be fitted to the people, and not the people to the constitution. In particular, since political economy will always be the dominant peacetime business of civil government, the effective constitution of a nation must and will adapt to changing economic conditions. Thus, in his 2013 *Land of Promise: An Economic History of the United States*, Lind expounds his theory of three successive American republics: the First American Republic (c. 1787-1861), "founded on water and undermined by steam," the Second American Republic (c. 1861-1929), which "ensured that the United States would be a continental nation-state with an industrial economy," and the Third American Republic (c. 1929-present), built upon the New Deal and extended by the broad post-war consensus that lasted up through 1975. In each case, technological and economic developments increasingly outgrew the strained fabric of earlier understandings of law and government until the mismatch between economic and political institutions grew great enough to provoke a crisis, characterized by creative destruction and rapid transformation of political institutions. The most optimistic reading of our current convulsions, then, is that we are witnessing the long-overdue birth of the Fourth American Republic, whatever form exactly that will take.

Finally, Lind is an economic realist — a refreshing change after the Right's decades of captivity to an increasingly disconnected free-market dogmatism that ignored both history and the current lived experience of the American people. For Lind, the question is simple, even if the answers are necessarily complex: "Ultimately American economic policy must meet a single test: Does it, in the long run, tend to raise or depress the incomes of most Americans? A policy that tends to impoverish ordinary Americans is a failure, no matter what its alleged benefits are for U.S. corporations or for humanity as a whole" *(Hamilton's Republic, 324)*. And over the long run, the evidence seems clear: America has prospered when government policy took an active role in encouraging that prosperity. *Land of Promise* in particular is something of an apologia for the much-maligned political economy of

"mercantilism," though perhaps it is better called "developmentalism" — the self-conscious economic theory and policy that has underpinned the meteoric rise of East Asian economies in the past few decades, and that informed the rapid development of Germany and America in the later 19th century and the Britain in the later 18th. One of the greatest theorists and practitioners of this now-widespread economic school was America's own Alexander Hamilton, whose 1793 *Report on Manufactures* remains an enduring classic of the tradition. Developmentalism recognizes the need for active investment in and early protection of new technologies and infant industries, arguing that a laissez-faire approach to trade and industry will tend to entrench existing national economic specializations. As Lind acidly remarks in his 2003 *What Lincoln Believed*, "If Americans had paid attention to Adam Smith, the United States never would have become the world's greatest industrial economy, because it never would have become an industrial economy at all" (76); it would have remained a resource colony for Great Britain. Moreover, Lind blithely defies a longstanding American prejudice against bigness and consolidation, arguing that economies of scale in many advanced industries render our romantic Wendell Berry ideal of the small producer increasingly obsolete. Of course, big industry requires a powerful national government to keep it in check, and Americans have long cherished the myth that our virtuous citizenry and exceptional ideals can enable us to prosper with a minimalist state. This fond hope Lind considers as delusional as its corollary that long dominated American foreign policy: that America could remain rich, powerful, and free with a small navy and an even smaller army.

Indeed, perhaps no nation on earth has been so prone to flights of romantic and self-congratulatory idealism as America, whose immense geographical advantages have often deceived us into thinking that we can prosper effortlessly. Lind identifies this romanticism with the Jeffersonian tradition in American politics, with its ideal of a nation of small, independent yeoman-farmers and artisans, free trade, a tiny military, and an almost invisible state. In the introduction to *Land of Promise*, he drily remarks

"In a spirit of philosophical bipartisanship, it would be pleasant to conclude that each of these traditions of political economy [Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian] has made its own valuable contribution to the success of the American economy and that the vector created by these opposing forces has been more beneficial than the complete victory of either would have been. But that would not be true. What is good about the American economy is largely the result of the Hamiltonian developmental tradition, and what is bad about it is largely the result of the Jeffersonian producerist school" (15).

Although it has been frequently maligned as an elitist prop of big business, Lind persuasively argues that the Hamiltonian tradition is in fact the true standard-bearer of American greatness:

"Like Jeffersonians, Hamiltonians are liberal, constitutional republicans, but Hamiltonians have believed from the beginning that both individual liberty and constitutional government are easier to secure in a strong nation-state with a stable government and a diversified economy than in a weak, decentralized, economically backward confederacy which, pursuing utopian schemes in foreign policy and domestic governance, would inevitably be dominated, in fact, by parochial politicians and foreign powers" *(Next American Nation, 374).*

Pithily summing up the difference between the two traditions in *Hamilton's Republic,* Lind observes, "the disagreement between the two

great American traditions can be summed up thus: Hamiltonians are more afraid of the world than of their own government, while Jeffersonians are more afraid of their own government than of the world" (129).

Still, Lind recognizes that the Jeffersonian ethos has penetrated deeply into the self-understanding of the American nation and saturates our political rhetoric, and observes that ever since FDR, shrewd statesmen have cloaked largely Hamiltonian policies in the largely Jeffersonian language of freedom and self-determination. Not since Theodore Roosevelt has the Hamiltonian tradition been openly avowed by leading American politicians, although perhaps that is at last due to change — albeit thanks more to Lin-Manuel Miranda than to Michael Lind.

DEFINING LIBERAL NATIONALISM

As a hard-headed realist, Lind has little patience with the increasingly unreal conceptions of the American nation that have dominated our politics since the 1960s. A nation, Lind argues, "is a concrete historical community, defined primarily by a common language, common folkways, and a common vernacular culture" *(Next American Nation, 5)*. As such, it serves as the foundation for strong and stable political units, states that can lay convincing claim to sustaining and protecting a way of life that makes liberty meaningful, and in which a people can experience self-government through representative institutions even on a very large scale.

Nationalism can come in thicker or thinner forms, illiberal and liberal variants. Although frequently associated in contemporary parlance with authoritarian, jingoistic regimes, it has just as often taken democratic and pacific forms, and Lind would argue in 1995 at least, was still the dominant conception of American identity among ordinary Americans. Lind identifies four potential components of a national identity: language, culture, religion, and race (to these, he might well have added "laws;" Lind rightly wishes to distinguish "nation" and "government," but the customary laws of a people are a key constituent of its culture). While what Lind calls "nativism" tends to focus heavily on either religion or race, Lind's own "liberal nationalism" confines itself to a shared language and culture (with "language" encompassing idioms, accents, and allusions, not merely a common vocabulary and grammar).

In this broad sense, Lind considers it indisputable that even today, we can speak of a common American nation, albeit with plenty of regional and ethnic variations. To be sure, its base has immensely broadened since its early days of white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. "Anglo-America" gave way by 1860 to "Euro-America," and finally in the 1960s to a fully multi-racial America in which the contributions of African-Americans to the distinctive American national culture were finally given their due — or would have been, in his view, if multiculturalism had not wrecked the project of integration. With each fresh infusion of immigrants, the fabric of the American nation has been forced to stretch a bit wider. This has been, to be sure, a messy process, but through it, new threads have gradually been woven into an existing garment; America has never simply changed out her clothes wholesale. The old biblicist English Protestantism of the colonial era, Lind argues, continues to pervade the American psyche, even if new elements have concealed or transformed it. "Liberal nationalism," Lind writes, "might be most simply defined as yesterday's 'melting-pot' nationalism updated to favor the cultural fusion and genetic amalgamation not just of white immigrant groups but of Americans of all races" *(Next American Nation, 9)*.

Many on the Right, eager to continue waving

the banner of American exceptionalism long after the decay of the theological assumptions that once undergirded it, have sought to define American identity in creedal terms, by our commitment to liberty and democracy. On this view, which Lind calls "democratic universalism," "the United States…is not a nation-state at all, but an idea-state, a nationless state based on the philosophy of liberal democracy in the abstract. There is no American people, merely an American Idea" *(Next American Nation, 3)*. This perspective, which has thankfully lost ground since its 1990s heyday, is absurd, on Lind's view. If America is defined simply by its ideals, then "if those ideals were abandoned or substantially modified 'America' would cease to exist, even if the same population, with the same language, customs, and social institutions continued to inhabit the same territory" *(Next American Nation, 223)*. But functioning nations are defined by loyalties to people and place, not simply to ideas. Moreover, most of the claims made for the supposed exceptionalism of American ideals and institutions are, in Lind's view, grossly exaggerated and increasingly untenable.

For many on the Left, on the other hand, the sheer diversity of the American people renders any talk of nationalism retrograde and potentially oppressive, certain to privilege some identities over others. In its place, they have for decades promoted "multiculturalism," according to which America should see itself as a federation of incommensurable tribes, each with its own culture, history, and interests. In theory, these distinct cultures are meant to live together harmoniously, celebrating their diversity, but such harmony is constantly undermined by the Left's insistence on ferreting out ongoing inequities and structures of oppression, or seeking to blow the embers of old injustices back into flame. Lind is not in the least interested in minimizing the history of white supremacy in America; on the contrary, he spotlights it throughout his works, even going out of his way in *What Lincoln Believed* to stress Lincoln's own less-than-sterling record on race. But, as a historical realist, Lind is also well aware that oppression and discrimination among different ethnic and racial groups is simply what humans do, and the only reliable way to overcome it is through relativizing and in time erasing the boundary-lines — above all, through intermarriage.

This being the case, Lind cannot conceal his indignation over the multiculturalism of the post-60s Left, which has only intensified since. This stance, far from fighting to relativize remaining racial boundaries, works overtime to accentuate them, by "celebrating" rival identities, except, of course, for the majority identity of the American people. Of course, in the real world, people are the bearers of multiple overlapping identities, and sometimes must accept the relativization of one in order to enjoy the benefits of another. But the multiculturalist

"ideal of authenticity seeks to eliminate such conflicts, by positing the identity of your true self and your official subculture. To find yourself, you need only find your ghetto, and adopt its politics, its style of dress, and its approved beliefs about the world and humanity. Having done so, you can then demand that society at large recognize your individuality—that is to say, your abject conformity.… Identity politics is meekest conformity, masquerading as anarchic rebellion. It is subculture collectivism, rather than society-wide collectivism, but just as anti-individualist. Far from being radically postmodern, identity politics is reminiscent of premodern feudal orders of status" *(Next American Nation,* 123*)*.

In one of the most bitingly insightful passages of *The Next American Nation*, Lind prophesies that even evangelical Christians, while ostensibly

the loudest critics of multiculturalism, will soon mimic its rhetorical and political strategy. Evangelicals, he notes, "do not aspire to take over the federal government, but rather to weaken its authority in order to carve out enclave communities in which they can approach their own communal ideals. It is not difficult to imagine such subcultural separatism being justified in the language, derived ultimately from the black power movement, of group rights and group victimization" (251-52). The result is the degeneration of politics into a war of all against all.

"What blacks were in the sixties, we are today, claim the born agains and the environmentalists and the handicapped, the feminists and the members of the men's movement. Behold us set upon by dogs; pity us, pass laws on our behalf.… Everyone wants to be the protest marchers, but someone has to play the role of the police with the dogs. One American's Martin Luther King is another's Bull Connor. The evangelicals claim they are being persecuted by the powerful secular humanists; no, no, reply the secular humanists, see how powerful the fundamentalists are, they are Bull Connor, we are King!" (350-51)

REVIVING DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM

So, what is Lind's solution to this breakdown of the American identity? It is, as one might expect from what we have seen thus far, impossible to characterize simply as "liberal" or "conservative." While loudly standing up for concerns today voiced only (if at all) by conservatives, Lind argues that in many ways the problem with modern progressivism is that it is not nearly radical enough. His objection to multiculturalism is not its obsessive drive for racial justice, but rather that it has become a cop-out strategy for disguising and ignoring the real structural injustices of American society. Affirmative action, he charges, is mere "tokenism," a way of pacifying downtrodden minorities without effecting real change, with the added benefit of insulting and degrading the white working class that liberal elites so despise. "By means of college-to-Congress racial preference policies, the white overclass, over the past thirty years, has attempted to create and maintain small, artificial black and Hispanic overclasses. It has done so, not out of charity, but in order to co-opt the potential leaders of black and Hispanic dissent" *(Next American Nation,* 101*)*.

The real division in American society, Lind charges, is not between races, but between classes, something that both the myth of American exceptionalism and the race filters of multiculturalism both serve to obscure. Indeed, by focusing on race, our elites do not merely distract from class inequities, but help to strengthen them by dividing the working class against itself. "Far from being revolutionary," he observes in *The Next American Nation*, "identity politics is merely America's version of the oldest oligarchic trick in the book: divide and rule" (141); "racial divisions ensure that the lower-half Americans waste their energies in zero-sum struggles between races" (255). Meanwhile, elites on the right, argues Lind, pursue the same end by different means: by championing absolute free trade, they force American workers into an unwinnable competition against sweatshop laborers abroad, shattering worker bargaining power, depressing wages, and depriving the working class of meaningful political influence. Both parties, meanwhile, for two decades united around loose immigration policies that eviscerated the American middle class, chiding all dissent as xenophobic, economically illiterate, or both. Meanwhile, snobbish elites poured contempt on the religious and moral values of working class America. No wonder it responded by inflicting Trump on its tormentors.

But neither Trump nor any other major political leader has yet offered a plausible solution to this new class war. Most reformist proposals to date Lind dismisses, borrowing a term from Daniel McCarthy, as "palliative liberalism." Progressives are liable to accept the status quo of power imbalance and simply call for more distribution from the winners to the losers, rather than rewriting the rules of the rigged game. Populists on the Right are most likely to revive the old Jeffersonian anti-monopolism, and argue that if we can only break up big business and defang cronyism, the renewed economy of small producers will generate prosperity for all. Lind's Hamiltonianism makes him skeptical; small businesses, he notes, are much more likely to pay minimum wage than large ones.

The real solution, which Lind calls "democratic pluralism" must involve a resurrection of countervailing power, such as Americans enjoyed in some measure in the most successful decades of the republic, the post-war period. What is needed for a renewed democratic liberalism, concludes Lind in *The New Class War*, are "mass-membership institutions comparable to the older grassroots parties, labor unions, and religious organizations, which can provide ordinary citizens with the collective power to check the abuses of the managerial elite" (130). Echoing the diagnosis of many shrewd political critics of recent decades, Lind recognizes the need for mediating institutions within civil society, a "tripartism" that can replace the increasingly binary relationship of individual and state. Too many of our political debates have become dominated by the false dilemma between a free-for-all of cutthroat competition, and stifling top-down government regulation. In the workplace, for instance, tripartism "rejects excessive government micromanagement of minimum wages and working conditions using one-size-fits-all rules. Some minimum standards are necessary, but many decisions should be left to collective bargaining among organized capital and organized labor, brokered by national governments" (136).

Lind's tripartism also seeks to re-empower religious institutions for a meaningful role in American public life, rather than seeking to grind them into the dust, with the contemporary Left, or carve out for them an autonomous niche, like the contemporary Right. "For example," writes Lind,

"legislation should require the participation of a representative range of secular and supernaturalist creedal groups in government boards and commissions that oversee media policy and education policy to ensure that the values of all major subcultures in the nation are acknowledged and given deference. Today in the US it would be unthinkable for a civil rights commission to have no African American or Latino members. It should be equally unthinkable for a commission or agency that makes rules for the media, public school curricula, or college accreditation to include no devout Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and members of other major religious or secular creeds" (*New Class War*, 144).

CONCLUSIONS

That Lind's realism should not be confused with cynical pessimism is clear from the fact that the above words were published in 2019. Many of us are apt to respond wearily that, whatever *should* be unthinkable, it is in fact unthinkable that a federal commission on public education would explicitly invite the formal inclusion of evangelical Protestant representatives. And in general, the steady and not-so-slow unraveling of American public life, and of the trust in one another that is something of a prerequisite for political renewal, may lead many readers to doubt the viability of

Lind's solutions — which would indeed require a sustained and radical restructuring of the American social contract.

Still, whether renewal comes in our own lifetimes or not, Lind has, I believe, pointed the right path forward for a responsible politics of the common good: one which transcends racialism in favor of genuine civic friendship, abandons ideology for historically-informed empiricism, and rejects libertarian idolatries and re-imagines diverse yet corporate forms of life together than can both concentrate and distribute political and economic power. Nor is Lind's vision a mere pipe dream; on the contrary, it is a one that has begun to recapture the imagination of today's conservatives, as groups like Oren Cass's American Compass have called for a re-empowerment of labor unions and signaled that the time has come for a post-libertarian conservatism. Protestants in particular should sit up and take notice of such developments, since by speaking of the nation-state as a "community of communities," Lind is speaking the language of the great Protestant political theorist Johannes Althusius, whose social vision of bottom-up subsidiarity coupled with strong government remains perhaps the last, best hope for American renewal.

This, of course, raises the question of how much such renewal requires spiritual and theological renewal. Lind, for one, couldn't care less. Although he frequently roasts the ruling elites for their scorn of middle America's values, he himself can scarcely conceal his contempt for evangelical Protestantism and the moral culture of flyover country. On the rare occasions when he touches on such issues, he signals support for a relatively liberal sexual politics and broadening of civil rights. At the same time, however, he recognizes the need for moral renewal in a culture overly fixated on individual rights and calls in *The Next American Nation* for a revived "civic familism," a "constitution of honor" that preached intergenerational obligation over mere self-fulfillment. This, he deems, could flourish as a purely secular ethic, and need not be monopolized by the Religious Right.

I am, of course, more skeptical. While history certainly affords many examples of "civic familist" ethics and stable polities flourishing in the absence of Christianity, they have almost inevitably rested on a strong public religion of some kind — and those not leavened by the Bible have tended to condone practices that would still appall even our libertine age. Moreover, there is an important difference between a non-Christian society and a post-Christian society. Strange gods may still hold the disordered passions of the *demos* in check, but when the old gods have fled the temple, no paean to the glories of civic friendship can fill their vast void.

BRAD LITTLEJOHN IS A SENIOR FELLOW WITH THE EDMUND BURKE FOUNDATION AND PRESIDENT OF THE DAVENANT INSTITUTE, AUTHOR IN THE FIELDS OF REFORMATION STUDIES, CHRISTIAN ETHICS, AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY

ATHEIST NONES

VICTORIA SMOLKIN. *A SACRED SPACE IS NEVER EMPTY: A HISTORY OF SOVIET ATHEISM*. PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. $32.95, 360 PP.

Author *ANA SILJAK*

It is perhaps too easily forgotten that Soviet Communism began as a vibrant ideology, full of optimism for the human future. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, enthusiastic Communist Party members embraced an eschatological vision of a new, liberated world. They were not content with mere economic equality. They dreamed of "new men," turning ordinary people into "conscious agents for changing the world." (33) The heart of the new order was a passionate atheism, a robust belief system that would end religious oppression and preach godless "scientific materialism." Proselytizers of atheism, such as Anatolii Lunacharskii, Commissar of Education, longed for the day that Communists could take the "fresh, small hearts and bright, open, little minds" of children and create "a true miracle…a real human being." (33)

Long before the Russian Revolution, Marxism promoted a radical version of what social scientists of the 1960s termed the "secularization thesis." Religion was the "opiate" of the oppressed and ignorant, and progressive societies would slowly relinquish primitive religious beliefs. Soviet Marxists were thus confident that they were merely hastening the end of religion. Forty years later, in Victoria Smolkin's compelling account, this exuberant optimism had faded. After World War II, Communists were left with a puzzle that they would spend decades trying to solve – why did religion persist?

Smolkin's *A Sacred Space is Never Empty* is a remarkable, abundantly documented portrait of a Soviet state determined, to the end, to transform the worldviews of its citizens. From 1917 until World War II, Communists waged a multifront campaign against religion; especially against the Russian Orthodox Church. First Lenin and then Stalin demolished churches, closed monasteries, and arrested, exiled, and executed priests, monks, and nuns. In 1925, the "League of the Militant Godless" began working to root out religious belief throughout Russia. Though this era of the Soviet atheist crusade is reasonably well-documented, Smolkin analyzes the political aims and ideological underpinnings of these infamous anti-

religious campaigns, providing vivid images, such as political cartoons, to capture the flavor of the propaganda of the day.

Smolkin's most original and insightful discoveries emerge in the extraordinary story of the intense effort, in the 1960s and 1970s, to discover why Soviet citizens had proven resistant to atheist evangelism. The Orthodox Church, as an institution, proved relatively easy to subdue — it had relied too heavily on the support of the pre-revolutionary autocracy, and it had taken traditional — especially peasant — belief for granted in the years before 1917. Orthodox Christianity itself, however, was remarkably resilient. By the 1960s, one atheist scholar declared it was time "to figure out where we lost people." (151)

Under the umbrella of the Institute of Scientific Atheism, resources were poured into ethnographic, psychological, and sociological research to determine what had gone wrong. The breadth and depth of the effort was extraordinary: atheist investigators conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with people from all walks of life, published detailed reports, and made extensive suggestions on how to implement change.

The findings produced by this research were often counterintuitive — Christianity's strength did not necessarily lie in widespread religious fervor. Instead, people simply practiced religion. Agnostics and unbelievers continued to baptize their children, attend Easter services, and celebrate Christmas. Icons hung on the walls of well-to-do Party members. Soviet students wore crosses. When asked about these religious remnants, survey respondents verbally shrugged — it was part of tradition, or family, or custom, and why not?

Indeed, atheist researchers were most troubled by the fastest growing new category of belief: "indifference," especially among members of the younger generation (160). Distant from the early revolutionary struggle, younger Soviet citizens cared only for consumer goods, careers, and personal pleasures. In 1974, after an extensive two-year investigation, the Institute of Soviet Atheism concluded that younger Soviets could be characterized by "an indifference to worldview questions as a whole — with a peculiar kind of spiritual and ideological emptiness…" (209) The verdict was clear: the Communist Party had to do "atheist work" to ensure the proper "upbringing of irreligious youth." (214)

How did religion itself survive indifference? Nikolai Gordienko, atheist author and expert on religion, drew conclusions from research into Christian prayer based on a treasure trove of notes left in a disused chapel once dedicated to the very popular (though then uncanonized) eighteenth century Saint Ksenia of St. Petersburg. The prayers to St. Ksenia concerned "purely everyday affairs" (209): passing an exam, getting a job, applying to university, helping an alcoholic son, saving a daughter's marriage.

Prayers to St. Ksenia vividly illustrated what many Soviet Marxists had been saying all along: the battle against religion had to consider a particularly Russian concept, *byt* — the culture of ordinary, everyday life. Few people had the time or inclination to deeply delve into philosophical questions of the non-existence of God, and many were content to remain uncommitted on theological questions. They tolerated lectures on atheism, much as their pre-revolutionary predecessors might have yawned through their mandatory catechism classes. They craved religion not as some fully developed doctrine, but in the rhythms of their daily routines.

Soviet citizens longed for ritual. Ritual was originally dismissed by Marxism as a superstitious relic of the past, but researchers found that rituals were difficult to eradicate. Rituals were concrete and multisensory; they brought together families and communities in shared celebration and mourning. Rituals entered ordinary lives and struggles, while always pointing to the higher purpose toward which lives should be lived. Christianity continued to provide this sense of ordered time and human telos.

Surprisingly, the Communist Party overcame their hostility to ritual and tried to reclaim *byt*. In the 1960s and 1970s, various Soviet ministries came together in a comprehensive effort to create Soviet rituals. Wedding and "Little Baby" "palaces" were built to house marriage ceremonies and birth celebrations. Officiants wore decorative uniforms and bestowed newlyweds and parents with medals and certificates to commemorate each special occasion. Soon, other rites were added: for the first day of school, for graduation, for induction into Communist organizations. Communist artists, architects, and musicians contributed their talents in a grand effort to enhance and modernize the Soviet ritual experience. The experiment was modestly successful, but short-lived. In the end, as one Communist wrote, man-made rituals could not compete with the rituals of religion, which had been "worked out over the course of years." (188)

Smolkin's book is thus a must-read for those who wish to understand the long history behind the remarkable resurgence of Orthodoxy and other religions in Russia after the fall of Communism. Indeed, it was this "resurgence of religion" that led many to declare that the secularization thesis was proven spectacularly wrong.

Or was it? In a Pew survey conducted on faith in the United States in 2019, some 26% of those surveyed declared they did not have a religion. These "nones" are the most rapidly growing category of religious belief — encompassing some 40% of millennials. Articles and books have broken down the statistics and analyzed the causes of this phenomenon, and some observers now speculate that secularization is back.

Religious groups in the United States have conducted few in-depth investigations of the Soviet type, to figure out where they might have "lost people." One exception is Tara Isabella Burton's *Strange Rites*, which combines statistical analysis and close investigation to illuminate the beliefs of the nones. Burton discovers that, much like their earlier Soviet counterparts, the younger "indifferent" generation of the West clings to ritual. Whether in the occult, in Harry Potter, in online chat groups, or in SoulCycle, the nones crave "a sense of meaning in the world and personal purpose within that meaning, a community to share that experience with, and rituals to bring the power of that experience into achievable, everyday life." [1]

Burton's book, and its reviewers, offer a multitude of reasons for the abandonment of organized religion: distrust of traditional institutions, the internet-given ability to treat religion as a spiritual buffet, the modern focus on "self-care" bolstered by a capitalism willing to cater to every selfish whim. Still, the central question remains: how did churches find themselves unable to give the nones "a sense of meaning" and "personal purpose"?

[1] Tara Isabella Burton, *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World* (New York: Public Affairs, 2020), p. 10.

One possibility is that late-modern religions share with Marxism (and with modernity generally) a particular anthropology of the self, in which a person is an independent, self-determined, rational individual who chooses a belief system from a multitude of competing worldviews. Armed with this anthropology, churches enter a marketplace of belief systems — persuading discerning spiritual consumers to buy into a package of beliefs. Ritual, if at all a part of this packaging, is seen as secondary: at worst, an embarrassing atavism and at best, a carefully circumscribed "experience" to be had for a few hours on a Sunday. As Matthew Thiessen has written, daily rituals, such as the purity rituals that defined the lives of the Jews of the New Testament, seem "alien at best and irrational at worst." [2]

In this modern environment, churches struggle to capture the vibrancy of pre-modern religious practice, in which ritual was the vital center of belief. Frank Gorman has uncovered the essence of ritual (in this case, Old Testament priestly ritual) as a God-bestowed practice that elaborated the human place "in the cosmos." Through ritual, a person does not simply "experience" faith, but "participates in, realizes, and enacts the world order."[3] And not just once a week, for a few hours, but in the daily, ordinary, and sometimes even mundane events of life. Marriage, birth, prayer, worship, bathing, and eating were not discrete events, but integrated into an eternal truth about each person and their purpose. Ritual revealed the world as not merely immanent, but also enchanted, symbolic, full of transcendent meaning. Thiessen and Gorman remind us that in the Jewish world of the Bible, faith was not chosen among an infinite combination of truth-propositions. Faith was entered, and lived — and rational, doctrinal elaborations of theology flowed from this wellspring.

The resurgence of religion in Russia after 1990 can be attributed to many things: the underground church in Russia, the tireless efforts of persecuted clergy and missionaries, and even the episodic Soviet willingness to use the church as a patriotic, moral bulwark. But perhaps the Communists were right to fear the persistence of ages-old ritual practice, no matter how desultory. Perhaps "empty rituals," like sacred spaces, never remain empty.

ANA SILJAK IS A PROFESSOR OF RUSSIAN HISTORY AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY IN ONTARIO, CANADA. HER CURRENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS FOCUS ON THE INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF NINETEENTH CENTURY RUSSIA. SHE IS CURRENTLY WRITING A BOOK ON THE PERSONALISM OF NIKOLAI BERDIAEV.

[2] Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), p. 3.

[3] Frank H. Gorman, Jr., *Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), p. 17

Out of My Skull — Boredom, Agency, and Epiktasis

JAMES DANCKERT, JOHN D. EASTWOOD. *OUT OF MY SKULL: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BOREDOM*. CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020. 288 PP., $27.95.

Author JOY CLARKSON

In a study where participants were instructed to sit in a room with nothing to do for only fifteen minutes, nearly half of them chose to self administer painful electric shocks rather than sit with their own thoughts. Where does this profound aversion to boredom come from, and what does it say about human nature? These are the questions James Danckert and John D. Eastwood set out to answer in their book *Out of My Skull: the Psychology of Boredom* (2020). Approached from a rigorously scientific and psychological perspective (Danckert is a neuroscientist and Eastwood a professor of psychology), the book offers an illuminating examination of both the psychological origins of the subjective experience of boredom and the severe maladies that can afflict a society beset by it. Its insights are salient, and its implications pressing, but in its neglect of the spiritual dimensions of boredom, it leaves something significant to be desired.

The book begins with a brief history of boredom and its philosophical parentage, from acedia, the noonday devil of monastic practice, to the distinctly French and modern experience of ennui, and finally the monotony brought about by the mechanised labour of the industrial revolution. Glossing over these historical (and often theological) definitions of boredom, the authors pivot to providing their own psychological definition: *"the uncomfortable feeling of wanting, but being unable to, engage in satisfying activity"* (19). Boredom arises from a perceived or actual loss of agency; the feeling that our effort will have no effect on the activity in which we are engaged. The counterpart to this frustrated desire for engagement is the experience of "flow," the sense of absorption we attain when we are involved in activity that is just difficult enough to require our full attention, but which does not produce a sense of defeatedness.

We are hardwired to enjoy the feeling of mastery, absorption, and accomplishment. We hunger for this experience of "meaningful engagement" as intensely as we do for food, water, and companionship.

Boredom, then, is an important form of pain; a psychological cue for action. Like the physiological experience of withdrawing our hand from a hot burner, boredom is a sign that our essential need for meaningful engagement is not being met.And as with any essential human need (food, water, companionship), when we are deprived of it for a long period of time, we will suffer profound consequences. In a meticulously researched recitation of dozens upon dozens of psychological studies on boredom (which to the academically uninitiated may occasionally feel onerous), the authors show that people who are often bored are more likely to engage in compulsive and risky behaviours, commit crimes, and ascribe to extremist political ideologies. These harmful behaviors are maladaptive ways of reclaiming agency, ineffectual means of accessing the meaningful engagement we crave.

This perspective on boredom illuminates the simultaneous chaos and malaise of the past year. Over the past year, we have experienced a global loss of agency. Households and whole nations have found themselves in a metaphorical room with nothing but their thoughts, life on hold as time passes on at its usual unforgiving pace. For some, the promptings of boredom led to an increase of creativity and familial connection, healthful ways of reclaiming agency. And yet for most, the results were mixed, producing anxiety, depression, listlessness. One could even extrapolate that existential boredom might have contributed to the furor of the violent events of the year, and the apparent rise in political extremism.

Though it came to a crisis point over the past year, the authors argue that society has been tumbling toward an "epidemic of boredom" for a long time: modern people are overstimulated and under engaged. Society is full of what Matthew B. Crawford describes in his book *Shop Class As Soul Craft* as "knowledge workers:" people trained from a young age in highly specific (and usually digital) skills who lack the ability to do basic tasks like tune up their car, fix things around the house, and grow a garden. He laments that modern people are "more passive and more dependent" counterparts to being engaged and independent. The ready-made world has decreased the arena of our agency. Furthermore, constant exposure to global news diminishes our sense of agency because we are constantly exposed to crises about which we can do very little. In the paralysed hypervigilance of the modern world, there is no way for us to meaningfully engage with a world so vast. The result, the authors propose, is a fulfilment of William James' dour prophecy that an "irremediable flatness is coming over the world."

What, then, is the solution to the "irremedial flatness" so pervasive in the modern world?
Aiming to diagnose rather than to prescribe, the authors remain mostly demure on this point, but give some promptings, inviting readers to draw their own conclusions. We must get better at being bored, resisting the urge to numb the pain of boredom by scrolling through twitter, and, instead, find better, more meaningful ways to respond to its promptings of boredom. The principles behind Crawford's project provide a healthful antidote to the malaise of modern life described by Danckert and Eastwood. Crawford presents an economic and psychological case for the benefits of manual labour, advocating for the "kind of spiritedness that is called forth when we take things in hand for ourselves." By taking tools in hand, we become more engaged with our world, we grow in competence and satisfaction. In its most lifegiving moments, the lockdowns

led us to take charge over areas of our lives we had outsourced and undervalued.

In learning to bake bread, garden, and fix things around the house, many of us were reclaiming a primal human satisfaction. We understood in a visceral way that the words uttered to Adam and Eve in the opening pages of Genesis were, in fact, a blessing: "be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it." In our mastery, husbandry, and artistry we reflect a God who, complete and satisfied in the endless joy of the trinity, created a cosmos not out of necessity, but love.

But Dankert and Eastwood would simply not be interested in these sorts of reflections. The question of whether or not there is a spiritual dimension to boredom is repeatedly referenced, but summarily dismissed. Boredom is a desire, and like any desire, they claim, are merely "biological drives that function to preserve our lives and the future of our clan" (60). The final chapter closes with a reference to Nietzsche's remarks on the Sabbath as the manifestation of God's boredom, suggesting that the concept of eternity is inherently boring, the ultimate absence of agency and urgency, deprived of the boundaries of time, death, and the struggle to survive. It reminded me of the final episode of *The Good Place*, where, after four seasons of fighting their way to heaven, Chidi and Eleanor are disappointed to discover that the Good Place consists of an eternal banality and existential malaise. As a solution to this, they introduce an "exit strategy,' essentially reinventing death." The show seems to embody Martin Hagglund's claim in *This Life*, "not that an eternal activity would be 'boring' but that it would not be intelligible as my activity." And it seems Danckert and Eastwood agree: the only thing that ultimately keeps us from boredom is the constant but ultimately fruitless evasion of death, propagation of the species.

This seems, to me, to be a hollow and overly assured position. The book sets out to diagnose the origin of boredom, and this it does with clarity and insight, but by adopting this incurious materialism, it leaves something to be desired. Would we all benefit by engaging in activities which challenge and satisfy us, reading more books, climbing more mountains, perhaps even raising more children? Very likely. But I can't help but think that there is something inadequate in suggesting that the sole solution to the existential ennui of modern life is simply more and better quality meaningful activity. For many people, there simply *is* an existential dimension to desire. From where does this gnawing ache for something "more" come? Is it merely a malfunction of our evolutionary heritage? Or could it testify to some deeper aspect of human nature?

The fourth century theologian Gregory of Nyssa describes the destiny of mankind as *epektasis,* which Liviu Petcu calls "the doctrine of unceasing evolution in eternal happiness." For Gregory, human nature is fulfilled when it exceeds itself through union with God, growing in deeper knowledge and deeper love, a process that will go on in perpetuity because there is always more to know and love in and about God. This is a process initiated in our earthly lives through experiences of desire, satisfaction, and even manual mastery. Our earthly experiences of desire, work, and satisfaction have an eschatological dimension: they tutor us in desire, eternally pulling us into deeper and deeper intimacy with God, the mind which can never be mastered, but of which there is always more to be explored. Earthly desires, even boredom, begin the process of our ultimate *telos*: endless meaningful engagement.

When I watched *The Good Place*, this is what I saw: not a nihilistic abandonment of pleasure, relationship, and existence, but a progression of desire into the source of all enjoyment. Perhaps this is merely because my brain has been oversteeped in theology, but I think this theological account

of desire nourishes the insights of *Out of My Skull*. We are hardwired for meaningful engagement, yes. I would merely object that it is not death which gives the bounds of our activity meaning, but God, who made us the sort of creatures who find profound satisfaction in mastery, engagement, and craftsmanship. In loving God we find the unceasing evolution of happiness, the task which can never be mastered, and yet always be enjoyed.

JOY CLARKSON IS A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE IN THEOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS. SHE RESEARCHES THE ROLE OF ART IN MORAL FORMATION AND HOSTS SPEAKING WITH JOY, A PODCAST ABOUT CULTURE, ART, AND THEOLOGY.

The End of American Childhood

PAULA S. FASS. *The End of American Childhood: A History of Parenting from Life on the Frontier to the Managed Child.* PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017. $19.95, 352 PP

BRANDON MCGINLEY

Perhaps more than anything else, Paula S. Fass's learned and engaging history of American parenting, *The End of American Childhood*, is a meditation on tradition. This is, after all, the very nature of parenting and childhood, which is the fulcrum between generations; a chance to preserve customs or to correct course. It is the place where one generation's anxieties and hopes, and indeed its very self-understanding as a people and a civilization, become reified — or amended or rejected — in the next.

The book is a casual review of a vast topic, one to which Fass, professor emerita at Berkeley, has dedicated her entire career: She has served as president of the Society for the History of Children and Youth and recently edited *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*. The ease with which she navigates her expertise is impressive; one is aware that she is leaving vast tracts of her knowledge unexplored, and yet what she chooses to explain, and how she chooses to explain it, feels natural, clear, and complete.

The challenge that Fass implicitly poses to the reader, though, and especially to the self-identified traditionalist, is this: What really is "traditional?" Which tradition are we talking about? And do we really understand the content of the traditions we claim to be upholding? Fass's account of the history of American parenting confounds an easy dichotomy between tradition and innovation, or conservatism and progressivism: She ultimately laments the loss of a distinctively American kind of childhood that is at once, like the country itself, revolutionary and yet deeply rooted in the human experience.

Most of the history of American parenting and childhood tracks intuitively with trends in American history. Fass's five chronological chapters, followed by a sixth of contemporary analysis, cover the eager republicanism of the young nation, the public response to the crises of war and freedmen and immigration, the emergence of an overconfident "science" of childrearing, the distinctly American innovation of adolescence, and the tumult of the last half of the twentieth century.

The hopes of the early republic were unbounded, and so were its children — at least compared to their Old World ancestors and contemporaries. While modern criticism has tended to recast the frontier as more brutal than romantic, Fass's study of first-hand accounts (she is especially taken by Ulysses Grant's

autobiography) reveals that labor was hard but often seen by children as a liberating opportunity to develop one's skills and distinctive character. Readers will recognize this revision of the revisionists as a conservative move, presenting 10-year-olds hauling firewood as confident and self-possessed, trained to make their own way in a dynamic economy and society, rather than miserable and exploited.

And yet, Fass observes that the prevailing ideology of childhood that encouraged this early maturation was undeniably progressive: A republican country needed republican children, and so independence, assertiveness, and a rough equality with parents from a young age were prized and nurtured. This was a self-conscious break from middle-class European norms, which at that time regarded childhood as a precious time of innocence, weakness, and unquestionable subordination to parents — especially the father. While American dads retained significant authority, it became customary, as a kind of training in republican citizenship, for them to listen to their growing children at least as much as they lectured them.

Needless to say, this adds complexity to attempts by Christian (and especially Catholic) traditionalists to reclaim an older style of parenting for the modern age. The early introduction of chores (and sometimes more serious labor) and latchkey responsibility, so prized by many of today's traditionalists, was a distinctly American innovation that rejected Old World customs. Further, while traditionalists attempt to marry this more "free range" style of childhood to a reassertion of parental authority, historically this kind of freedom was associated, again quite intentionally in keeping with revolutionary anti-monarchy ideology, with the relaxing of such authority. If adults in society were no longer subjects but citizens, then so should be children in the home.

This is a reminder of the extent to which, in a secular age, all traditionalism is a kind of reclamation project. The traditions that we try to bring to life are, in most cases, comatose or quite dead, and figuring out what they were really like — and applying that to the present — is a forensic task. Modern traditionalism is neither Old World nor frontier nor American-republican nor, as we are about to see, turn-of-the-century nor post-war. The new traditionalism is, in that very American way, also something brand new.

If the first part of the nineteenth century was marked by a boundless social-economic-spiritual optimism, the first part of the twentieth maintained the optimism while dropping the supernatural view. A 1900 essay in *Ladies Home Journal* put it this way: The American "no longer regards his child as an animal to be tamed by beating, *or as a possible saint*, but as the heir to all the good things of time. … The future is the kingdom of which these young people are taught that they will be the legitimate rulers." (emphasis added) It is one (anonymous) essay in one magazine, but the confident foreclosure of a supernatural end, and implicitly of grace, is striking. And the means by which that end — becoming the rightful rulers of the temporal order — was to be achieved was scientific expertise.

In the twentieth century, then, we see children being prepared for a destiny at once expanded and constrained: expanded to include the entire global order, rather than just the continental frontier, but constrained by the myopic "optimism" of scientific materialism. As the class of parenting gurus expanded — almost all disciples of Darwin, Freud, and Dewey — so did parental anxiety about whether they were raising their children "correctly." In this period we can see the precursors to the present moment: The "managed child," whose every step from baby bonnet to mortarboard is planned by anxious parents, is

in many ways the heir to this countertradition in American parenting.

The rise of Dr. Benjamin Spock in the post-war era provides, on Fass's account, not a new and permissive progressivism but a return to the dominant American tradition of liberty, trust, and early maturity. Spock aimed to relieve parental anxiety by appealing to instinct and natural affection rather than scientific formulas. The world wars had taken the shine of the optimism of scientism, but it was replaced by a different (and better, Fass and I concur) kind of optimism in the ability of the growing child to develop his own personality — and, importantly, to find a place for that personality in the social and economic order, thereby enriching it.

There was something different this time, though: The demanding material conditions of the early republic had been replaced by an easy and broadly shared prosperity. It was, of course, precisely this social and economic stability that gave parents confidence that their children's lives did not need to be channelized to ensure future success. But this also meant that childhood "no longer led easily to maturity through work and responsibility." Fass continues:

> Work as a goal had not only disappeared as a natural part of childhood, but even household chores receded, as middle-class mothers took over almost all household tasks so that their offspring could freely enjoy a childhood defined by play and school. Children…could play together, but the assumption of a parental role, so common in the nineteenth century, was now no longer part of growing up.

The Spockian system tried to build on an American tradition whose material and spiritual foundations — the necessity of work and, more importantly, the conviction that work properly understood is elevating, even for growing children — had been removed. The result, at least on some tellings, was the aimless indulgence of the counterculture. But the irony, once again, was that the intention was not to remake American parenting for the modern world, but to rediscover a deep tradition that had been undone by modern "expertise."

The chapter on the latter half of the twentieth century is the weakest, not so much because it's wrongheaded but because space constraints make it so obviously and radically incomplete. The birth control pill, for instance, is discussed here and there, but not in the sustained way it deserves. And yet, of course only implicitly, Fass recognizes that it is the essential component to the factors that have brought an end to American childhood: choice and control.

For Fass, "the fundamental, unspoken, reality of parenting in our time [is] that giving birth is now a choice for most middle-class women, a choice with great potential consequences." She continues, delivering a restrained but searing description of the modern situation:

> Unlike any previous time in history, child bearing is no longer seen to be part of the natural order, and having children today is a choice that may also involve a variety of other choices. … The choice to parent at all, and how best to do so, is thus viewed as both subject to manipulation and freighted with consequences. Once the child is born, parents are confronted with a difficult balancing act about work and home that makes them eager to be as much in control as possible. I*t is the striving for control, not a new emotionalism, that differentiates family life today from that of fifty or one hundred years ago.* (emphasis added)

And that is the end of American childhood. We now live with the expectation — indeed the absolutely unquestioned assumption — that the very passing-on of human life should not

be a solemn cooperation with nature but an expression of autonomy over which we have complete dominion. (Thus we speak with grave concern about "unplanned pregnancies." Just wait until all pregnancies unassisted by fertility consultants are similarly suspect.) That distinctly American and, I agree with Fass, distinctly good combination of discipline and liberation, labor and love, requires a certain detachment in parents — not detachment from caring about their children's well-being, but detachment from fear and anxiety over the inability to control for every aspect of that well-being. It requires a prudent but confident trust in one's children, but most of all it requires an abiding trust in the Lord who watches over them. Only then, with confidence in providence, can we relinquish the control that stifles joy and personality and optimism — in ourselves and in our children.

And so it's not about reenacting the parenting of a previous age. The conditions that made 1950s (or 1850s) parenting possible no longer obtain. Now we are faced with new challenges, most of all a completely justified civilizational pessimism that makes the "managed child" approach all the more appealing, because parents want their children to be channeled from the start on one of the few reliable paths to security. But all that does is reify our anxieties and further vindicate our pessimism; it is a feedback loop, a spiral, a suicide pact.

The beauty of the dominant American tradition of parenting and childhood, rather, is that it boldly embraces *life*. It is not tremulous, calculating, or neurotic. It does not obsess over risk or uncertainty on the one hand, nor perfection and scrupulous order on the other. At its best, in different ages and under different conditions it nurtures that which is good in itself — honest work, hard play, abiding love — and lets the results work themselves out. The Christian, whose hope is in heaven rather than college or career, and whose trust is in the Lord rather than experts or pundits, is uniquely positioned to be able to revive and reform American childhood for a new age.

BRANDON MCGINLEY IS A CATHOLIC WRITER AND SPEAKER BASED IN PITTSBURGH, DEDICATED TO ARTICULATING A FULLY INTEGRATED VIEW OF CATHOLIC LIVING, ANCHORED IN TRADITION BUT ORIENTED TOWARD THE FUTURE.

REVELATION

TIMOTHY BEAL, *The Book of Revelation*: A Biography. Lives of Great Religious Books. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018. $26.95, 288 pp.

REVIEWED BY: PETER J. LEITHART

First things first: Let me state my disagreement with two premises of Timothy Beal's "biography" of the Book of Revelation. First, Beal claims that Revelation is not a "book." Of course, he admits there's a text, produced in the first century by (to him) an unknown writer who calls himself "John," but the text is actually a fluid text tradition, not a fixed set of words in a set order. More importantly, because Revelation has inspired a host of offshoots in a variety of media — commentaries, woodcuts and illuminations, folk sculpture and film – Revelation itself is a "multimedia constellation of images, stories, and story-shaped images" (6). Beal hasn't written "a singular life of a bound book of pages" but "a story of the many lives of an ever-expanding constellation of ideas and images that are more or less related to a first-century text tradition" (xiv).

Second, Beal doesn't think the text of Revelation, such as it is, hangs together very well. It has "a kind of anarchic textuality" (8); it's a monstrous Frankenstein of a quasi-book, bolted together from other discarded limbs of earlier texts (9, 208); it's characterized by "generative incomprehensibility" (31). Purporting to unveil, John's loose narrative in fact obscures and masks.

I concede that many readers find Revelation incomprehensible, but it's worth asking why. Some of the obscurity comes from readers' ignorance of the Old Testament, which is quoted, alluded to, and echoed in virtually every sentence of the Apocalypse. Some of the obscurity arises from ignoring the temporal markers that begin and end the book, where John insists he sees visions of things "*shortly* to take place" (1:1-3; 22:6, 20). Some of the obscurity comes from a long-standing misdating of the Apocalypse, which has the unfortunate effect of disconnecting
Revelation from the passions and battles that occupy the rest of the New Testament. Beal thinks it "conceivable" that Revelation emerges from the crucible of the Jewish War with Rome (66-70 AD),

and rightly rejects the common dating of the book to the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD; pp. 37-40). The earlier date is certainly preferable, but that leads to a final source of obscurity: the belief that Revelation is exclusively concerned with the combat between the church and Rome, rather than the combat between the church and the combined forces of Rome and Jerusalem. To highlight one key image: *Jerusalem* is the bloodthirsty city of Revelation. The harlot Babylon is dressed like an Israelite priestess (Rev 17); Jerusalem, not Rome, is the biblical city filled with martyr blood (Rev 18:24; cf. Matt 23:29-39); and the heavenly bride who replaces the harlot is new Jerusalem, not new Rome (Rev 21:1-22:5).

When we place Revelation in its mid first-century context and insist on reading it in light of the Old and New Testament, the "anarchy" and "incomprehensibility" is dramatically reduced. There are complications everywhere, but it's a single, coherent narrative – it is, well, a book, whose main subject is persecution and martyrdom. Revelation addresses churches threatened by "synagogues of Satan" (Rev 2:9; 3:9), that is, by hostile Jews who slander, accuse, and attack followers of Jesus (just as in Acts). John is caught up to heaven to see visions that assure these churches of their ultimate triumph. Everything unfolds as it is written in the heavenly scroll, whose seals the Lamb opens in the midst of a heavenly liturgy. The scroll reveals the martyrs calling for justice, but they are told to wait. Before God vindicates the martyrs, *more* martyrs will be made, 144,000 of them (Rev 6:9-11; 7:1-8). Once the sealed book is fully open, seven angels trumpet a fanfare to announce the reading (Rev 8:1-11:18). John eats the scroll (Rev 10:1-11) and prophesies its contents. The dragon has been attacking the Christ since His birth (Rev 12:1-6), but the new thing, the thing that will take place shortly after John's visions, is a new alliance of the Satanic sea beast and the Satanic land beast, representing Rome and apostate Jews; the same alliance that crucified Jesus. Together, the beasts slaughter the 144,000, but this slaughter is really a harvest that gathers the martyrs to heaven (Rev 14:1-15:4). When their blood is poured out, it shakes the cosmos (Rev 16:1-21) and brings the fall of the harlot city who drinks martyr blood like wine (Rev 17:1-18:24). Jesus' victory over the beasts and the harlot initiates the millennium, the epoch of the reign of martyrs (Rev 20:1-6). The harlot city falls, replaced by a bridal city who descends from heaven, sharing the glory of God (Rev 21:1-22:5). Revelation is an extended riff on Genesis 2: through the trauma of persecution and martyrdom, the Last Adam receives His Eve, who will share His throne and reign forever. Beal, to the contrary, Revelation *unveils*, and its message is the message of the Risen Christ: Be not afraid, little flock, I have given you the kingdom.

As for my first disagreement: Beal himself isn't consistent. If Revelation is its history of interpretation, then any extension or deployment becomes part of its anarchic, multimedia essence. Yet several times Beal implies that this or that interpretation or cultural use of Revelation is erroneous. In contrast to many readings, Revelation is a "this-worldly text, envisioning the ultimate renewal or recreation of this world, not escape to another" (206). But if Revelation is its cultural history, then the narratives of escape are as much part of Revelation as any other. Beal discovers a hidden continuity between "dominion" and "apocalypse" scripts, but observes that they "work best when they keep their distance from the scriptures they claim as their origins." Detached from the biblical roots, the dominion script becomes an inspiration "for the rise of modern capitalism" (207). Again, if Revelation is its interpretative tradition, then modern capitalism can't be a deviation. For all his trendy theory, Beal sounds for all the world

like a fogey who believes in texts that do more than float "somewhere near the dense middle of [a] multimedia constellation." (6)

Despite these disagreements, I think Beal has written an informative, intriguing book. As he makes clear, images, themes, and motifs from Revelation have wriggled free from their original setting and taken on a life of their own. Beal's biography is organized chronologically and stretches from the fourth to the twentieth century, with each chapter examining an important, or eccentric use of the Apocalypse: Augustine's "non-apocalyptic" reading; Hildegard's and Joachim's interpretations of the Apocalypse in the light of Y1K; Cranach's "weird" woodcut illustrations for Luther's German Bible; the missionary use of Revelation to "other" other religions; James Hampton's decades-long construction of the "throne of the third heaven," now preserved in the Smithsonian as a classic of American folk art; Evangelical horror films, especially the 1972/1971 Rapture film *Thief in the Night*.

Beal doesn't trace trends across this swath of time, but several trends emerge. I highlight two. First, the temporal scope of Revelation has been constricted. During the first millennium of church history, Revelation provided an expansive framework for envisioning the whole of history. Augustine claimed the millennial reign of the church began with Jesus' first Advent and would continue until Satan was released at the end of time. Though inspired by the agitations surrounding the end of the first Christian millennium, both Hildegard and Joachim viewed Revelation as a template for human history. Following hints from the church fathers, Hildegard allegorized the seven days of creation as seven millennia, with Revelation as the blueprint for the "storied architecture of Christian history" (82). For Joachim, Revelation's narrative cycles unveiled historical eras of the church. Reformers and Counter-Reformed often apply its visionary images to contemporary events and personalities: "Protestants use [Revelation] to monstrocize Catholics, Catholics use it to monstrocize Protestants" (134). With the rise of dispensationalism, the scope of application narrows further, as Revelation is read as a framework not for history but as a roadmap of the end of history. No age has paid so much attention to Revelation as ours. No age has applied it so narrowly.

Second, as the temporal scope of Revelation constricted, its interpretation became more personalized. One of Beal's most intriguing chapters examines the work of James Hampton, an African-American World War II veteran from Washington, DC. After Hampton's death in 1964, his landlord discovered his "Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations' Millennium General Assembly" in a garage Hampton began renting in 1950. Inspired by the throne visions of Revelation 4 and 20, Hampton's installation consists of "a dazzling array of silver, gold, and purple winged thrones, glimmering altarpieces, bedazzled crowns, and other lustrous objects. . . . at the center of everything stood a seven-foot-high, brilliantly ornate throne, with silver wings spread wide over this garaged sanctuary like some back-alley seraphim" (156). The 180-piece throne room is constructed from detritus – modified tables and chairs, cardboard tubes, light bulbs and ink blotters, gilded with silver and gold foil from liquor bottles and candy wrappers. Hampton believed he received revelations himself, and apparently believed his throne room would be the site of Jesus' second coming: "he built it to *host* that coming. It is a space of creative apocalyptic hospitality" (165). Like other dispensationalists, Hampton believed Revelation was a preview of the end times, but he believed the end times would end in his rented garage.

Though these recent trends diminish the book of Revelation, they also highlight one of its principal purposes. Throughout the book, Beal complains that Christians have used the imagery of Revelation to name their terrors. Missionaries drew from "stock terms and conventional images" (147) to make sense of the religious practices and images they encountered outside of Christendom. Following Homi Bhabha, Beal argues these projections force the "other" into a mold that's "entirely knowable and visible." Pejorative tone aside, that's what Revelation is *for*. Revelation itself deploys earlier texts to make sense of a new, chaotic, and dangerous first-century situation. The four beasts that Daniel saw rising from the sea referred to a sequence of four empires from Babylon to the coming of the Son of Man (Dan 7). John sees a composite of Daniel's beasts rising from the sea (Rev 13), which implies that the last and most brutal of Daniel's beasts has finally arrived. Like every other book of the Bible, Revelation is most applicable when we attend most carefully to its original setting. We're encouraged to do just what John's visions do – apply the images of Revelation to new times, for there will always be rough beasts rising from the sea, always slouching land beasts eager to propagandize, always new harlot cities who drink the blood of the saints.

PETER LEITHART IS PRESIDENT OF THEOPOLIS INSTITUTE AND SERVES AS TEACHER AT TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN BIRMINGHAM.

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creator of heaven and earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

MERE
ORTHODOXY

EST. MMV