

"The Good Parts"

*A Hand-Picked "Verbal Icons"
Collection for Orthodox and Others*

C.S. Hayward

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1. Orthodox Eastern Church—theology. 2. Orthodox Eastern Church—spirituality. 3. Anthologies

The reader is invited to visit CJSH.name, cjshayward.com, and cshayward.com.

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About this Book

“The Good Parts” is originally a reference to some famous guidance provided by computer scientist Douglas Crockford, in the programming language JavaScript, where there are some good parts and some bad parts.

This collection is meant to be a “The Good Parts” for my works at CJSHayward.com, answering the question, “*Out of all the works you have written, which ones would you most recommend to an Orthodox reader now?*” About one in four works made the cut, and this collection represents the original content of CSHayward.com.

As a collection not organized above alphabetical order, this is something you can skip through, reading certain works and not others, and read them in any particular order you want. Please consider it to be not a single work, but a 1000 page library between two covers. And not something you have to work through.

If you’d like an initial suggestion for what to read, I would pick out “The Angelic Letters” (p. 24) ““Religion and Science” Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution” (700), “A Canticle to Holy, Blessed Solipsism” (99), “Plato: The Allegory of the... *Flickering Screen?*” (687), “Doxology” (200) and “The Consolation of Theology” (113).

The change in the listing of my name from “C.J.S. Hayward” to “C.S. Hayward” is in the wake of Facebook community, I have been told, where my name triletered to “CSH”, for “C.S. Hayward.”

I pray that this collection may somehow be of benefit to you.

Dive in!

Much Love,
“C.S. Hayward”

55 New Maxims for the Cyber-Quarantine

(Note: Some of this is old and some of this is new. I'm not seeking to be original.)

1. Trust technology about as far as you can throw it, and remember that you can't throw software or the web.
2. When facing a situation, ask, "What would a Boomer do?"
3. If your priest is willing, ask for pastoral guidance in slowly but steadily withdrawing from technologies that hurt you. (Don't try to leap over buildings in one bound. Take one step at a time, and one day at a time.)
4. Practice the spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, generosity, church attendance, the sacraments, silence, etc.
5. Use older technologies.
6. Fast from technologies some of the time, especially on fasting days.
7. Use your phone only for logistics, never for games, entertainment, or killing time. (You cannot kill time without injuring eternity.)

"The Good Parts"

8. Unplug your intravenous drip of noise, little by little. It may be uncomfortable at first, but it's worth it.
9. Own and read paper.
10. Leave your phone at home some days.
11. Read *The New Media Epidemic*.
12. Read *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, with particular attention to *The Consolation of Theology*.
13. Minimize or cut out completely your use of anti-social media. (By the way, spending time sucked into Facebook is a good way to enter a depression.)
14. Read up on Humane Tech and advice for how to take control, but do not limit yourself to that.
15. Do not own a television.
16. Do not feed the trolls.
17. Choose face-to-face meetings over Zoom meetings if you have a choice, and Zoom over any instant messaging.
18. Consider screen time, and multitasking, to be a drain on the mindfulness we are seeking from the East because we have rejected it in the West.
19. Turn off all phone notifications you have a live option to do.
20. Look at your phone when it rings or buzzes. Do not check your phone unprovoked every five minutes to see if you missed a text.
21. When you are reading on the web, don't just scan the page. Read it, like a paper book, slowly.
22. When you type, type full words, not txtisms.

23. Don't trade your adequate, existing, working gadgets for the latest and hottest gadget.
24. Set a fixed bedtime, and then lights out is lights out.
25. Keep and charge your phone in some room that is away from your bedroom.
26. If you use porn, stop. If you find yourself unable to stop, bring it to confession, and seriously consider XXXchurch.com.
27. Do not store up treasures on earth, but own and use technology only so far as it advances the Kingdom of Heaven.
28. Live by a *Silicon* Rule of, "What technologies do Silicon Valley technology executives choose for their children?" Steve Jobs, for instance, gave his kids walls of paper books and animated discussion, and so far as I am aware no iPads.
29. Reject contraception and Splenda.
30. Shop in real, local stores, even a local Wal-Mart, rather than making Amazon your first port of call.
31. Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need.
32. When you want to go shopping like some feel-good sacrament, do not buy it. You may buy it after you've let go of coveting after it and probably let go of buying it at all, and not before.
33. Limit your consumption of TED talks, and recognize them along psychology as something of a secular religion. (But if you need help, get help, without fear or shame.)
34. Write snailmail letters, preferably with your own handwriting.
35. Recognize that from the Devil's perspective, Internet is for porn—and he may have helped inspire, guide, and shape its development.
36. Expect Amazon and Google Books to delist priceless treasures. (This is already happening.)

37. Cultivate the virtues.
38. Cultivate social skills, especially for face-to-face.
39. If your conscience and applicable law permit, maybe consider owning and learning to use a gun. It's safer for everyone to have most criminals and some law-abiding citizens be armed than only have criminals be armed.
40. Seek theosis in the acquisition of the Spirit.
41. When shopping, use a debit card before a credit card, and use cash before either if you have a choice. Giving away paper bills and wondering what to do with change is a partial deterrent to buying things you do not need.
42. Never form an identity around the brands you patronize, and do not adopt a personal brand.
43. If you have the luxury, check email once per day. If your job or obligations do not permit a literal once per day checking of email, check it as often as you must. (If that is once per hour, don't keep checking your watch, but set an hourly alarm bell to remind you.)
44. Limit new technological intrusions into your life.
45. Repent of your sins.
46. Read aloud some of the time.
47. Cultivate connection with nature.
48. Drop it and drive.
49. Drop it and pay attention to the person you're with.
50. Keep good posture and take steps to avoid the diseases of civilization. Some approaches that have been taken to all be important include using Paleo diet (with fasts, eating vegetables in lieu of grain and saving bread for ceremonial purposes) and exercise, have a balanced ratio of Omega-3 to Omega-6 fatty acids, get real sleep, have engaging activities, and have social interactions.

51. Do not be surprised if you live to see the Antichrist rise to power, and recognize that we are already in an apocalyptic singularity.
52. Learn survival skills.
53. Recognize that it will be easier to get the people out of the cyber-quarantine than to get the cyber-quarantine, our new home, out of the people.
54. Keep a reasonable amount of cash available, at home or in a money belt.
55. Read, and live, Fr. Tom Hopko's 55 Maxims.

Akathist to St. Philaret the Merciful

Kontakion 1

To thee, O camel who passed through the eye of the needle, we offer thanks and praise: for thou gavest of thy wealth to the poor, as an offering to Christ. Christ God received thy gift as a loan, repaying thee exorbitantly, in this transient life and in Heaven. Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures! (Repeated thrice.)

Oikos 1

Thou hadst earthly wealth yet knewest true treasure: thou madest use of thy possessions but trustedst them never, for in thee was the Kingdom of God and thy treasurehouse was Heaven. Wherefore thou hearest these praises which we offer to thee:

Rejoice, illustrious and wealthy noble who knew true wealth!

Rejoice, O thou who were ever mindful of the poor!

Rejoice, who knew thy deeds to the poor are deeds done to Christ!

Rejoice, O thou who knew true wealth from false!

Rejoice, O thou who knew that we can take nothing from the world!

Rejoice, O thou who knew that the righteous would never be forsaken!

Rejoice, O thou who gave ever more than was asked!

Rejoice, O thou who withheld not thy last ounce of wheat!

Rejoice, O thou who gave all six bushels to one who asked for a little!
Rejoice, O thou whose friend gave thee forty bushels thereafter!
Rejoice, O thou who trusted in the Lord with all his heart!
Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 2

Thou knewest treasure enough to feed thy household for a hundred years without work: And thou wert true to thy name, Philaret or "Lover of Virtue", even when thine own wife saw not the horses on the mountain and chariots of fire which surround the true lover of virtue. But with eyes raised to fiery Heaven, we cry out with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 2

Thou invitedst thine own to join thy love of virtue, and thine own received not thine invitation. But thine invitation remaineth open, and we who receive thine invitation and hearken to the open door cry out to thee in praise:

Rejoice, O diadem of married life in the world!
Rejoice, O thou who knewest virtue as treasure!
Rejoice, O thou who fed a household out of the treasurehouse of thy virtue!
Rejoice, O thou who knew not the greed of Midas's curse!
Rejoice, O thou whose gifts would yet multiply and enrich the recipient!
Rejoice, O thou who was generous when he was rich!
Rejoice, O thou who was raided by marauders yet became no less generous!
Rejoice, O thou who trusted God when he had much and when he had little!
Rejoice, O thou who knewest that riches profit not in the day of wrath!
Rejoice, O thou whose virtue profited in easy times and hard times alike!
Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 3

Many a generous beggar will give his last penny, whilst few a rich man will give to thee from his hedge of protection. Yet we behold a wonder in thee, who was rich, illustrious, and of noble lineage, and esteemed these not. Thy hedge of protection was the Lord God, and virtue and treasure in Heaven, and thou wert generous unto thine uttermost farthing. To thee, a rich man more generous than a beggar, we cry: Alleluia!

Oikos 3

Thou transcendedst the virtues of pagan philosophy: fortitude, justice, prudence, and temperance, the virtues of a well lived earthly life. But thou knewest the Christian,

deiform virtues: faith, hope, and love, the virtues of a Heavenly life already present in an egg in life on earth. Wherefore we cry out to thee:

Rejoice, O thou whose fortitude sought no protection from earthly treasures!

Rejoice, O thou whose justice transcended human reckoning!

Rejoice, O thou whose prudence was the Wisdom who is Christ!

Rejoice, O thou whose temperance sought from earthly things nothing in excess of what they could give!

Rejoice, O thou whose faith trusted that Christ would faithfully provide!

Rejoice, O thou whose hope in God was never disappointed!

Rejoice, O thou whose love refrained from sharing neither virtue nor earthly possessions!

Rejoice, O thou whose joy flowed in easy times and hard!

Rejoice, O thou whose peace flowed from the silence of Heaven!

Rejoice, O thou whose generosity was perfect!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 4

We will forever underestimate thy generosity if we merely count what thou gavest against what much or little property thou possessedst, for thine open hand was a shadow and an icon of the vast wealth thou heldest in the generous treasure in Heaven, and this vast treasure thou laid hold to as Philaret, lover of virtue, which is to say lover of treasures in Heaven, eclipseth thy generosity with mere earthly property as the sun eclipseth the moon—nay, as the sun eclipseth a candle! Wherefore, with thee who hoarded true treasure, we cry: Alleluia!

Oikos 4

Beseech the Lord God that we also might seek true treasure in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrodes and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherefore we cry out in wonder to thee:

Rejoice, O thou who drunk from the wellspring of Truth!

Rejoice, O thou who were fed by the Tree of Life!

Rejoice, O thou who knew silver from dross!

Rejoice, O thou who never grasped at dross because thou clungst to the Treasure for whom every treasure is named!

Rejoice, O thou who esteemed men of humble birth because thou questedst after the royal priesthood!

Rejoice, O thou who grasped treasure next to which every earthly endowment is but dust

and ashes!

Rejoice, O thou who counted the poor and needy as more precious than gold!

Rejoice, O thou who cast away shadows to behold the Sun of Righteousness!

Rejoice, O thou who never forsook the Lord!

Rejoice, O thou whom the Lord never abandoned!

Rejoice, O thou who found that not one of His good promises has failed!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 5

Ever seeking Christ, thou becamest thyself like Christ, the source and the summit of all virtue. Wishing to imitate thee as thou imitatedst Christ, we cry unto thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 5

Every virtue is an icon of Christ, an icon not before us, but in us. Seeking after the virtues as we seek Christ, we cry out to thee:

Rejoice, O thou divine lover of virtue!

Rejoice, O thou who knew the Source of virtue!

Rejoice, O thou whose virtue was an imprint of Christ!

Rejoice, O thou who perfected the divine image with voluntary likeness!

Rejoice, O thou who teaches us virtue in the Christian walk!

Rejoice, O thou ever willing to share not only possessions but virtue!

Rejoice, O thou in whom Christ sat enthroned on virtue!

Rejoice, O thou who in virtue loved and served God!

Rejoice, O volume wherein the Word was inscribed in the ink of the virtues!

Rejoice, O thou who ever banishest passions!

Rejoice, O polished mirror refulgent with the uncreated Light!

Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 6

Eating from the Tree of Life, thou becamest thyself a tree of life, to the nourishment of many. Hungering for lifegiving food, we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 6

Sown in good soil, thou baredst fruit thirty, sixty, a hundredfold. Wherefore we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, O thou who were food to the hungry!
 Rejoice, O thou who were wealth to the destitute!
 Rejoice, O thou who were a robe of boldness to the naked!
 Rejoice, O thou who gave abundantly out of thine abundance!
 Rejoice, O thou who gave abundantly out of lack and want!
 Rejoice, O thou who were God's abundance to thy neighbour!
 Rejoice, O thou who never merely gave money or property!
 Rejoice, O thou who always gave with a blessing!
 Rejoice, O thou who loved Christ in thy neighbour!
 Rejoice, O thou tree whose shade sheltered many!
 Rejoice, O thou river who irrigated vast lands!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 7

Blessed art thou, O holy Father Philaret the Merciful! Merciful wert thou, and thou receivedst mercy, wherefore we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 7

Feeding the hungry is greater work than raising the dead! Wherefore we ask of thee no miracle, O merciful Father Philaret, for thou shewedst the continual miracle of mercy, and we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, O thou who gave the very last thou hadst!
 Rejoice, O thou who received recompense from Christ thereafter!
 Rejoice, O thou who withheld nothing from him who asked of thee!
 Rejoice, O thou who wherewith withheld nothing from Christ!
 Rejoice, O thou who clung not to gold!
 Rejoice, O thou who clung to the Light next to which gold is as dust!
 Rejoice, O wise one who made blessings as abundant as dust!
 Rejoice, O thou who were ever full of mercy!
 Rejoice, O thou whose mercy was as a lamp!
 Rejoice, O thou who firmly beheld the invisible!
 Rejoice, O thou whose faith worked mercy through love!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 8

Rejoice, thou who wilt stand before Christ's dread judgment throne numbered among those who hear: Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared

for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came to me. And thou wilt cry with the blessed saints: Alleluia!

Oikos 8

Knowing that no man can love God whom he cannot see except that he love his neighbor whom he has seen, thou wert ever merciful, wherefore we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, O thou who fed Christ when He was an hungred!
Rejoice, O thou who gave Christ to drink when He was athirst!
Rejoice, O thou who showed Christ hospitality when He came a stranger!
Rejoice, O thou who clothed Christ when He was naked!
Rejoice, O thou who visited Christ when He was sick!
Rejoice, O thou who came to Christ when He was in prison!
Rejoice, O thou who met the least of these and saw Christ!
Rejoice, O thou who called every man thy brother!
Rejoice, O thou who saw no man as outside of God's love!
Rejoice, O thou perfect in mercy as thy Heavenly Father is perfect in mercy!
Rejoice, O lamp ever scintillating with the Light of Heaven!
Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 9

All the angels were amazed at the excellence of thy virtue, for thy name "Philaret" is not only "Lover of Virtue" but "Lover of Excellence", for in thee excellence, virtue, and power are one and the same. Wherefore thou joinest the angels in crying: Alleluia!

Oikos 9

Even the most eloquent of orators cannot explain how thy virtue excelleth, for they cannot explain how in every circumstance thou soughtest out and lovedst virtue. But we marvel and cry out faithfully:

Rejoice, O rich man who cared for the poor!
Rejoice, O illustrious man who cared for men of no account!
Rejoice, O excellent in virtue in times of advantage!
Rejoice, O excellent in virtue in times of suffering as well!
Rejoice, O man who held great treasure and yet ever fixed his eyes upon true Treasure!
Rejoice, O thou who in every circumstance found an arena for excellent virtue!
Rejoice, O thou who were ever an excellent worshipper of God!

Rejoice, O thou who in the world escaped the Devil's snares!
 Rejoice, O thou who unmasked hollow Mammon!
 Rejoice, O thou who found harbor on the sea of life!
 Rejoice, O thou who by loving virtue loved Christ!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 10

Thy life wast a living manuscript of the Sermon on the Mount, for even Solomon in his splendor had not raiment like unto thy faith. Beholding thy splendor we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 10

Thou storedst up possessions wherewith not to worry: not fickle and corruptible treasure on earth, but constant and incorruptible treasure in Heaven. Wherefore we cry unto thee:

Rejoice, O thou who however rich wert poor in spirit!
 Rejoice, O thou who mourned thy neighbor's unhappiness!
 Rejoice, O thou meek before thy neighbor's suffering!
 Rejoice, O thou who hungered and thirsted for justice and all virtue!
 Rejoice, O thou mirror of mercy!
 Rejoice, O thou who remained pure in heart!
 Rejoice, O thou who made deepest peace!
 Rejoice, O living mirror of the Beatitudes!
 Rejoice, O thou soaring as the birds of the air!
 Rejoice, O thou who wert devoted to one Master, and despised all others!
 Rejoice, O living exposition of the Sermon on the Mount!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 11

Thou wert as the widow who bereaved herself even of her last two farthings: not only gave she more than all the others, but she who gave up her creaturely life received the uncreated, immortal, and eternal life. Like her, thou wert a vessel empty enough to fill, wherefore we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 11

Thou wert a second Job, steadfast whilst Satan tore off layer after layer of thy belongings to show that there was nothing inside. Wherefore, we cry to thee who ever persevered:

Rejoice, O thou worshiper of God in plenty and in need!
Rejoice, O thou icon of perseverance and faith!
Rejoice, O thou generous with thy coin and generous with thy virtue!
Rejoice, O thou phoenix ever arisen from thy very ashes!
Rejoice, O thou saint immobile in thy dispassion!
Rejoice, O thou who in want showed the truth of thy generosity in easy times!
Rejoice, O thou who ever blessed the name of the Lord!
Rejoice, O thou who with many possessions loved them not!
Rejoice, O thou who with few possessions loved them no more!
Rejoice, O thou who remained stalwart whilst Satan tore away what was thine, to show there was nothing inside!
Rejoice, O thou who were vindicated when God peeled off the nothing and showed there was everything inside!
Rejoice, O thou who vindicated God as did Job!
Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 12

Thou hadst no food in the house, when imperial emissaries came looking for a bride for the Emperor: thou rich in Heaven, in trust thou beganst preparations to honourably meet the imperial emissaries. And thy neighbours came and brought food, a fitting feast, and the imperial emissaries found thy granddaughter finest in virtue and modesty, choosing her for her excellence to become Empress. Wherefore we cry with thee: Alleluia!

Oikos 12

When all this had come to pass, in thy virtue, in thine excellence, thou knewest what is real treasure. In thy virtue and humility, thou refusedst all imperial rank and office, saying that it sufficed thee to be known as grandfather to the Empress. Wherefore, amazed, we cry to thee:

Rejoice, O thou who knew true Treasure!
Rejoice, O thou who were lover of virtue and excellence!
Rejoice, O thou who were rich and cared for the poor!
Rejoice, O thou who lost almost all and still opened thy hand!

Rejoice, O thou who became grandfather to the Empress whilst remaining ever humble!
 Rejoice, O thou who were illustrious and noble yet cherished those of low estate!
 Rejoice, O thou who were raised high unto the earth, and ever remained excellent as a
 lover of virtue!
 Rejoice, O thou who were raised high unto Heaven, and ever remained humble as a
 lover of virtue!
 Rejoice, O thou who sought first the Kingdom of Heaven!
 Rejoice, O thou who were given all other things as well!
 Rejoice, O thou who even then fixed his virtuous gaze on Christ!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 13

O holy Father Philaret whose excellence was virtue and whose virtue was
 excellence, whose power was virtue and whose virtue was power, who was ever merciful
 and generous out of thine overflowing virtue, ever protected by the Kingdom of God,
 pray for us as we cry with thee: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! (*Repeated thrice.*)

Oikos 1

Thou hadst earthly wealth yet knewest true treasure: thou madest use of thy
 possessions but trustedst them never, for in thee was the Kingdom of God and thy
 treasurehouse was Heaven. Wherefore thou hearest these praises which we offer to thee:

Rejoice, illustrious and wealthy noble who knew true wealth!
 Rejoice, O thou who were ever mindful of the poor!
 Rejoice, who knew thy deeds to the poor are deeds done to Christ!
 Rejoice, O thou who knew true wealth from false!
 Rejoice, O thou who knew that we can take nothing from the world!
 Rejoice, O thou who knew that the righteous would never be forsaken!
 Rejoice, O thou who gave ever more than was asked!
 Rejoice, O thou who withheld not thy last ounce of wheat!
 Rejoice, O thou who gave all six bushels to one who asked for a little!
 Rejoice, O thou whose friend gave thee forty bushels thereafter!
 Rejoice, O thou who trusted in the Lord with all his heart!
 Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

Kontakion 1

To thee, O camel who passed through the eye of the needle, we offer thanks and
 praise: for thou gavest of thy wealth to the poor, as an offering to Christ. Christ God

received thy gift as a loan, repaying thee exorbitantly, in this transient life and in Heaven. Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

All Orthodox Theology is Positive Theology

*To my parents John and Linda—
I owe you more than words can say.*

The state of psychology

Martin Seligman, a giant in the psychological community, kicked off a major TED talk by talking about how a TV station wanted a sound bite from him, and it should be one word. He said, "Good." Then they decided that as the president of the American Psychological Association he was a figure of such stature that they would let him have two words, and he said, "Not good." Finally, they decided he was of such stature that he would be allowed *three* words, and his three words were, "Not good enough."

What he was getting at was essentially as follows: clinical psychology had a goal which was remarkably well accomplished: the complete classification of behavioral health conditions, along with effective psychiatric treatment and psychotherapy. He didn't really underscore the magnitude and implications of this goal; apart from the fact that public figures know they at least need to act humble publicly, sometimes greatness brings real humility and he was trying to lead people to see there was more to ask for than just getting someone to feel OK, and he did not suggest that clinical psychology is the kind of tool that lets people of all kinds to thrive in every way. He called for a positive psychology to help people thrive, have fulfilling and delightful living, and enable high talent not to go to waste. And the point that I know him for is his calling for positive psychology.

What is systematic theology?

What is mystical theology?

What is positive theology?

One distinction between Eastern Orthodoxy and Rome is that in Rome, all theology is systematic theology, and in Orthodoxy, all theology is mystical theology. This much is true to point out, however it invites confusion.

Thomas Aquinas, were he alive today, couldn't cut it for "publish or perish" academia. He is revered as one of the greatest giants in history, but he would not obviously be welcome as an academic today. While there are many ideas in his *Summa Theologiae*, few or any have the faintest claim to originality. Some people, including me, don't think that a single original idea is to be found. Others think that there are a few, very few: I have not read anyone attribute even a dozen original ideas in his quite enormous work. But what he did provide was a system: an organized set of cubbyholes with a place for everything and everything in its place. And the claim that all Roman theology is systematic theology means that everything fits somewhere in the system, whether Thomas Aquinas's or something else.

The claim that all theology in Orthodoxy is mystical theology is a different sort of claim. It says that all true theology meets a particular criterion, like saying that all true fire brings heat. It is not a claim that everything fits under some kind of classification scheme. Systematic theology as such is not allowed, and trying to endow the Orthodox Church with its first systematic theology is a way to ask the Church hierarchy for a heresy trial. "Mystical" in mystical theology means theology that is practiced, experienced, and lived. The claim to "study" a martial art can involve reading, especially at the higher levels, but if you are going to study karate, you go to a dojo and start engaging in its practices. In that sense, while books may have some place in martial arts mastery, but "studying" ninjutsu is not something you do by burying your nose in books. It is a live practice.

All theology is positive theology, and my assertion is like saying that all theology is mystical theology, and not that all theology is part of systematic theology.

As to the relationship between positive psychology and positive theology, I honestly hope for an interesting conversation with some of the positive psychology community. I do not assert that positive theology contains positive psychology as we know it, or that positive psychology contains positive theology. I do, however, wish to suggest that something interesting and real is reflected in the claim that all theology is positive theology.

A wonderful old world

I wish to make one point of departure clear in the interest of framing what I am attempting.

There is a certain sense that this work could be seen as novel; for all I know it may be the first work discussing all Orthodox theology as being positive theology, but I follow Chesterton's footsteps here (or rather fall short of them). *I am not seeking to **invent** a positive theology.* I am in fact attempting no novelty of any sort other than a new articulation of timeless truths that are relevant to the conversation. And I am seeking to offer something better than something wonderful I invented. I want to talk about wondrous things that I believe God invented, as old as the hills.

A deliberately jarring example

What is positive in the psychology of the Orthodox Church? To get off to a good start, I would like to say "repentance from sins." And one of my articles unfolds in "Repentance, Heaven's Best-Kept Secret."

The Philokalia says that men hold on to sin because they think it adorns them. Repentance is terrifying. It is an unconditional surrender. But once you have made that surrender, you receive a reward. You realize that you needed that sin like you need a hole in the head—and you are free of a trap. It is something like a spiritual chiropractic massage, that you walk away from in joy with a straighter spine. And in my own experience, I'm not sure I am ever as joyful as when I am repenting. And the effect is cumulative; repentance represents a rising spiritual standard of living. Repentance is like obediently showing up for your funeral, and then you get there and you have shown up for your resurrection.

Monasticism, which I discuss in "A Comparison Between the Mere Monk and the Highest Bishop," represents a position of supreme privilege within the Orthodox Church. Now I love my Archbishop dearly and wouldn't want to take him down one whit, but part of the point of the piece is that if you are given a choice between being the greatest bishop in the world and being an ordinary monk, "ordinary monk" is hands down the better choice to choose. The overriding concern in that environment is the spiritual, human profit of its members. Poverty, obedience, and chastity are all conditions to one of two routes to salvation, and however wonderful marriage may be, monasticism is even better. And as well as other terms, monasticism is spoken of as "repentance." To live in a monastery is to work at a place that is minting spiritual money and giving all members as copious pay as possible.

The Utopia that is nowhere absent

Robert Goudzward, in *Aid for the Overdeveloped West*, talked about Old Testament law as representing a paradise, and part of the picture is that it represented a paradise in which it was hard to get rich. A sage in the Bible asks, "Give me neither poverty nor riches," and there is a sense that having more and more money is not good for us as humans.

This world was created to be a paradise. The Old Covenant represented a paradise. The New Covenant represents a paradise. Marriage represents a paradise. Monasticism represents a paradise.

We were made for human flourishing, and part of what the Church attempts is to provide for each person to flourish as that person should flourish. Abbots (and everyone else) are not to colonize and clone; the authority is profound, but it is a profound authority in restoring a damaged icon—and helping the icon look like itself, not like something it isn't. If you read the saints' lives over time, all the saints represent Christ, but there is incredible diversity among how the saints represent Christ.

What does God ask from us?

If we look at the question of what God commands and what he requests, there is fundamental confusion in thinking God is asking us to fill his needs. *God in Heaven is perfect, and has no conceivable needs except in the person of our neighbor.* God makes demands of us, not to fill his needs like an incompetent therapist, but to give *us* what is best. St. Maximus the Confessor divides three classes of obedience: *slaves*, who obey out of fear, *mercenaries*, who obey to obtain benefits, and *sons*, who obey out of love. Now all obedience is in at least some sense obedience and sometimes obedience out of fear is just what the doctor ordered, but if you obey as a slave you can be saved, if you obey as a mercenary you do better, and if you obey as a son even better than that. However, none of this is a setup to fill God's needs. The point is not that it is best for God if we obey out of love; the point is that it is best for *us* if we obey out of love.

A better kind of affirmation

This may come across very strangely to a psychologist who endorses affirmations, but the two main affirmations in Orthodoxy are "Christ died to save sinners, of whom I am first," and "All the world will be saved, and I will be damned."

Part of this stems from beliefs that I will explain but I do not ask you to subscribe to. Religion has enough of a reputation for focusing on the afterlife that it is provocative for a social gospel poster to say, "We believe in life before death." This life is of cardinal and incomparable significance; it is a life in which inch by inch we decide whether we will embrace Heaven or Hell when our live ends and no further repentance is available.

But it has also been said that birth and death are an inch apart whilst the ticker tape goes on forever, and reform is only possible before we die. What the "affirmations" (of a sort) that I have mentioned do is prepare people like plaintiffs to press forth for maximum awards in their favor. The statements are for our good, and they help before death. Furthermore, it is believed that God doesn't do everything in our good works for us, but he allows a genuine cooperation of combined powers where we do part of it. We are told, though, that we are not to take credit for one single achievement in our life, but give all the merit to God... but come Judgment Day, all good deeds we have done our part to are reckoned as if we did them entirely ourselves and without any help from God. I do not ask you to believe this or think it makes sense, but I suggests it is a part of a picture where an overriding concern is God blessing us as much as we will accept.

Dr. Seligman's lecture linked at the beginning of this article talked about how French vanilla ice cream tastes exquisite for the first bite, but by the time you get to the fifth or sixth bite, the flavor is gone. In the first candidate for the good life, people habituate quickly.

I have slightly opposite news about Orthodox affirmations: when you make them central to your life, the sting crumbles. Furthermore, if you see yourself as the worst sinner in a parish, or a monastery, or all prehistory and prehistory, that's the time that real growth and even real joy appear. Orthodoxy's affirmations unlock the door to repentance, and there is no end of treasure to be mined from that vein.

Stoicism and virtue

I've seen TED talks about how stoicism is being taken as some sort of ultimate power tool, and secret weapon, within the professional NFL community.

Part of my thought was, "Duh!" and with it a thought that it is a mischaracterization of philosophy to assume it's just something for odd and eccentric people, including yours truly, who have their noses in books. Stoicism is legitimately a power tool, but it is one of many power tools that have garnished quite a following and have been as powerful to their practitioners might have been.

I have said elsewhere, "Orthodoxy is pagan. Neo-paganism isn't," and *The Philokalia* preserves the very best of pagan philosophy with its profound endowment of virtues. N.B. the same word in Greek means "virtue" and "excellence," and if you want to help people thrive and develop giftedness, the four-horsed chariot of courage, justice, wisdom, and moderation has really quite a lot to go for it, and all the more if these are perfected by the virtues of faith, hope, and love. All of these are called "cardinal" or "hinge" virtues, meaning that not only are they good, but they are positive "gateway drugs" to other and perhaps even greater virtue.

And I would like to say one thing that the authors of *The Philokalia* simply can't much of ever stop talking about. This does not seem an view of yourself that you would

want to have, but I've had some pretty arrogant and abrasive people try pretty hard to teach me about humility. But I will say this: humility is the Philosopher's Stone and maybe the Elixir of Life. It opens your eyes to beauty pride may not see, and I need humility in my daily living more than I need air. I'm not going to try to further argue for an unattractive virtue, but I will say that it looks tiny and constricted from the outside, and vast and spacious from the inside. And for another Chesterton name drop: "It takes humility to enjoy anything—even pride."

If we are going to look at world traditions, the Greek term for virtue, *arete* also meant excellence, and *arete* (I both mean 'virtue' and 'excellence') represents a tradition well worth heeding. Bits and pieces have been picked up on TED talks; Stoicism is a power tool among the professional American football community, and another TED talk talks about how "grit" (also known as fortitude or courage) makes a big difference in success. But the tradition of virtue itself, and virtue philosophy, is worth attention.

Value-free spirituality?

I haven't read the title, but I have read Fr. Richard John Neuhaus talk about his title *The Naked Public Square*, in which he argues essentially that a religiously neutral public square is an impossibility, and the attempt to produce a naked public square will, perhaps, result in a statist religion.

If serious inner work without the resources of religious tradition is a possibility, I haven't seen it. Present psychotherapy has changed much faster than core humans have changed, and uses yoga practices from Hinduism, mindfulness of a sort (whether a traditional Buddhist would recognize Western exhilaration at mindfulness as Right Mindfulness I do not know), and a couple of other usual suspects like guided imagery (alleged to be known from Graeco-Roman times and known to some traditional medicines, although the pedigree seems to be copied and pasted across websites).

In my Asian philosophy class, I was able to sympathize with some element of almost everything that was presented. In terms of Hindu claims that inside each of us is a drop of God, I could sympathize, believing we are made in the image of God. But the one point I recoiled from is Buddhism's *anatta*, or *an-atman*: the claim that we, and everything that "exists", are an empty illusion. Or as Chesterton put it: "Buddhism is not a creed. It is a doubt."

Right Mindfulness, in its context in the Buddhist Eightfold Noble Path, is a cardinal virtue, and I count that as a positive. However, I do not see the need for the West to turn to India as a maternal breast. It is a microaggression that treats Orthodox Christianity as bankrupt of resources. I also don't like being advised to practice yoga. I am already participating in a yoga, or a spiritual path: that of Orthodox Christianity, and it is a complete tradition.

My point, however, is not to attack the medicinal use of Indian tradition (whether or not Indians would recognize their land's spiritualities), but to say that value-free counseling is something I have never seen, and while it may be politically correct to foist Indian spirituality but not Orthodox Christian, I wish to offer a word on my drawing on my religious tradition. Whether you accept it is not up to me, but Orthodoxy is a therapeutic tradition. And the claim has been explicitly made, in a book called *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, that if Orthodox spiritual direction were to appear new on the scene today, it might well not be classified as "religion," but as "therapeutic science."

I have not been directly involved with that therapeutic science. I've tried to reach monasticism, and am still trying, and therapeutic science is included in monasticism. So I cannot directly speak from experience about its fruit. But other things—virtue, repentance from sin and the like, I can directly attest to as positive theology.

A few more words about humility

Humility seems at the start something you'd rather have other people have than have it yourself. It looks small on the outside, but inside it is vaster than the Heavens, and it is one of two virtues that the virtue-sensitized Fathers of the *Philokalia* simply cannot ever stop talking about.

Perhaps what I can say is this. I don't know positive psychology well, but one of the first lessons, and one of the biggest, is to learn and express gratitude. And what I would say as someone who believes in gratitude is this: what gratitude is to positive health, humility is more.

Let me ask a question: which would you rather spend time with: someone horrible and despicable, or someone wonderful and great? The latter, of course. How it relates to humility is this: if you are in pride, you see and experience others as horrible and despicable, while if you are in humility, you see others as wonderful and great. Church Fathers talk about seeing other men as "God after God." *That is a recipe for a life of delight.*

Eyes to see

There is more to be said; I am quite fond of St. John Chrysostom's *A Treatise to Prove that Nothing Can Injure the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*. In connection with this, there are constant liturgical references to "the feeble audacity of the demons." The devils are real, but they are on a leash, and we are called to trample them. It has been said that everything which happens has been allowed either as a blessing from God, or as a temptation. (In Orthodoxy, "temptation" means both a provocation enticing to sin, and a situation that is a trial). As has been said, the faithful cannot be saved

without temptations, and the temptations that pass are provided by God so we can earn a crown and trampling them. St. John here frames things in a very helpful way.

Here I am starting to blend into something other than positive theology, and making assertions about positive theology and how they have similar effects to positive psychology. But really, all is ordained for us by a good God, a point for which I would refer you to God the Spiritual Father. There is profound providence, and profound possibility for profit, if only we have eyes to see it and be grateful for a God who has ordained Heaven and Earth for the maximum possible benefit for each of us. Does this strain credibility? Yes, but I believe it, and I believe it makes a world of difference.

Thomas Dixon on secularism and psychology

The article form of my advisor's thesis offered a case study for an understanding of secularity, and his case study was in psychology. He talked about how an older religious concept of passions was replaced by what was at first a paper-thin concept of emotions which you were just something you felt at the moment, then how the concept of emotions filled out and became emotions that could be about something, and then they filled out further and you could have an emotional dimension to a habit. The secular concept remains alienated from its religious roots, but the common Alcoholics Anonymous concept of being an alcoholic has almost completely filled out what was in the older concept of a passion.

I'm not completely sure secularism is possible; it returns to Hinduism, at least for yoga, and Buddhism, at least for Right Mindfulness, as maternal breasts, and Hinduism has something there as Buddhism does not. Chesterton comes again to mind: "The problem with someone who doesn't believe in God is not that he believes nothing; it's that he believes anything!" I believe the Orthodox Church's bosom offers a deeper nourishment. I'm not sure I have much to back this claim other than by the extent by which this article does (or does not) make sense, or whether it is more desirable to pursue one virtue (giving that virtues are stinkin' awesome things to have), or pursue a panoply of virtues. But I would hope that the reader would by now be able to make sense of my assertion that all Orthodox theology is positive psychology, even if the claim is more superficial than the assertion that all Orthodox theology is mystical theology.

For further reading without a moment's thought to positive psychology as such, see *The Consolation of Theology*, a work of Orthodox theology, and one steeped in virtue philosophy.

The Angelic Letters

My dearly beloved son Eukairos;

I am writing to you concerning the inestimable responsibility and priceless charge who has been entrusted to you. You have been appointed guardian angel to one Mark.

Who is Mark, whose patron is St. Mark of Ephesus? A man. What then is man? Microcosm and mediator, the midpoint of Creation, and the fulcrum for its sanctification. Created in the image of God; created to be prophet, priest, and king. It is toxic for man to know too much of his beauty at once, but it is also toxic for man to know too much of his sin at once. For he is mired in sin and passion, and in prayer and deed offer what help you can for the snares all about him. Keep a watchful eye out for his physical situation, urge great persistence in the liturgical and the sacramental life of the Church that he gives such godly participation, and watch for his ascesis with every eye you have. Rightly, when we understand what injures a man, nothing can injure the man who does not injure himself: but it is treacherously easy for a man to injure himself. Do watch over him and offer what help you can.

With Eternal Light and Love,
Your Fellow-Servant and Angel

My dear son Eukairos;

I would see it fitting to offer a word about medicating experience and medicating existence. There is a thread of escape that men reach for when they cannot tolerate silence.

When one of the race of men medicates experience by means of wine, that is called drunkenness. When by means of the pleasures of the palate, that is called gluttony. When by means of other pleasures, it is called lust. When by means of possessions and getting things, it is called avarice. Escapism is an ancient vice and a root of all manner of evils: ancient Christians were warned strongly against attempting to escape this world by medicating experience.

Not that pleasure is the only way; medicating experience by mental gymnastics is called metaphysics in the occult sense, and medicating experience by means of technology is a serious danger.

Not all technologies, and perhaps not any technology, is automatically a problem to use. But when technologies become a drone they are a problem. Turning on a radio for traffic and weather news, and then turning it off, is not a drone. Listening to the radio at a particular time to devote your attention to a concert is not a drone. Turning on a radio in the background while you work is a drone; even Zen and the Art of the Motorcycle Maintenance discusses what is wrong with mechanics having the radio on in the background. And texting to get specific information or coordinate with someone is not a drone, but a stream of text messages that is always on is a drone. Technology has its uses, but when technology is a drone, noise in the background that prevents silence from getting too uncomfortable, then it is a spiritual problem, a tool to medicate experience. And there are some technologies, like video games, that exist to medicate experience.

(Of course, technologies are not the only drone; when Mark buckles down to prayer he discovers that his mind is a drone with a stream of thoughts that are a life's work to quiet.)

More could be said about technologies, but my point here is to point out one of the dangers Mark faces. Not the only one, by any means, but he has at his disposal some very powerful tools for doing things that are detrimental. It's not just a steady stream of X-rated spam that puts temptation at his fingertips. He has all the old ways to medicate experience, and quite a few powerful technologies that can help him medicate his experience as well. And for that he needs prayer.

But what is to be done? The ways of medicating experience may be in some measure more than many saints have contended with; the answer is the same. Don't

find another way to medicate experience, or escape the conditions God has placed you in, trying to escape to Paradise. Don't ask for an easier load, but tougher muscles. Instead of escaping the silence, engage it. Prayerfully engage it. If your dear Mark does this, after repenting and despairing of finding a way to escape and create Paradise, he will find that escape is not needed, and Paradise, like the absent-minded Professor's lost spectacles, were not in any of the strange places he looked but on his nose the whole time.

A man does not usually wean himself of drones in one fell swoop, but pray and draw your precious charge to cut back, to let go of another way of medicating experience even if it is very small, and to seek not a lighter load but a stronger back. If he weans himself of noise that medicates uncomfortable silence, he might find that silence is not what he fears.

Watch after Mark, and hold him in prayer.

Your Dearly Loving Elder,
Your Fellow-Servant,
But a Wind and a Flame of Fire

My dear, dear Eukairos;

When fingers that are numb from icy cold come into a warm, warm house, it stings.

You say that the precious treasure entrusted to you prayed, in an uncomfortable silence, not for a lighter load but for a stronger back, and that he was fearful and almost despairing in his prayer. And you wonder why he looks down on himself for that. Do not deprive him of his treasure, by showing him how much good he is done.

He has awakened a little, and I would have you do all in your power to show him the silence of Heaven, however little he can receive it yet. You know some theologians speak of a river of fire, where in one image among others, the Light of Heaven and the fire of Hell are the same thing: not because good and evil are one, but because God can only give himself, the uncreated Light, in love to his creatures, and those in Hell are twisted through the rejection of Christ so that the Light of Heaven is to them the fire of Hell. The silence of Heaven is something like this; silence is of Heaven and there is nothing to replace it, but to those not yet able to bear joy, the silence is an uncomfortable silence. It is a bit like the Light of Heaven as it is experienced by those who reject it.

Help Mark in any way you can to taste the silence of Heaven as joy. Help him to hear the silence that is echoed in the Church's chanting: when he seeks a stronger back to bear silence, strengthen his back, and help him to taste the silence not as bitter but sweet. Where noise and drones would anaesthetize his pain, pull him through his pain to health, wholeness, and joy.

The Physician is at work!

With Eternal Light and Love,
Your Fellow-Servant and Angel

Dear blessed Eukairos;

Your charge has had a fall. Do your best that this not be the last word: help him get up. Right now he believes the things of God are not for those like him.

The details of the fall I will not treat here, but suffice it to say that when someone begins to wake up, the devils are furious. They are often given permission to test the awakening man, and often he falls. And you know how the devils are: before a fall, they say that God is easy-going and forgiving, and after a fall, that God is inexorable. Do your best to aid a person being seduced with the lie that God is inexorable.

Mark believes himself unfit for the service of the Kingdom. Very well, and in fact he is, but it is the special delight of the King to work in and through men who have made themselves unfit for his service. Don't brush away a mite of his humility as one fallen, but show him what he cannot believe, that God wishes to work through him now as much as ever And that God wishes for him prayer, liturgy, sacrament..

And open his eyes now, a hint here, a moment of joy there: open them that eternity is now: eternal life is not something that begins after he dies, but that takes root now, and takes root even (or rather, especially) in those who repent. He considers himself unworthy of both Heaven and earth, and he is; therefore, in God's grace, give him both Heaven and earth. Open up earth as an icon, a window to Heaven, and draw him to share in the uncreated Light and Life.

Open up his repentance; it is a window to Heaven.

In Light and Life and Love,
Your Brother Angel

My dear fellow-ministering angel;

I would make a few remarks on those windows of Heaven called icons.

To Mark, depending on the sense of the word 'window', a 'window' is an opening in a wall with a glass divider, or alternately the 'window' is the glass divider separating inside from outside. But this is not the exact understanding when Orthodox say an icon is a window of Heaven; it is more like what he would understand by an open window, where wind blows, and inside and outside meet. (In most of human history, a window fitted with glass was the exception, not the rule.) If an icon is a window of Heaven, it is an opening to Heaven, or an opening between Heaven and earth.

Now Mark does not understand this, and while you may draw him to begin to sense this, that is not the point. In *The Way of the Pilgrim*, a man speaks who was given the sacred Gospels in an old, hard-to-understand book, and was told by the priest, "Never mind if you do not understand what you are reading. The devils will understand it." Perhaps, to Mark, icons are still somewhat odd pictures with strange postures and proportions. You may, if you want, help him see that there is perspective in the icons, but instead of the usual perspective of people in their own world, it is reverse perspective whose vanishing point lies behind him because Mark is in the picture. But instead of focusing on correcting his understanding, and certainly correcting his understanding all at once, draw him to venerate and look at these openings of Heaven. Never mind if he does not fully grasp the icons he venerates. The devils will understand.

And that is true of a great many things in life; draw Mark to participate in faith and obedience. He expects to understand first and participate second, but he needs to come to a point of participating first and understanding second. Many things need to start on the outside and work inwards.

Serving Christ,
Whose Incarnation Unfurls in Holy Icons,
Your Fellow

Dear cherished, luminous son;

Your charge is reading a good many books. Most of them are good, but I urge you to spur him to higher things.

It is a seemingly natural expression of love to try to know as much about possible about Orthodoxy. But mature Orthodox usually spend less time trying to understand Orthodoxy through books. And this is not because they have learned everything there is

to learn. (That would be impossible.) Rather, it is because they've found a deeper place to dig.

God does not want Mark to be educated and have an educated mind. He wants him to have an enlightened mind. The Orthodox man is not supposed to have good thoughts in prayer, but to have no thoughts. The Orthodox settled on the path have a clear mind that is enlightened in hesychastic silence. And it is better to sit in the silence of Heaven than read the Gospel as something to analyze.

Books have a place. Homilies have a place. But they are one shadow of the silence of Heaven. And there are more important things in the faith, such as fasting and almsgiving, repentance and confession, and prayer, the crowning jewel of all asceticism. Give Mark all of these gems.

With Deep Affection,
Your Brother Angel

My dearly beloved, cherished fellow angel Eukairos;

Your charge Mark has been robbed.

Your priceless charge Mark has been robbed, and I am concerned.

He is also concerned about a great many things: his fear now, which is understandable, and his concerns about where money may come from, and his loss of an expensive smartphone and a beautiful pocketwatch with sentimental as well as financial value to him, and his inconvenience while waiting on new credit cards.

There are more concerns where those came from, but I am concerned because he is concerned about the wrong things. He has well over a week's food in his fridge and he believes that God failed to provide. Mark does not understand that everything that happens to a man is either a temptation God allowed for his strengthening, or a blessing from God. I am concerned that after God has allowed this, among other reasons so Mark can get his priorities straight, he is doing everything but seeking in this an opportunity for spiritual growth to greater maturity.

If you were a human employee, this would be the time for you to be punching in *lots* of overtime. Never mind that he thinks unconsciously that you and God have both deserted him; your strengthening hand has been invisible to him. I do not condemn you for any of this, but this time has been appointed for him to have opportunities for growth and for you to be working with him, and the fact that he does not seek growth in this trial is only reason for you to work all the harder. That he is seeking to get things back the way they were, and suffering anger and fear, is only reason for you to exercise

more diligent care. God is working with him now as much as ever, and I would advise you for now to work to the point of him seeking his spiritual good in this situation, however short he falls of right use of adversity for now.

Your name, "Eukairos," comes from "eu", meaning "good", and "kairos", an almost inexhaustible word which means, among other things, "appointed time" and "decisive moment." You and Mark are alike called to dance the great dance, and though Mark may not see it now, you are God's agent and son supporting him in a great and ordered dance where everything is arranged in God's providence. Right now Mark sees none of this, but as his guardian angel you are charged to work with him in the dance, a dance where God incorporates his being robbed and will incorporate his spiritual struggles and, yes, provide when Mark fails to see that the righteous will never be forsaken.

A good goal would be for Mark to pray for those that robbed him, and through those prayers honestly desire their good, or come to that point. But a more immediate goal is his understanding of the struggle he faces. Right now he sees his struggle in terms of money, inconveniences, and the like. Raise his eyes higher so he can see that it is a spiritual struggle, that God's providence is not overruled by this tribulation, and that if he seeks first the Kingdom of God, God himself knows Mark's material needs and will show deepest care for him.

Your Fellow-Servant in Prayer,
But an Angel Who Cannot Struggle Mark's Struggle on his Behalf

My dear, esteemed son and fellow-angel Eukairos;

That was a deft move on your part, and I thank you for what you have helped foster in Mark's thoughts.

Mark began to console himself with the deep pit of porn, that poison that is so easily found in his time and place. And he began to pray, on his priest's advice, "Holy Father John, pray to God for me," and "Holy Mother Mary, pray to God for me," Saint John the Much-Suffering and Saint Mary of Egypt being saints to remember when fighting that poison. And you helped him for a moment to see how he was turned in on himself and away from others, and he prayed for help caring about others.

At 10:30 PM that night on the dot, one of his friends was walking in the dark, in torrential rains, and fell in the street, and a car ran over his legs. This friend was someone with tremendous love for others, the kind of person you cannot help but appreciate, and now that he had two broken legs, the flow of love reversed. And Mark unwittingly found himself in an excellent situation to care about something other than

himself. He quite forgot about his money worries; and he barely noticed a windfall from an unexpected source. He kept company and ran errands for his friend.

What was once only a smouldering ember is now a fire burning brightly. Work as you can to billow it into a blaze.

With an Eternal Love,
Your Respectful Brother Angel

My dear, scintillating son Eukairos;

I would recall to you the chief end of mankind. "To glorify God and enjoy him forever" is not a bad answer; the chief end of mankind is to contemplate God. No matter what you do, Mark will never reach the strictest sense of contemplation such as monastic saints enjoy in their prayer, but that is neither here nor there. He can have a life ordered to contemplation even if he will never reach the spiritual quiet from which strict contemplation is rightly approached. He may never reach beyond the struggle of asceticism, but his purpose, on earth as well as in Heaven, is to contemplate God, and to be deified. The point of human life is to become by grace what Christ is by nature.

Mark is right in one way and wrong in another to realize that he has only seen the beginning of deification. He has started, and only started, the chief end of human life, and he is right to pray, go to confession, and see himself as a beginner. But what he is wrong about is imagining that the proof of his fledgling status is that his wishes are not fulfilled in the circumstances of his life: his unconscious and unstated assumption is that if he had real faith like saints who worked miracles, his wishes would be fulfilled and his life would be easier. Those saints had less wishes fulfilled, not more, and much harder lives than him.

(And this is beside the point that Mark is not called to perform miracles; he is called to something greater, the most excellent way: love.)

Mark imagines you, as his guardian angel, to be sent by God to see that at least some of his wishes happen, but the truth is closer to saying that you are sent by God to see that some of his wishes do not happen so that in the cutting off of self-will he may grow in ways that would be impossible if he always had his wishes. There is a French saying, —On trouve souvent sa destine par les chemins que l'on prend pour l'eviter.—: "One often finds his destiny on the paths one takes to avoid it." Destiny is not an especially Christian idea, but there is a grain of truth here: Men often find God's providence in the situations they hoped his providence would keep them out of.

This cutting off of self-will is part of the self-transcendence that makes deification; it is foundational to monks and the office of spiritual father, but it is not a "monks-only" treasure. Not by half. God answers "No" to prayers to say "Yes" to something greater. But the "Yes" only comes through the "No."

As Mark has heard, "We pray because we want God to change our circumstances. God wants to use our circumstances to change us."

Mark has had losses, and he will have more to come, but what he does not understand is that the path of God's sanctification is precisely through the loss of what Mark thinks he needs. God is at work allowing Mark to be robbed. God is at work allowing Mark to use "his" "free" time to serve his friend. And God is at work in the latest challenge you wrote to me about.

Mark has lost his car. A drunk and uninsured driver slammed into it when it was parked; the driver was saved by his airbag, but Mark's car was destroyed, and Mark has no resources to get another car, not even a beater for now. And Mark imagines this as something that pushes him outside of the Lord's providence, not understanding that it is by God's good will that he is now being transported by friendship and generosity, that he is less independent now.

Right now Mark is not ready either to thank God for his circumstances or to forgive the driver. But do open his eyes to the good of friendship and generosity that now transports him. Even if he sees the loss of his car as an example of God failing to provide for him, help him to see the good of his being transported by the love and generosity of his friends. Help him to see God's providence in circumstances he would not choose.

Your Fellow-Servant in the Service of Man,
A Brother Angel

My dear son Eukairos;

Your precious charge, in perfectly good faith, believes strongly in bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. His devotion in trying to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ is really quite impressive, but he is fundamentally confused about what that means, and he is not the only one.

Mark would never say that you can reason your way into Heaven, but he is trying to straighten out his worldview, and he thinks that straightening out one's ideas is what this verse is talking about. And he holds an assumption that if you're reasoning things out, or trying to reason things out, you're probably on the right path.

Trying to reason things out does not really help as much as one might think. Arius, the father of all heretics, was one of many to try to reason things out; people who devise heresies often try harder to reason things out than the Orthodox. And Mark has inherited a greatly overstated emphasis on how important or helpful logical reasoning is.

Mark would be surprised to hear this; his natural question might be, "If bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ is not what you do when you straighten out your worldview, then what on earth is?"

A little bit more of the text discusses unseen warfare and inner purity: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Men's thoughts are not just abstract reasoning; they are all sorts of things, some entangled with sinful desire, that are around all the time to a mind that has not learned hesychastic silence. Thoughts that need to be taken captive include thoughts of money entangled with greed, thoughts of imagined success entangled with pride, thoughts of wrongs suffered entangled with anger, thoughts of food compounded with gluttony, thoughts of desired persons compounded with lust, thoughts of imagined future difficulties entangled with worry and doubt about the Lord's good providence. Such thoughts as these need to be addressed, and not by tinkering with one's worldview: these thoughts remain a battleground in spiritual warfare even if one's worldview condemns greed, pride, anger, gluttony, lust, worry, and doubt.

Work with Mark. Guide him and strengthen him in the unseen warfare that includes learning to cut off such thoughts as soon as possible: a fire that is spreading through a house is hard to put out, and what Mark needs to learn is to notice the smoke that goes before fire and extinguish the smouldering that is beginning and not waiting for leaping flames to make doomed efforts to fight it. Help him to see that his thoughts are not only abstract ideas, and help him to be watchful, aware of his inner state. Unseen warfare in thoughts is of inestimable importance, and do what you can to help him see a smouldering smoke when it has not become a raging fire, and to be watchful.

Do what you can to draw him to repeat the Jesus Prayer, to let it grow to a rhythm in him. If the question is, "What should I start thinking when I catch myself?", the answer is, "The Jesus prayer."

Keep working with Mark, and offer what support you can. And keep him in your prayers.

With Deepest Affection,
Another Member of the Angel Choirs

Dear fellow-warrior, defender, and son Eukairos;

I wish to write to you concerning devils.

Mark has the wrong picture with a scientific worldview in which temptations are more or less random events that occur as a side effect of how the world works. Temptations are intelligently coordinated attacks by devils. They are part of unseen warfare such as Mark faces, part of an evil attack, but none the less on a leash. No man could be saved if the devils could give trials and temptations as much as they wished, but the devils are allowed to bring trials and temptations as much as God allows for the strengthening, and the discipleship, of his servants.

Some street drugs are gateway drugs, and some temptations are temptations to gateway sins. Gluttony, greed, and vanity are among the "gateway sins", although it is the nature of a sin to give way to other sins as well. Gluttony, for instance, opens the door to lust, and it is harder by far to fight lust for a man whose belly is stuffed overfull. (A man who would fare better fighting against lust would do well to eat less and fast more.) In sin, and also in virtue, he who is faithful in little is faithful in much, and he who is unfaithful in little is also unfaithful in much. You do not need to give Mark what he expects now, help in some great, heroic act of virtue. He needs your help in little, humble, everyday virtues, obedience when obedience doesn't seem worth the bother.

The liturgy speaks of "the feeble audacity of the demons", and Mark needs to know that that is true, and true specifically in his case. What trials God allows are up to God, and the demons are an instrument in the hand of a God who would use even the devils' rebellion to strengthen his sons. The only way Mark can fall into the demons' hands is by yielding to temptation: nothing can injure the man who does not injure himself. The trials Mark faces are intended for his glory, and more basically for God's glory in him—but God chooses glory for himself that glorifies his saints. Doubtless this will conflict with Mark's plans and perceptions of what he needs, but God knows better, and loves Mark better than to give Mark everything he thinks he needs.

Do your best to strengthen Mark, especially as regards forgiveness to those who have wronged him and in the whole science of unseen warfare. Where he cannot see himself that events are led by an invisible hand, help him to at least have faith, a faith that may someday be able to discern.

And do help him to see that he is in the hands of God, that the words in the Sermon on the Mount about providence are not for the inhabitants of another, perfect world, but intended for him personally as well as others. He has rough things he will

have to deal with; help him to trust that he receives providence at the hands of a merciful God who is ever working all things to good for his children.

With Love as Your Fellow-Warrior and Mark's,
Your Fellow-Warrior in the War Unseen

My dear, watchful son Eukairos;

Mark has lost his job, and though he has food before him and a roof over his head, he thinks God's providence has run short.

Yet in all of this, he is showing a sign of growth: even though he does not believe God has provided, there is a deep peace, interrupted at times by worry, and his practice of the virtues allows such peace to enter even though he assumes that God can only provide through paychecks.

Work on him in this peace. Work on him in the joy of friendship. Even if he does not realize that he has food for today and clothing for today, and that this is the providence he is set to ask for, help him to enjoy what he has, and give thanks to God for everything he has been given.

And hold him in your prayers.

As One Who Possesses Nothing,
One Who Receives All He Needs From God

My prayerful, prayerful Eukairos;

Prayer is what Mark needs now more than ever.

Prayer is the silent life of angels, and it is a feast men are bidden to join. At the beginning it is words; in the middle it is desire; at the end it is silence and love. For men it is the outflow of sacrament, and its full depths are in the sacraments. There are said to be seven sacraments, but what men of Mark's day do not grasp is that seven is the number of perfection, and it would do as well to say that there are ten thousand sacraments, all bearing God's grace.

Help Mark to pray. Pray to forgive others, pray for the well-being of others, pray by being in silence before God. Help him to pray when he is attacked by passion; help him to pray when he is tempted and when he confesses in his heart that he has

sinned: O Lord, forgive me for doing this and help me to do better next time, for the glory of thy holy name and for the salvation of my soul.

Work with Mark so that his life is a prayer, not only with the act-prayer of receiving a sacrament, but so that looking at his neighbor with chaste eyes he may pray out of the Lord's love. Work with Mark so that ordinary activity and work are not an interruption to a life of prayer, but simply a part of it. And where there is noise, help him to be straightened out in silence through his prayer.

And if this is a journey of a thousand miles that Mark will never reach on earth, bid him to take a step, and then a step more. For a man to take one step into this journey is still something: the Thief crucified with Christ could only take one step, and he took that one step, and now stands before God in Paradise.

Ever draw Mark into deeper prayer.

With You Before God's Heart that Hears Prayers,
A Praying Angel

My dearly beloved, cherished, esteemed son; My holy angel who sees the face of Christ God; My dear chorister who sings before the eternal throne of God; My angel divine; My fellow-minister;

Your charge has passed through his apprenticeship successfully.

He went to church, and several gunmen entered. One of them pointed a gun at a visitor, and Mark stepped in front of her. He was ordered to move, and he stood firm. He wasn't thinking of being heroic; he wasn't even thinking of showing due respect to a woman. He only thought vaguely of appropriate treatment of a visitor and fear never deterred him from this vague sense of appropriate care for a visitor.

And so death claimed him to its defeat. *O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?* Death claimed saintly Mark to its defeat.

Mark is no longer your charge.

It is my solemn, profound, and grave pleasure to now introduce you to Mark, no longer as the charge under your care, but as a fellow-chorister with angels who will eternally stand with you before the throne of God in Heaven.

Go in peace.

Your Fellow-Minister,
מיכאל • MIXAHA • MICHAEL • Who Is Like God?

Amazing Providence

My church in Cambridge asked students to share as Holy Trinity Cambridge said farewell to us. I ended up sharing this more than once.

Even before I left Wheaton, I had a disturbing amount of trouble. An employer broke its word, jeopardising my ability to pay. I was working on student loans for six months. They fell into place one business day before I left. And when I left I was gravely ill.

I arrived at Cambridge without a place to stay, and when after weeks I found one, I was barely able to work because I was so wiped out that my hardest efforts weren't enough for me to consistently work more than two hours a day. I went through treatments that could have killed me.

My studies suffered. I did terribly at almost everything during the schoolyear. Usually the people supervising me didn't even give me a grade—just advice on what to do next.

To say all this and *stop* would be very deceptive. In the end, I was bewildered, not so much by the sufferings I had been allowed to experience, but the joy. How has God blessed me?

Community, for starters. I've been held in a blanket of prayer by Christians here, in England, in other countries, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, all praying for me. I'm honored. There were times when I knew I should not have the strength to walk at all, but I was walking lightly, joyfully, on strength given by God. The Dean family helped me look for a place to stay, and I don't think I can even remember all the practical help they

gave—but more than this, they welcomed me into their hearts at the time I felt most isolated and lonely. Holy Trinity is a warm place; a woman named Mary invited me over for a lavish meal that I don't think she can often afford to eat as a ninety year old widow. I believe my roommate Yussif was the reason why God closed so many doors in places to stay, and opened just one. He gave me this marvelous African shirt, and when I wear it I feel like I'm putting on regalia I have not earned. I've had visits: my father came out to visit me, and later my aunt, uncle, and two cousins spent a day in Cambridge. We went on a small boat in the river Cam, and one of the people in the tour company lent my cousin Katie his hat. The tour guide looked at her and said, "It's a good thing you have that hat to protect you from the fierce English sun." I fear that especially here I must leave out much more than I can say; the Shepherd's Council will be annoyed if I talk for three hours.

God's transcendence has become more and more real to me. I've relearned that the God who lives inside our hearts is majestic and glorious, beyond the farthest stars. When I've attended Orthodox vespers, I've met God's transcendence.

Providence has been powerful. At the end of the year, my friend Dirk said he could move my possessions that evening to Colchester for storage. I e-mailed Michelle in Colchester and scrambled to get ready. After I arrived, Michelle said I had the luck of the Irish: one day earlier or later, she would not have been home. Among other things. This sort of thing had happened again and again and again, and when she later e-mailed me about my luck, I answered, "Not luck. Providence."

I've had all sorts of pleasures, small and great. I've improvised on my college's chapel organ. I've been able to take pictures of Cambridge and incorporate them into a game where you're running through a labyrinth, chasing a furball, looking at lovely Cambridge pictures, and answering icebreaker questions. (Don't worry. It's actually much stranger than it sounds.)

The academic environment is a real blessing. This may sound strange, but academic theology often destroys students' faith. My faith has become both stronger and deeper. The tutorial system has been excellent, and things fell into place at the end of the year. I was able to work on my thesis when I was too tired to lift my head, and the day I turned it in, I told my Bible study I was realizing how God was not constrained by my limitations. Cambridge grades are based exclusively on the final, and I received e-mail from my tutor Thursday. I passed *everything*.

I've been learning about the link between God's transcendent glory, on one hand, and his loving providence on the other. What is it? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Which of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to his life?" Sickness is a good opportunity to realize that even a single hour is a gift from God. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry, asking, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For the pagans run after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need

them. But seek first the kingdom of God, and his perfect righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

It's not just that God doesn't need my help figuring out what's best for me. What I've learned is that what God, in his transcendence, in his mystery, in his glory, in his deeply hidden wisdom, ordains for me is much fuller, deeper, richer, more beautiful, more interesting, and more adventuresome than what I would choose for myself if (God forbid) I were in control...

The blessings continue after I've returned. My parents were given a sweetheart of a dog, named Jazz. Not ten minutes after I met her, Jazz climbed up on my lap and wanted to cuddle. Jazz is a seventy-five pound Laborador retriever and is a bit of a bull in a China shop. I trust that through her, God will give me furry companionship, aerobic exercise, and thicker arms. Please pray that I may rightly appreciate her.

Thank you *so much* for praying. It is said that Satan laughs at our plans, scoffs at our power, and trembles at our prayers. Please *persist in all of your prayers*, and if the Lord leads you, please let part of that include me.

Apprentice gods

1. This life is an apprenticeship. You do not understand its purpose until you understand that we are created to be apprentice gods.
2. It is said, a man knows the meaning of life when he plants a tree knowing he will never live to sit in its shade. Truer is to say that a man knows the meaning of life when he plants a tree not seeing how he will ever this side of Heaven sit in its shade.
3. You do not understand life in the womb until you understand what is after the womb. For some actions in the womb bear fruit in the womb, but suckling and kicking are made to strengthen muscles for nursing and walking, and nursing a preparation for the solid food of men.
4. *You shall surely die*: such Adam and Eve were warned, such Adam and Eve were cursed, and such the saints are blessed. For death itself is made an entryway for life. But we can only repent in this life: after this life our eternal choice of Life or Death is sealed.
5. Do not despise moral, that is to say eternal, victories. Have you labored to do something great, only to find it all undone? Take courage. God is working with you to wreak triumph. From his eternal providence he is working, if you will be his co-worker, in synergy, to make with you something greater than you could

possibly imagine, a treasure in Heaven which you never could imagine to be able to covet.

6. The purpose of life may be called as an apprenticeship to become divine. The divine became man that man might become divine. The Scriptures oft speak of the sons of God, and of men's participation in the nature divine. This divinisation begins on earth and reaches its full stature, when the Church triumphant and whole becomes the Church of saints who have become what in God they were trying to become. And we are summoned to that door.
7. Were sportsmanship to be found only in a foreign culture, we would find it exotic. Play your best, seek to win a well-played game, but have dispassion enough to be graceful in winning and losing alike. But one of its hidden gems is that most often a team that has to win will be defeated by a team that only tries to give it their best.
8. But sportsmanship is not just for sports. Hard times are encroaching and are already here: but we are summoned, not to win, but to play our best. Hence St. Paul, at the end of a life of as much earthly triumph as any saints, spoke as a true sportsman: he said not, "I have triumphed," but that he had been faithful: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my [race]course, I have kept the faith. This from a saint who enjoyed greater earthly accomplishments than his very Lord.
9. It is said that there are three ranks among the disciples: slaves who obey God out of fear, hirelings who obey God out of the desire for reward, and sons who obey God out of love. It has also been said that we owe more to Hell than to Heaven, for more people come to the truth from fear of Hell than the desire for the rewards in Heaven. But if you want a way out of Hell, seek to desire the incomparably greater reward in Heaven; if you seek reward in Heaven, come to obey God out of love, for love of God transcends even rewards in Heaven.
10. It is said, Doth thou love life? Then do not waste time, for time is the stuff life's made of. It might be said, Seekest thou to love? Then do not shun asceticism and discipleship, for they are the stuff love is made of. Or they are a refining fire that purges all that is not silver and gold. Our deifying apprenticeship takes place through asceticism and being disciples.
11. Two thoughts are to be banished: *I am a saint*, and *I shall be damned*. Instead think these two thoughts: *I am a great sinner*, and *God is merciful*. Because

"The Good Parts"

strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. *You have not met Christ's dread judgment throne yet: seek each day to pursue more righteousness.*

12. The sum of our status as apprentice gods is this: Love men as made in the image of God, and work in time as the womb of eternity. Fulfill your apprenticeship with discipleship as best you are able. And follow God's lead in the great Dance, cooperating in synergy with his will. And know that lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The Arena

1. We stand in an arena, the great coliseum. For it is the apostles who were sent forth last, as if men condemned to die, made a spectacle unto the world, to angels and men.
2. St. Job was made like unto a champion waging war against Satan, on God's behalf. He lost everything and remained God-fearing, standing as the saint who vindicated God.
3. But all the saints vindicate God.
4. We are told as we read the trials in the Book of Job that Satan stands slandering God's saints day and night and said God had no saint worthy of temptation. And the Lord God Almighty allowed Satan to tempt St. Job.
5. We are told this, but in the end of the Scripture, even when St. Job's losses are repaid double, St. Job never hears. He never knows that he stands in the cosmic coliseum, as a champion on God's behalf. Never on earth does St. Job know the reason for the catastrophes that befell him.
6. St. Job, buffeted and bewildered, could see no rhyme or reason in what befell him. Yet even the plagues of Satan were woven into the plans of the Lord God who never once stopped working all things to good for this saint, and to the saint who remained faithful, the plagues of Satan are woven into the diadem of royal priesthood crowning God's saints.

7. Everything that comes to us is either a blessing from God or a temptation which God has allowed for our strengthening. The plagues by which Satan visited St. Job are the very means themselves by which God glorified his faithful saint.
8. Do not look for God in some other set of circumstances. Look for him in the very circumstances you are in. If you look at some of your circumstances and say, "God could not have allowed that!", you are not rightly accepting the Lord's work in the circumstances he has chosen to work his glory.
9. You are in the arena; God has given you weapons and armor by which to fight. A poor warrior indeed blames the weapons God has armed him with.
10. Fight therefore, before angels and men. The circumstances of your life are not inadequate, whether through God lacking authority, or wisdom, or love. The very sword blows of Satan glancing off shield and armor are ordained in God's good providence to burnish tarnishment and banish rust.
11. The Almighty laughs Satan to scorn. St. Job, faithful when he was stricken, unmasked the feeble audacity of the demons.
12. God gives ordinary providence for easy times, and extraordinary providence for hard times.
13. If times turn hard for men, and much harder for God's servants, know that this is ordained by God. Do not suppose God's providence came when you were young but not now.
14. What in your life do you wish were gone so you could be where you should be? When you look for God to train you in those very circumstances, that is the beginning of victory. That is already a victory won.
15. Look in every circumstance for the Lord to train you. The dressing of wounds after struggle is part of training, and so is live combat.
16. The feeble audacity of the demons gives every appearance of power, but the appearance deceives.
17. Nothing but your sins can wound you so that you are down. And even our sins are taken into the work of the Almighty if we repent.
18. When some trial comes to you, and you thank God, that is itself a victory.
19. Look for God's work here and now. If you will not let God work with you here and now, God will not fulfill all of your daydreams and then begin working with you; he will ask you to let him train you in the here and now.

20. Do you find yourself in a painfully rough situation? Then what can you do to lighten others' burdens? Instead of asking, "Why me?", ask, "Why not me?"
21. An abbot asked a suffering monk if he wanted the abbot to pray that his suffering be taken away. The disciple said, "No," and his master said, "You will outstrip me."
22. It is not a contradiction to say that both God has designs for us, and we are under the pressure of trials. Diamonds are only made through pressure.
23. No disciple is greater than his master. Should we expect to be above sufferings when the Son of God was made perfect through suffering?
24. Anger is a spiritual disease. We choose the path of illness all the more easily when we do not recognize that God seeks to train us in the situation we are in, not the situation we wish we were in.
25. It is easier not to be angry when we recognize that God knows what he is doing in the situations he allows us to be in. The situation may be temptation and trial, but was God impotent, unwise, or unloving in how he handled St. Job?
26. We do not live in the best of all possible worlds by any means. We live instead in a world governed by the best of all possible Gods. And that is the greater blessing.
27. Some very holy men no longer struggle spiritually because spiritual struggle has worked out completely. But for the rest of us, struggle is a normal state. It is a problem for you or I to pass Lent without struggle. If we struggle and stumble and fall, that is good news. All the better if we cannot see how the thrusts and blows of the enemy's sword burnish away a little rust, one imperceptible speck at a time.
28. Do you ask, "Did it have to hurt that much?" When I have asked that question, I have not found a better answer than, "I do not understand," and furthermore, "Do I understand better than God?"
29. We seek happiness on terms that make success and happiness utterly impossible. God destroys our plans so that we might have the true happiness that is blessedness.
30. Have a good struggle.
31. There is no road to blessedness but the royal road of affliction that befits God's sons. Consider it pure joy when you fall into different trials and temptations. If you have trouble seeing why, read the Book of James.

32. Treasures on earth fail. Treasures in Heaven are more practical.
33. Rejoice and dance for joy when men slander you and revile you and curse you for what good you do. This is a sign you are on the royal road; this is how the world heralds prophets and sons of God. This earthly dishonor is the seal of Heavenly honor.
34. If you have hard memories, they too are a part of the arena. Forgive and learn to thank God for painful memories.
35. Remember that you will die, and live in preparation for that moment. There is much more life in mindfully dying each day than in heedlessly banishing from your mind the reality. Live as men condemned to die, made a spectacle before men and angels.
36. Live your life out of prayer.
37. It takes a lifetime of faith to trust that God always answers prayers: he answers either "Yes, here is what you asked," or "No, here is something better." And to do so honestly can come from the struggle of praying your heart out and wondering why God seemed to give no answer and make no improvements to your and others' pain.
38. In the Bible, David slew Goliath. In our lives, David sometimes prevails against Goliath, but often not. Which is from God? Both.
39. Struggling for the greater good is a process of at once trying to master, and to get oneself out of the way. Struggle hard enough to cooperate with God when he rips apart your ways of struggling to reach the good.
40. Hurting? What can you do to help others?

Ask for the Ancient Ways

Readers familiar with my site might have read *Exotic Golden Ages and Restoring Harmony with Nature: Anatomy of a Passion*, which complains about attempts to resurrect the glory of ages past (and willing, to do so, break from a nearer past), such as the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, Vatican II's *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*, and perhaps I should have included neo-Paganism, on the assertion that they bring a decisive break with the recent past and ultimately from the older past they seek to resurrect as well. So what is my point about asking for the ancient ways now?

Simply this: the cyber-quarantine for Coronavirus has brought us to a newer and virtual way of doing things, and however much we may long for the real thing in the moment, they are in some cases convenient, above and beyond a field training exercise for the next level of virtual living.

When we can, we would do well to resume what we were doing, in for instance meeting with people face-to-face and perhaps driving to do so. I applaud Civil War re-enacting, not specifically as a means of resurrecting something long past, but because it is a kind of face-to-face meeting (and community!) that has been part of our present and that we would do well to resume. And participate in church life as you are able, and the door remains open. I am not at all impressed that my own governor has decided to keep churches closed, but in Orthodoxy there is a very simple rule: in matters pertaining to the Church, obey your bishop first and Caesar second. That is all. (I do not know other bishops' positions to comment on them, nor perhaps should I comment on them). My

own archbishop has said to obey the law and work within the quarantine, which has now included having online services and allow one person at a time to enter the cathedral building to receive communion. It is a hardship, perhaps, but the Orthodox position is very simple.

There is something ancient and beautiful in a real (not virtual) hug, a picnic on the lawn, seeing your co-workers face-to-face (some places are discovering remote work now, which gives people a private office such as has been banished from mainstream businesses, first for cubicles and then for open plan offices, and discovering that employees work remarkably better when they can hear themselves think, but this is a separate issue). In the "Old Technologies" section of *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, I wrote:

There is a Foxtrot cartoon where the mother is standing outside with Jason and saying something like, "This is how you throw a frisbee."—"This is how you play catch."—"This is how you play tennis." And Jason answers, "Enough with the historical re-enactments. I want to play some games!" (And there is another time when he and Marcus had been thrown out of the house and were looking at a frisbee and saying, "This is a scratch on the Linux RAID drive.")

I remember one time when I was visiting a friend, and his son and two best friends were holding close to each other and each playing a video game on a portable device. I'm not going to endorse video games, but I will comment that three little boys were having fun together face-to-face, and if they were all playing video games, they were still playing them face-to-face, friends like in time immemorial.

So some of the things we can do when the quarantine is relaxed (or lifted) include ordering a paper book from Amazon, reading it outside and putting it on a bookshelf and taking care of it so it is available afterwards, or driving to a new restaurant via GPS to have a meal together, or just go to church, or spending some days in the office face-to-face to maintain social connection with your co-workers. Note that I am commenting less on using or not using new technologies (but really it is also possible to do purely older things like take a stack of blank sheets of paper and hold a physical brainstorm about how to make paper airplanes, or origami—which I mention not because it is of Asian origins but because it is a recognized thing in my time and place). Or build something with Legos, old or new (I might comment that the decidedly new-school *Lego Mindstorms robots* offer a whole new dimension for creativity). What all of these share is that they are sharing something classic and organic, regardless of how much (or little) they use technology. Churches may have signs saying, "Cellphones that go off in the service will be dunked in holy water," but while some avoid or minimize

digital technology usage while fasting for the Eucharist, there is presently little policing of cellphone usage in getting to the church.

We have one more doors open, doors to something unclean. Perhaps now there is not legitimate choice, and if our bishops say "Obey the quarantine" we should obey the law. Those inclined to increasingly virtual life have had a good practice at handling things virtually, and so have those not so inclined. And there is something practically good, if not always in trying to recover long-lost glory, at very least at continuing in living traditions we know how to do, and to be able to get up from the new normal, get off our back ends, and reclaim ancient and still living glory that remains open to all of us, even if it turns out to be surprisingly more convenient not to drive (another technology) and meet people face-to-face.

For what it's worth...

An Author's Musing Memoirs: Retrospective Reflections, Retracings, and Retractions

Taking a second look at some of what I wrote

Dear Reader,

Years back, when I was a math grad student, I wrote a short essay entitled, *Why Study Mathematics?* The basic thought was connected with the general education math class I was taking, and it is not really an article for why to specialize in mathematics through intensive study, but why a more basic knowledge of math can be a valuable part of liberal arts education. Much like how I taught my class, I did not speak favorably of memorizing formulas—pejoratively called "mindless symbol manipulation" by mathematicians—but spoke of the beauty of the abstractions, the joy of puzzles and problem solving, and even spoke of mathematics as a form of weight lifting for the mind: if you can do math, I said, you can do almost anything. I was sincere in these words, and I believe my obscure little piece captures something that a lot of math students and faculty sensed even if they did not explain their assumption. Since then, there are some things I would say differently. Not exactly that I was incorrect in what I said, but I worked hard to climb a ladder that was leaning against the wrong building.

One famous author in software development, who wrote a big book about "software engineering", had said, "What gets measured gets improved," and began to express second thoughts about his gung-ho enthusiasm for measurement. He didn't

exactly take back his words of, "What gets measured gets improved," but he said that the most important things to understand are rarely things that are easy or obvious to measure: the mantra "What gets measured gets improved," is a mantra to ruthlessly optimize things that often are less important than you might think. His second thoughts went further: the words "software" and "engineering" have been joined at the hip, but however hard software developers have tried to claim to be engineers, what they do is very different from engineering: it's an apples and oranges comparison.

I would pretty well stand by the statement that if you can deal with the abstraction in math, you can deal with the abstraction in anything: whether chemistry, analytic philosophy, engineering, or sales, there isn't much out there that will call for more abstract thinking than you learn in math. But to pick sales, for instance, not many people fail in sales because they can't handle the deep abstraction. Sales calls for social graces, the ability to handle rejection, and real persistence, and while you may really and truly learn persistence in math, I sincerely doubt that mathematical training is a sort of industrial strength preparation for social graces and dealing with rejection. And even in engineering, social graces matter more than you might think; it's been said that being good at math gets you in the door, but social influence and effectiveness are what make a *real* superstar. I would still stand by a statement that if you can handle the abstraction in math, you can probably handle the abstraction in anything else. But I'm somewhat more wary of implying that if you have a mathematical mind, you just have an advantage for everything life may throw at you. *That's simply not true.*

There are some things I have written that I would like to take back, at least in part, but even where my works are flawed I don't believe mass deletions are the best response. I would rather write what might be called "Retractions and retracings" and leave them available with the original works. Why study Mathematics?, whatever its flaws, gives a real glimpse into the beauty that draws mathematicians to mathematics. I may be concerned with flaws here, but they are not the whole truth. However, there are some things I would like to comment on, some flaws to point out. In many cases, I don't believe that what I said is mainly wrong, but I believe it is possible to raise one's eyes higher.

HOW to HUG

Mathematics may be seen as a skill, but it can also be how a person is oriented: jokes may offer a caricature, but a caricature of something that's there. One joke tells of a mathematician who finds something at a bookstore, is delighted to walk home with a thick volume entitled *HOW to HUG*, and then, at home, is dismayed to learn he purchased volume 11 of an encyclopaedia. And I mention this as a then-mathematician who wrote "A Treatise on Touch," which may be seen as interesting, may be seen as

deep, and may have something in common with the mathematician purchasing a book so he could know how to hug.

Part of what I have been working on is how, very slowly, to become more human. This struggle is reflected in "Yonder," which is at its most literal a struggle of philosophers to reach what is human. There is an outer story of disembodied minds set in a dark science fiction world, who are the philosophers, and there is a story within a story, an inner story, of the tragic beauty of human life. When I showed it to a science fiction guru, he suggested that I cut the philosophical dialogues down by quite a bit. The suggestion had a lot of sense, and quite possibly a traditional publisher would want to greatly abbreviate the sections that he suggested I curtail. But I did not follow his advice, and I don't think this was just author stubbornness. When literature builds up to a success, usually the path to success is filled with struggles and littered with failures. This is true of good heroic literature, and for that matter a lot of terrible heroic literature as well. (Just watch a bad adventure movie sometime.) Yonder is a story that is replete with struggles and failures, only the failures of the disembodied minds have nothing to do with physical journeys or combat. They begin stuck in philosophy, mere philosophy, and their clumsy efforts to break out provide the failures, and therefore to greatly abridge the philosophical discussion would be to strip away the struggle and failure by which they reach success: a vision of the grandeur of being human. Like much good and bad literature, the broad sweep was inspired by *The Divine Comedy*, opening with a vision of Hell and building up to a view of our painful life as a taste of Heaven, and you don't tell *The Divine Comedy* faithfully if you replace the *Inferno* with a brief summary stating that there are some gruesome images and a few politically incorrect ideas about sin. The dark science fiction world and its mere philosophy provides the vision of Hell that prepares the reader to see the humanness of Heaven and the Heaven of humanness. The inner story can be told by itself; it is for that matter told independently in *A Wonderful Life*. But there is something in Yonder, as it paints the stark, dark, disturbing silhouette of the radiant, luminous splendor and beauty of human life.

While I was a math undergrad, I read and was deeply influenced by the *Tao Te Ching*; something of its influence may be seen in "The Way of the Way." That work has its flaws, and I may have drunk too deeply of Taoism, but there was a seed planted that I would later recognize in fuller forms in the Orthodox Way. I had in full my goals of studying and thinking, but I realized by the way that there was some value to be had in stillness. Later I would come to be taught that stillness is not an ornament to put on top of a tree; it is the soil from which the tree of life grows.

After I completed my studies in math, and having trouble connecting with the business world, I took stock, and decided that the most important knowledge of all was theology. I had earlier planned to follow the established route of being a mathematician until I was no longer any good for mathematics and then turning out second rate

theology. My plans shifted and I wanted to put my goal up front and, I told my pastor, "I want to think about theology in community." (If you are wincing at this, good.) So, in this spirit, I applied to several schools and began the study of academic theology. If you are an astute reader, I will forgive you if you ask, "But isn't this still a mathematician looking for a book on how to hug?" The goal I had, to teach at a university or even better train Orthodox priests at a seminary, was a laudable enough goal, and perhaps God will bless me with that in the future. Perhaps he wants the same thing, but perhaps God first wants to free me from the chain of being too much like a mathematician wanting to learn how to hug by reading a book.

During my time studying theology at Cambridge, I was received into the Orthodox Church. I am grateful to God for both a spiritual father whose lenience offered a corrective to my legalistic tendencies, and for a godfather who was fond of reading Orthodox loose cannons and who helped me see a great many things that were invisible to me at the time. For instance, I asked him for help on some aspect of getting my worldview worked out correctly, and I was caught off guard when he explained, "You aren't being invited to work out the Orthodox worldview. You're being invited to worship in the right glory of Orthodoxy, and you are being invited to walk the Orthodox way." In that sense Orthodoxy is not really a system of ideas to work out correctly that, say, a martial art: there may be good books connected to martial arts, but you learn a martial art by practicing it, and you learn Orthodoxy by practicing it. And in that response, my godfather helped me take one step further away from being a mathematician trying to find a book that will teach him how to hug. (He also gave me repeated corrections when I persisted in the project of trying to improve Orthodox practices by historical reconstruction. And eventually he got through to me on that point.)

Becoming Orthodox for me has been a matter of becoming really and truly human, or at least beginning to. There is a saying that has rumbled down through the ages in different forms: in the second century, St. Irenaeus wrote, "For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God." I have not read this in much earlier sources, but I have read many later phrasings: "God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that man and the sons of man might become gods and the sons of God." "The divine became human that the human might become divine." "The Son of God became a man that men might become the sons of God." And one real variation on this has been quoted, "Christ did not just become man so that I might become divine. He also became man that I might become a man."

If Christ became man that I might become human, this is manifest in a million ways in the Orthodox Church. Let me give one way. When I was preparing to be received

into the Orthodox Church, I asked my godfather some question about how to best straighten out my worldview. He told me that the Western project of worldview construction was not part of the Orthodox Way: I had been invited to walk the Orthodox Way but not work out the Orthodox worldview. If there is in fact an Orthodox worldview, it does not come from worldviewish endeavors: it arises out of the practices and life of the Orthodox Church, much in line with, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his perfect righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Not just corrections, but being caught off-guard by effectively being told, "Here are some of many rules; there is no need for you to know all of them. They are important, and you need to strive for strict excellence, but you are not treating them in the right spirit if you hold them rigidly and legalistically. (Work out with your priest how you will best bend them.)" The Orthodox Church's nature as essentially an oral tradition has helped cure me of silly things like meticulously studying ancient texts to put my mind to an antiquarian reconstruction and answer the question, "How should we live?" (The Orthodox Church is ancient, but it is not really infected with antiquarian reconstruction efforts.) The rhythm of the liturgy and its appointed seasons, the spiritual housecleaning involved with preparing for confession, the profoundly important community of the faithful: all of these are part of how it works out in the Orthodox Church that God became man not only so that I might become divine, but also so that I might become more truly man.

Part of this becoming human on my part also has to do with silence, or as Orthodox call it, hesychasm. Part of the disorder of life as we know it is that our minds are scattered about: worrying about this, remembering that pain, and in general not gathered into the heart. Mathematical training is a training in drawing the mind out of the heart and into abstract thinking. The word "abstract" itself comes from the Latin *abstrahere*, meaning to pull back (from concrete things), and if you train yourself in the habit of abstraction you pull yourself back from silence and from what is good about the *Tao Te Ching*.

In "Silence: Organic Food for the Soul," I all but closed with the words, "Be in your mind a garden locked and a fountain sealed," which speaks about having a mind that is gathered together and is in the fullest sense mind: which is not when abstract thinking is its bread and butter. Perhaps some of the saints' wisdom is abstract, but it does not come from building an edifice of abstractions.

The terms *intellect* and *mind* mean something very different in Orthodox classics than they do in today's English. The difference is as great as the difference between using *web* to mean a physical object woven out of spider's silk and *web* to mean interconnected documents and media available over the internet. Today you might say, "The intellect is what an IQ test measures." An Orthodox saint who had been asked might have said, "The intellect is where you meet God." The mind is an altar, and its

proper thought flows out of its being an altar: in Within the Steel Orb, a visitor from our world steps into a trap:

"And your computer science is pretty advanced, right? Much more advanced than ours?"

"We know things that the trajectory of computer science in your world will never reach because it is not pointed in the right direction." Oinos tapped the wall and arcs of pale blue light spun out.

"Then you should be well beyond the point of making artificial intelligence."

"Why on a million, million worlds should we ever be able to do that? Or even think that is something we could accomplish?"

"Well, if I can be obvious, the brain is a computer, and the mind is its software."

"Is it?"

"What else could the mind be?"

"What else could the mind be? What about an altar at which to worship? A workshop? A bridge between Heaven and earth, a meeting place where eternity meets time? A treasury in which to gather riches? A spark of divine fire? A line in a strong grid? A river, ever flowing, ever full? A tree reaching to Heaven while its roots grasp the earth? A mountain made immovable for the greatest storm? A home in which to live and a ship by which to sail? A constellation of stars? A temple that sanctifies the earth? A force to draw things in? A captain directing a starship or a voyager who can travel without? A diamond forged over aeons from of old? A perpetual motion machine that is simply impossible but functions anyway? A faithful manuscript by which an ancient book passes on? A showcase of holy icons? A mirror, clear or clouded? A wind which can never be pinned down? A haunting moment? A home with which to welcome others, and a mouth with which to kiss? A strand of a web? An acrobat balancing for his whole life long on a slender crystalline prism between two chasms? A protecting veil and a concealing mist? An eye to glimpse the uncreated Light as the world moves on its way? A rift yawning into the depths of the earth? A kairometer, both primeval and young? A—"

"All right, all right! I get the idea, and that's some pretty lovely poetry. (What's a kairometer?) These are all very beautiful metaphors for the mind, but I am interested in what the mind is literally."

"Then it might interest you to hear that your world's computer is also a metaphor for the mind. A good and poetic metaphor, perhaps, but a

metaphor, and one that is better to balance with other complementary metaphors. It is the habit of some in your world to understand the human mind through the metaphor of the latest technology for you to be infatuated with. Today, the mind is a computer, or something like that. Before you had the computer, 'You're just wired that way' because the brain or the mind or whatever is a wired-up telephone exchange, the telephone exchange being your previous object of technological infatuation, before the computer. Admittedly, 'the mind is a computer' is an attractive metaphor. But there is some fundamental confusion in taking *that* metaphor literally and assuming that, since the mind is a computer, all you have to do is make some more progress with technology and research and you can give a computer an intelligent mind."

That litany of metaphors summarizes much of my second master's thesis. Which is not really the point; but my point here is that on an Orthodox understanding, intellect is *not* something you measure by an IQ test and a mind is *not* the spitting image of a computer. The mind, rightly understood, finds its home in prayer and simple silence. The intellect is where one meets God, and its knowing flows out of its contact with God and with spiritual reality. And, in the metaphors of the Song of Songs, the mind as it is meant to be is "a garden locked, a fountain sealed", not spilled out promiscuously into worry, or grudges, or plans for the future that never satisfy. And this gathering together of the mind, this prayer of the mind in the heart, is one that was not proposed to me by my mathematical training.

Now I should mention that I have a lot to be grateful for as far as math goes. There are a lot of people who gave of themselves in my training; there are a lot of people who gave of themselves in the various math contests I was involved in. And, not to put too fine a point of it, I have a computer job now which is a blessing from God and in which I build on a strong mathematical foundation. It would be silly for me to say, "I am not grateful for this" as God has provided me many blessings through math. But I need to place things like "I have a lot of math awards" alongside what a monk said to a maid and to me: she was fortunate in the job she had, as manual labor that allowed her mind to pray as she was working in inner stillness, while I as a computer person was less fortunate because my job basically required me to be doing things with my mind that don't invite mental stillness. My job may be a profound blessing and something not to take for granted. But he was pointing out that the best jobs for spiritual growth may not be the ones higher on the pecking order.

A streak of escapism

There is a streak of escapism in much of my work. If you read *Within the Steel Orb*, I believe you will find insight expressed with wonder, and I would not take back any of that. But the wisdom, which is wisdom from here and now, is expressed as the alien wisdom of an alien world that panders to a certain escapism. Wisdom and wonder can be expressed without escapism; "Hymn to the Creator of Heaven and Earth" and "Doxology" both express wisdom and wonder in a way that does not need to escape from a disdained here and now. But there is a thread of escapism in much of my work, even as I have sought to reject it.

During or shortly after I was in high school, I wrote a note in an online forum arguing that *Terminator 2* had shot itself in the foot. The movie had a scene with two little boys angrily playing with toy guns and the voiceover complained about how tragic this was, and at the end the message was made even more explicit: "If a machine, a terminator, can learn the value of human life, maybe we can too." But the movie was an action-adventure movie, meaning a movie whose attraction was built on glorified violence with guns blazing. In terms of a movie that would speak out against violence, contrast it with a movie idea I had, for a movie that would rush along at an action-adventure clip for the first few minutes and then slow down like a European art film; from "Lesser Icons: Reflections on Faith, Icons, and Art:"

What I did do was to outline a film idea for a film that would start out indistinguishably from an action-adventure movie. It would have one of the hero's friends held captive by some cardboard-cutout villains. There is a big operation to sneak in and deftly rescue him, and when that fails, all Hell breaks loose and there is a terrific action-adventure style firefight. There is a dramatic buildup to the hero getting in the helicopter, and as they are leaving, one of the villain's henchmen comes running with a shotgun. Before he can aim, the hero blasts away his knee with a hollow-nosed .45.

The camera surprisingly does not follow the helicopter in its rush to glory, but instead focuses on the henchman for five or ten excruciating minutes as he curses and writhes in agony. Then the film slows down to explore what that one single gunshot means to the henchman for the remaining forty years of his life, as he nursed a spiritual wound of lust for vengeance that was infinitely more tragic than his devastating physical wound.

By contrast, it may be clearer what might be called shooting yourself in the foot in the *Terminator 2* syndrome, and as far as escapism goes, I have a couple of pieces that shoot themselves in the foot with something like a *Terminator 2* syndrome. In *The Voyage*, the miserable young Jason is an escapist and, when he meets an old man, asks the old man's help in an escape he doesn't believe is possible. The old man deftly opens Jason's eyes to the beauty of this world, the beauty of the here and now, that are simply invisible to him. I stand by everything I wrote in that regard. But the closing line, when thanks to the old man Jason triumphs over escapism, is, "And Jason entered another world." Which is to say that the story shot itself in the foot, like *Terminator 2*.

There may be a paradoxical link between escapism and self-absorption. Self-absorption is like being locked in your room and sensing that it is constricting, and so you wish that you could be teleported up to a spaceship and explore the final frontier, or maybe wish for a portal to open up that would take you to the Middle Ages or some fantasy world. And maybe you can get a bit of solace by decorating your room like someplace else and imagining that your room is that other place, and maybe you can pretend and do mind games, but they don't really satisfy. What you miss is what you really need: to unlock the door, walk out, visit a friend, go shopping, and do some volunteering. It may not be what you could arrange if you were controlling everything, but that's almost exactly the point. It may not what you want, but it is what you need, and it satisfies in a way that a quest to become a knight, at least in your imagination, cannot. And my own concerns to escape self-absorption and escapism play out in my writing: "The Spectacles" is more successful than "The Voyage" in telling of an escape from the Hell of self-absorption and escapism; I've been told it's my best short story. But it still has the imprint of self-absorption even as it tells of someone finding way out of self-absorbed escapism. And something of that imprint affects my writing: there are some good things about my fiction, but I have been told that my characters are too similar and are only superficially different. I do not think I will ever receive the kind of compliment given to Charles Dickens, that he envisions a complete universe of different characters. People may say that my satire like Hayward's *Unabridged Dictionary* shows a brilliant wit and is bitingly funny, but you can be pretty full of yourself and still write good satire. By contrast, it takes humble empathy to make a universe of characters worthy of Dickens.

A door slammed shut: God's severe mercy

I earned a master's in theology, and entered into a doctoral program. I thought for a long while about how to say something appropriate about that program, and I think the best I can do is this:

I've been through chemotherapy, and that was an experience: overall, it was not as bad as I feared, and I enjoyed life when I was going through chemotherapy. I still cherish *The Spectacles*, the first piece written after a long dry spell because I was drained by illness. I'm not sure it is a nice thing to have powerful cytotoxins injected into your body, and the rough spots included the worst hour of (purely physical) pain in my life, but on the whole, a lot of progress has been made in making chemotherapy not as bad as it used to be, and I had good people to care for me.

And then there are experiences that, to put it politely, put chemotherapy into perspective. My entering this doctoral program and trying to please the people there was one of those experiences into perspective: during that time, I contacted a dean and wrote, "I found chemotherapy easier than dealing with [a professor I believed was harassing me]," and received no response beyond a secretary's brush-off. After this ordeal, my grades were just below the cutoff to continue, and that school is not in any way going to give me nice letters of reference to let me finish up somewhere else. I suppose I could answer spam emails and get a diploma mill Ph.D., but I don't see how I am in a position to get the Ph.D. that I wanted badly enough to endure these ordeals.

And if I ask where God was in all this, the answer is probably, "I was with you, teaching you all the time." When I was in middle school, I ranked 7th in the nation in the 1989 MathCounts competition, and I found it obvious then that this was because God wanted me to be a mathematician. For that matter, I didn't go through the usual undergraduate panic about "What will I major in?" Now I find it obvious that God had something else in mind, something greater: discipleship, or sonship, which may pass through being a mathematician, or may not. Not straying too far from this, I wanted a Ph.D., and I thought that this would be the best way to honor him with my abilities. Again I was thinking too narrowly; I was still too much of the mathematician looking for a book to teach him how to hug; again the answer seemed to be, "That's not the issue. Aim higher and be my servant." As it turns out, I have four years' graduate work in theology; that has some use in my writings, and even if it didn't, the issue is not whether I am a good enough achiever, but whether I am faithful.

During this time I read quite a lot of medieval versions of the legends of King Arthur. There were a couple of things that drew me to them, both of them rather sad. The first was pride, both pride at thinking I was going to be an Arthurian author, and pride at sometimes reading medieval legends in the original.

But the second reason I kept reading them was that compared to what I was covering in theology class, reading the legends almost seemed like I was actually studying theology. (At least by comparison.) Whether a course in theological foundations that assumed, "We need to work from the common ground that is shared by all the world's religious traditions, and that universal common ground is Western analytic philosophy," or reading that theologians are scientists and they are every bit as

much scientists as people in the so-called "hard sciences" like physics, or a course in "philosophy and contemporary theology" that was largely about queer matters and such topics as ambiguous genitalia, the whole experience was like "Monty Python teaches Christian theology." And it would be a funny, if tasteless joke, but it was really something much more tragic than a Monty Python riff on theology. And in all this the Arthurian legends, which are really quite pale if they are held next to the grandeur of Christian theology, none the less seemed to give respite for me to study.

In the light of all this, there are three basic things that I wrote. The first is the Arthurian book I wanted to write out of all the medieval books I was reading:

- The Sign of the Grail

The second thing is a group of pieces that were written largely as rebuttals to things I ran into there. (The university was a "Catholic" university, so they were generous to us Orthodox and treated us like liberal Catholics.) I've had enough contact with Catholics outside that university; those pieces are not written just in response to being at a "Catholic" university.

- Dissent: Lessons From Being an Orthodox theology Student at a Catholic University
- An Open Letter to Catholics on Orthodoxy and Ecumenism
- Religion and Science Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution

I believe there is some merit in these pieces, but not that much: if they say something that needs to be said, they are limited to winning an argument. Theology can win an argument and some of the best theology is meant to win an argument, but the purpose of real theological writing is to draw people into the presence of God. These pieces may say something valuable, but they do not really do the job of theology: beckon the reader to worship before the throne of God.

But that leaves the third group of pieces written in the wake of that un-theological theology program, and that is precisely pieces which are written to draw the reader to bask in the glory of God. The ones I would pick as best are:

- Doxology
- God the Spiritual Father

- Lesser Icons: Reflections on Faith, Icons, and Art
- Silence: Organic food for the soul
- Technonomicon: Technology, Nature, Ascesis

So where does this leave me now?

I think I've made real progress but I still have a lot in common with that mathematician who bought a book so he could learn how to hug. Be that as it may, I have a lot to be thankful for.

I had my heart set on completing my program, but in 2005 I started a Ph.D. program that was estimated to take eight years to complete. And since then, the economy tanked. And in this, a gracious and merciful God didn't give me what I *wanted*, but what I *needed*. Actually, more than that. In the aftermath of the program, I took some anthropology and linguistics coursework which on the one hand confirmed that I was already good at learning languages (the woman who scored the Modern Languages Aptitude Test for me said, "I've scored this test for thirty years and I've never seen a score this high,") and on the other hand, paradoxically provided good remedial understanding of things I just didn't *get* about my own culture. And there's something I'd like to point out about that. God provided academic coursework to teach me some things that most people just pick up as they grow, and perhaps studying academic theology was what God provided to help me get on to something that is at once more basic, greater, and more human: entering the Orthodox Church, and entering real, human theology.

But back to after the anthropology courses. Then the economy took a turn for the worse, and I found a good job. Then the economy got worse than that, and my job ended, and I had my fast job hunt yet and found an even better than that. There's no way I'm entitled to this; it is God's gracious providence at work. These are blessings covered in the divine fingerprints.

I still have failings to face: rather spectacular failings which I'd rather not detail. And it God's grace that I am still learning of my clumsiness and my sin, and realize I really need to face ways I don't measure up. But that is really not the issue.

Does God work with flawed people?

Who else does he have to work with?

He has glorious, majestic, awesome, terrifying holy angels. But there is another glory when God works in and through flawed people.

Even the sort of mathematician who would read a book on how to hug (or maybe write one). The worst of our flaws is like an ember thrown into the ocean of God's transforming power.

And the same God wills to work in you, whatever your flaws may be.

Much love,
Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward

"Belabored Inclusive Language" and "Naturally Inclusive Language"

A long-lost letter to the editor

There was a letter to the editor I wrote long ago and have tried and failed to find. It did not seem to come up in a search on the magazine that printed it; but I do not fault the magazine or its website because I also could not find it in my Gmail archives. My Gmail account is over a decade old, but the core conversation was a couple of years before I opened my Gmail account.

What I essentially said was as follows:

The common terminology of "inclusive language" and "exclusive language" is loaded language and harsh, exclusive language... It would be better to speak of "belabored inclusive language" and "naturally inclusive language."

Confidence and timidity

When I was on one consulting gig at a prestigious client, political correctness in language was present but not enforced. What I mean by that is this: *I heard both the old style and the new style of language*. I never heard someone get even a little upset at someone using "he" in an inclusive way, but there was a good chunk of my colleagues who used *naturally inclusive language* (N.B. including some immigrants), and a good chunk of my colleagues who used *belabored inclusive language*).

When people spoke in *naturally inclusive language*, without exception it was bold, confident, assured. And they did not seem to be thinking about being confident; they seemed to be quite undistracted in making whatever point they wanted to make.

When men at very least spoke (I don't clearly remember a woman speaking in anything but *naturally inclusive language*, although that was probably included), there was a timidity and a bad kind of self-consciousness. Even a divided attention. A man saying "they" for a single person of unspecified sex always had a question on his face of "Is this un-sexist enough?" Even men who were current with the *belabored inclusive language* of political correctness as it existed then had a perennial distracted question on their faces of, "Have I done enough?" with significant doubt as to any definite and positive answer.

This kind of divided mind is not especially good for business communication, or non-business communication for that matter.

Feminists don't even use inclusive language

Feminism is a bazaar not a cathedral, and one can find a mainstream feminist classic saying that "all the central terms [in feminism] are up for grabs" (and, presumably, one could also find numerous disagreements to those words). Even the term "feminism" may appear dated when this work is new; as of classes a decade ago feminism was working on a far-reaching rebranding as "gender studies", and I tolerate both that this work's treatment of feminism will likely appear dated in five or ten years, and for that matter might have appeared dated to feminist readers ten years ago. However, as no form of feminism that has emerged that I am aware of has yet been stable, I am not particularly interested in endlessly updating a minor work to keep up with fashions.

My point is this. I have read feminists at length. I have spoken with people and met its live form. I have taken a graduate course in feminist theology. One of my advisors was big enough in egalitarian circles to be a plenary speaker at Christians for "Biblical" Equality. And I have yet to read a feminist author use inclusive language. Ever.

How?

What do I mean by that?

The essential feminist bailiwick, the area of primary feminist concern, is members of the human species and the human race, *Homo sapiens*, who are female, for the entirety of life, from whenever life is considered to begin, to whenever life is considered to end.

And the universal feminist-used term for a member of this bailiwick is not "human female" or "female human." It is "woman."

Do you see something odd?

Without imposing nearly so great a reform program to create a politically correct English, we have a mainstream English term that begins and ends neatly where the bailiwick begins and ends, and a pronoun that works perfectly: "she." This amounts to a much smaller shift in language than migrating from "man-hours" to "work-hours", "waiter" or "waitress" to "server" and "waitstaff", and selling "five-seat licenses," a term which engenders considerable confusion about what part of the body most makes us human. By contrast, even cattle have historically been given enough dignity to be counted by the head. "Head" may be taken to have an undesired second meaning now, but couldn't we at least be counted by the spine?

But every single feminist author I've read is content to refer to the entire bailiwick as "women."

"Woman," age-wise, is not inclusive language. It refers to adults alone, according to the shallow view of communication, and if "man" excludes "woman", "woman" excludes "female children."

It happens that feminist authors, at least for a present discussion, will talk about human females who are seniors and cope with issues about aging, or girls in math classes (classes which seem to always being given an 'F'). And if a feminist author is writing about minors alone, she may refer to the human females in question as "girls." But I have yet to read a feminist source of any decade use any other term at all for any member of the whole bailiwick. The sense is that when you write "woman," female minors are spoken for. There is no felt need to specify "women and girls" (or, to perhaps pursue a familiar logic, "girls and women") when the group of females in question is mixed and includes minors. Nor, as far as principles and general approach, is there any concept that a good solution for adult women might be misguided if applied to minors. There might be storms of protest at some strain of literature that says, "A man should watch his step carefully all the days of his life," and the required, and almost hysterical, allegation placed that the author in question had not conceived of any advice that considers women, and this hysterical enough allegation may be accompanied by ostensible clarification that the text should only be quoted as "A man [Sic] should watch his [Sic] step carefully all the days of his [Sic] life." But there is no uproar, there is not a whisper of dissent, when discussions of "women" are taken to obviously fully include girls unless excluded by context such as discussion of distinctively senior needs.

If you look at feminist use of the term "woman", with blindingly obvious concern for all human females, you have a remarkably good working model for how a good, naturally inclusive language might function.

The Best Things in Life are Free

1. The Best Things in Life are Free.
2. The Best Things in Life are Free. But what does this mean?
3. The Best Things in Life are Free. But we do not understand the truth of these words if we think they are filled out by hugs and friendship, or even love: If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.
4. A better lens comes from the condemnation of the Pharisees: Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. You blind Pharisee! first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean.
5. It appears in Orthodoxy that the outside of the chalice is all feasts and beautiful liturgies, even during Lent: but on the inside is all repentance, deprivation and hardship, and being blindsided by rebukes. All of this falls under "The Best Things in Life are Free," the one as much as the other.
6. Well enough it may be said that sin is the forerunner of sorrow: The wages of sin is death, and that death's sorrow begins here and now. Sin ultimately kills pleasure: It takes humility to enjoy even pride. It takes sobriety to enjoy even drunkenness. It takes chastity to enjoy even lust.

7. But this is not all. The outside of the cup is beautiful and its beauty is true and real. But the real treasure is inside. Repentance is a spiritual awakening; it terrifies because it seems that when we repent we will lose a shining part of ourselves forever, but when we repent we suddenly realize, "I was holding on to a piece of Hell!" and are free to flee the stench. What feast compares to the grandeur of real repentance?
8. The Great High Priest said, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. The Best Things in Life are Free, and this pruning is a very big free gift.
9. It is when we are cleansed inside the cup that the outside is clean. Let Christ cleanse us inside the cup, and then inside and outside will both bear proper fruit.
10. The things in life that are free are persecutions, and we have on the highest authority: Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.
11. St. Paul goes so far to say, But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering.
12. We may approach the outside of the chalice first, but it is a loss to stop there. We need the joyful sorrow of compunction and all that is within the chalice, and then what is on the outside of the chalice will be clean, and what is more, will reach its proper stature.
13. Every day take a little less, and pare down a little more. The Fathers do warn, "Do not engage in warfare beyond your strength," and the praxis is to crawl before we try to walk. But The Way of the Ascetic pares down, little by little, in humor, in luxury, in eating for a purpose other than nourishment, and aims to have none of it left.

14. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. And by faith we wean ourselves even from a life centered on innocent pleasures, knowing that they do not hold a candle to the spiritual pleasure that is inside the chalice.
15. The cutting of of one's own will is free. And it is the experience of monasticism that this is one of the best things in life: a monk's will is cut off, not for the primary benefit of his brother monks, but for his own benefit. And the voluntary and involuntary cutting off of one's will extends far outside the monastery. It is one of the best things in life, whether we accept it as a blessing or resent it because we do not wish to grow up in the spiritual life.
16. Do you wish that this chalice be taken from you? Christ prayed the same, but he also prayed, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." For some prayers are impossible.
17. There are two answers to prayer: "Yes," and "No, please ask for something better." St. James writes, You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Passions are sinful habits that warp us, and when we ask for something to satisfy our passions, God only ever says "No" because he wants better for us.
18. Those things that are obviously good are nothing compared to the terrible goods: the gilded artwork outside the chalice is beautiful enough, but it is nothing next to what is inside the chalice.
19. The Maximum Christ wishes the maximum for our lives, and that comes through repentance and the royal road of affliction.
20. Rejoice and dance for joy when men slander you and revile you and curse you for Christ's sake. This is a sign you are on the royal road; this is now the world heralds prophets and sons of God. This earthly dishonor is the seal of Heavenly honor.
21. No one can harm the man who does not injure himself. Nor can any circumstance. So therefore let us not be governed by circumstances, or think the less of our God when he allows us rougher circumstances.

22. We do not live in the best of all possible worlds, but there is another shoe to drop. We live in a world governed by the best of all possible Gods, and that is a greater good.
23. Perhaps we are entering a time of struggle. (Entering?) Perhaps we are seeing the end of exceptionally prosperous and easy days we have no right reason to expect. The same truths apply. The same God who reigns in easy times, reigns in hard times.
24. "Give us this day our daily bread:" it is normal not to know where your next meal is from.
25. The arm of the Lord is more visible, not less, in hard times. God's providence is stronger when you know you need it.
26. The chalice offered us indeed looks easy on the outside but is full of pain within. But the sufferings are part of the treasure. And the best things in life reach deeper than the golden ornaments that belong on the outside, but extend to the joyful sadnesses within. Those who shed at least some entertainment and seek repentance and compunction for their sins find repentance an awakening and compunction to be joyful and cleansing. And that is not all. Everything inside the cup runs deep. And everything inside the cup is free.
27. The divine sovereignty is never purchased at the expense of human freedom. Human freedom is limited, but this is not where divine sovereignty comes from. The divine sovereignty has the last word after every creaturely choice has been made, and the divine sovereignty shapes joy after every draught of the inexhaustible cup.
28. The joy of the best things in life is not purchased at the expense of the chalice of suffering. Suffering is limited, but this is not something the divine sovereignty is purchased from. The divine sovereignty has the last word after every creaturely suffering has been entered, and the divine sovereignty leaves people in a better place than had they not met their sufferings.
29. The divine life is now. The divine energies are now. Not later, once some difficulties are resolved, but now.

30. In ancient times the holiday of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection were celebrated together; even now there is not a separation between them, and we speak of a three-day Pascha. There is no real separation between bearing a cross and being crowned with a crown, even if it takes time to gain the eyes of faith to see such things.
31. Orthodox are iconodules, but God is both iconodule and iconoclast: he takes things in our life and makes them icons of himself, and he also keeps on destroying and removing things to make us more free to breathe. Heaven and Hell are both inside us, and God seeks to inhabit Heaven inside of us and uproot Hell.
32. God the Father is the maker of all things visible and invisible. God is spirit, and even among created things the first excellence belongs to the invisible. Who can buy or sell invisible things? This is one reason the best things in life are free.
33. In the Incarnation, Heaven kissed earth and the visible now has a share in the excellence of the invisible. But still if a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned: the sale of relics is forbidden.
34. Do you believe the best things in life are free? Excellent, but the demons believe—and shudder. Do you live as if the best things in life are free?
35. It is more blessed to give than receive. What do you have to give?
36. If you covet something and you gain it, it will bring misery once the pleasure melts away, and the greater the covetousness, the greater the misery. Covetousness is the inverse of what is inside the cup.
37. We want to have things our way. But the Lord has other plans. And what we will find if we yield is that he has other plans for us that are not what we would have chosen, but are far better. This is at once an easy and a hard thing to do.
38. In the Bible a chalice is both a cup of suffering to drink and a cup which fills with excellent joy. The suffering is as bad as we fear—no, worse— but if we drink of it we will be drinking of the very best things in life. The divine life in the chalice immeasurably eclipses the gilt ornament outside of it. Remembrance of death, compunction, and repentance dig deeper than the music of liturgy.

39. The best things in life are not just an ornament for when our material needs are well taken care of. It is true ten times more that they are lifeblood in hard times and harder times. And the chalice is inexhaustible.

40. The Best Things in Life are Free.

Beware of Geeks Bearing Gifts

Why did we call ourselves the Katana? It was in the excitement of a moment, and a recognition that our project has some off the elegance of a Katana to a Japan fan. We were more current than today's fashions and for that matter *made* today's fashions, but representing an unbroken tradition since Plato's most famous work, what they call the world's oldest, longest, least funny, and least intentional political joke: *The Republic*. Things would have been a lot easier if it weren't for them. *They* obstructed the Katana.

The Katana have a dynamic thousand-or-so goals, but there is only one that counts: the relentless improvement of the Herd. Some of the older victories have really been improving agriculture what seems like thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold, with mechanized engineering for farming and a realization that you can have meat costing scarcely more than vegetables if you optimize animals like you'd optimize any other machine, under conditions that turn out to be torture for farm animals. There are some lands where the Herd has been imbued with enough progress that the middle class has about as many creature comfort as there is to be had, and for that matter among the poor the #1 dietary problem is obesity. Maybe we made the Herd look more like pigs, but please do not *blame* us! *We* aren't eating that much!

And we are altruists through and through.

We have been providing the Herd with progressively greater "space-conquering technologies", as they are sold, which neuter the significance of their having physical bodies and the structure of life that was there before us. First we gave gasoline-powered Locomotives and great Aerobirds, devices that could move the meat of the human body faster. Now we are unfolding another wave of body-conquering technologies, which

obviate the need to move meat. They are powered by a kind of unnatural living thing. Perhaps the present central offering in this horn of plenty, or what we present as a horn of plenty, is a Portal: a small device carried by many even in the poorest lands, that draws attention to itself and such stimulation it offers, disengaging from ancient patterns of life.

Things would be so much easier if it weren't for them. We tried to tell people that they hate women; now we've told people that they hate gays. They still get in the way of progress.

Yesterday there was a planned teleconference, a town hall among the Katana after an important document from them had been intercepted. It was encrypted with a flawed algorithm, but cryptanalysis is easy and semantics is hard, and we gave the document to the semanticians for analysis.

The title of the document was straightforward and one that the Katana was happy to see: "How to Serve Man". But the head semantician came late, and his face was absolutely ashen. It took him some time to compose himself, until he said—"The book... How to Serve... How to Serve Man... *It doesn't contain one single recipe!*"

[With apologies to Damon Knight, To Serve Man.]

Beyond the Unbearable Lightness of Non-Being

Dark: How did he explain things? Was he bitter?

Light: Oddly, no. Or someone who knew him better than I did would say, "Obviously, no." He was too busy living, "Christ is risen!"

When he was asked why he was a prisoner in the camps that served as role models for Nazi death camps, he said, "I violated the rules of my profession." When he asked how, he said, "There was a new rule in place that I needed a permit to celebrate a marriage. And the officials were really dragging their heels, and people were assembled, a pig had been slaughtered, and still no permit came, the bride looked up at me and said, 'You baptized me. Why can't you marry me?' And so I married the couple, which was now an act of professional misconduct, and I became a prisoner for my professional misconduct." He also made some effort to make light-hearted excuses for the soldiers who destroyed his beehives; he apparently felt sorry for them.

And now we've left the older new rules of marriage in the dust; the new rules of his profession now are that people stand six feet apart in a

service, and not more than ten people may attend, and not only for marriage, but all new services. The ancient pattern of worship, among Orthodox, heretics, pagans, all others of meeting together to worship are set aside for Hindu as much as Christian.

Dark: But don't we have promise of technology? A chicken in every pot, really?

Light: We have delivered, if you will, a tofu virtual chicken in every pot. Tofu is not a new invention, even if it is a form of plant protein. There are several cultures that have refined a proper use, and they invariably consume it in limited measure and never as a replacement for meat!

Dark: And there is a world to be said there. You do not know what a sacrament simple face-to-face conversation is until you have abhorrently grasped telepresence, until you have grasped relating to others in no way but tofupresence telepresence.

Light: So it is.

Dark: It is, and is not, a matter of technology. Perhaps one could say that it is centered on technology once one has stepped into and embraced the illusion. Dorothy Sayers, our close contemporary, speaks largely in the past about the framing of things that finds that "ideas, like machines, grow rust and need to be replaced," but she could almost as well have been writing about the future.

The business book *Good to Great*, which has been critiqued on various grounds as a book in business, is in fact a book in business with little pretension to be anything else, including spiritual gurudom. But it comments that actors in successful companies tend to downplay and de-emphasize technological advances even when they were being praised for groundbreaking advances. It commented, and pointedly not as a point about Einstein, that Einstein was Time Magazine's Person of the Century; relativity on his claim would have come within five or ten years without him, and the fact that Einstein eclipses Mother Theresa among Man of the Year laureates says nothing about Einstein (or Mother Theresa) and everything about us.

The book does not particularly talk about World War I showing off the U.S.'s mechanized new army and trying and failing to catch a Mexican bandit who was harassing Californians; it does talk about Vietnam and makes the case that "Our cool gadgets will win the war for us" has never in history been a real military strategy, or at least not the kind that can win wars.

Moreover, we keep getting installments of the new normal. It's like George Orwell's *1984* in which the realization sweeps past that Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia.

In technology, there has been a widespread phenomenon of things becoming obsolete. CFL's are particularly interesting in that they were promoted on environmental grounds, were much more environmentally toxic than their predecessors, and we could have just used LED's a few years later. But this particular version of "Out with the old, in with the new" was not the classic obsolescence where oil lamps couldn't compete with electric light in the marketplace. And what is going on is rapid social change that is sliding over the line, or has already slid, from a technology transition where oil lamps mostly disappeared because they couldn't compete with incandescent bulbs, to a transition that is mandated in the next installment, where the dead hand of government intervention and not the invisible hand of the free market enforced the transition.

After a certain point, you didn't just include white people in pictures; there was an unspoken rule about other races being represented. Then, as one more installment of the new normal, some of the women were wearing hijabs. Sometime along the way came the first size 22 supermodel, and then the astonishing sight of swimsuit models with a medically healthy weight. As another installment, if you are going to do weddings, you have to do queer ones too. And this present installment looks very dubiously about one quarantine among others that will be wholly lifted once it has served its purpose. This quarantine is different in that it cuts presence but not telepresence; things must be passed through the funnel of tofupresence, and this is not the same.

Light: Truly you have a dizzying grasp of the situation.

Dark: But wait until I get going! Can you say anything like this?

Light: Three words known to the priest: "Christ is risen!" whether he had the faintest need to say them or not.

He lost a beehive that never really was his to begin with. Must he lose his temper too?

Such might St. John say after a failure, the St. John Chrysostom who wrote, *A Treatise to Prove that Nothing Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*. His colleague St. Basil the Great played a similar sibilant tune, when a prefect was sent to intimidate him:

The emperor Valens, mercilessly sending into exile any bishop who displeased him, and having implanted Arianism into other Asia Minor provinces, suddenly appeared in Cappadocia for this same purpose. He sent the prefect Modestus to Saint Basil. He began to threaten the saint with the confiscation of his property, banishment, beatings, and even death.

Saint Basil said, "If you take away my possessions, you will not enrich yourself, nor will you make me a pauper. You have no need of my old worn-out clothing, nor of my few books, of which the entirety of my wealth is comprised. Exile means nothing to me, since I am bound to no particular place. This place in which I now dwell is not mine, and any place you send me shall be mine. Better to say: every place is God's. Where would I be neither a stranger and sojourner (Ps. 38/39:13)? Who can torture me? I am so weak, that the very first blow would render me insensible. Death would be a kindness to me, for it will bring me all the sooner to God, for Whom I live and labor, and to Whom I hasten."

The official was stunned by his answer. "No one has ever spoken so audaciously to me," he said.

"Perhaps," the saint remarked, "that is because you've never spoken to a bishop before. In all else we are meek, the most humble of all. But when it concerns God, and people rise up against Him, then we, counting everything else as naught, look to Him alone. Then fire, sword, wild beasts and iron rods that rend the body, serve to fill us with joy, rather than fear."

Reporting to Valens that Saint Basil was not to be intimidated, Modestus said, "Emperor, we stand defeated by a leader of the Church."

Light: And perhaps this is helpful in viewing civil liberties that have never been ours to begin with; it's been easily decades that libertarians have worn T-shirts with the text of the Bill of Rights, on top of them stamped, VOID WHERE PROHIBITED BY LAW.

The attitude of a priest or a heirarch may be most fitting within Church authorities, but none of this is marked "for Church authorities only." The treasure is available to you and me, not just saints.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky took on the problem of evil, and he had no faint desire to water down his opponent's position to be easier to fight. He tried to state the case for evil as strongly as possible, and some of the book's inwards are gruesome. But the end shows a light touch in which good has triumphed all along. It is a bit like the Book of Job, where Satan tears off layer after layer of what Job can claim, to show that there is nothing inside, and then God peels off the nothing and shows that everything is inside. Some people think the book ends more strongly if Job does not in the end receive double for what has been taken, and Job just meets God. God disagrees. However, the position is worth mentioning because when Job loses his children and refuses to curse God, and then loses his health and refuses to curse God, this is as such victory. Job stands as a champion for God before the Slanderer, and the Slanderer's defeat begins as he acts on permission to harm Job, and God wins in his champion's response.

You are, I believe, one born in the Evangelical tradition?

Dark: Yes; I was received as a reconciled heretic. I have repented at length.

Light: I hope you have not repented of the fervor of faith or devoted study of the divine oracles of Scripture, but instead found a deeper root for what you only possessed in part.

And what do you believe about reconstructing the Early Church?

Dark: It is a cottage industry needed by Evangelicals, but entirely absent in the Early Church.

Light: You have answered well. You do well to have repented, but may I suggest something?

His Eminence Metropolitan KALLISTOS in *The Orthodox Church*, suggests that Orthodox Christians today may be in a position more like the Early Church than has since happened in history. And the suggestion has more *gravitas* now.

One finding in Church history, frustrating to some people today, was that at least some Roman persecution of the Church was not rightly understood simply as persecution of the Christian Church as such. There were, it was perceived, a sprawling bazaar's worth of corrupting religious influences, and Christians were not always persecuted under a conception of Christianity. Christianity was sometimes not seen as distinct, but somewhat more like a department of New Age's sprawl.

The saints' lives record, and there is no real reason for a scholar to find this impossible, that when Christians refused to bow deeply before the idol, officials asked if they would just give a pinch of incense. Now this may have been what it seemed in temptation, and in my thought it is a possible injected in the officials' minds by the diabolic host. However, the officials at least sometimes just wanted compliance, and hardly really wanted to make martyrs.

Furthermore, there is a social chasm surrounding holidays of pagan deities. Almost everybody in an area would be excited at a holiday, and Christians were saying something effectively inconceivable. In Chicago in recent years, there was a billboard showing the Chicago Bears and saying, "You're a fan or you're a tourist," and there was tremendous enthusiasm with people happily paying thousands of dollars for tickets for when the Cubs won the World Series. The position of the Early Christian communicating with pagans was, in some measure, what the position would be in Chicago when the Bears, Bulls, Hawks, or Cubs were doing some spectacular winning, and refused on principle to say a word of enthusiasm about either team. I do not otherwise wish to compare sports fandom to idolatry, but this may be suggested: that refusing on principle to give an

inch's participation to a merry and pleasant holiday may not be something pagans conceived or rejected; in some cases it may be something they couldn't be able to conceive of as something one *could* reject.

Now when victories are made by gay rights, there is a clear and distinct case of opposition and a change of society, but the Christian who does not see such things as obvious improvements may run into some level of the "You're a fan or you're a tourist" syndrome. *That* one disagrees may be communicable; the *substance* or even *nature* of the disagreement is harder to convey even if it were to queerly meet a sympathetic ear.

And pan-eroticism is not just another point of contact between our time and that of the Early Church; it is one of many false forms of living. The ascendancy of tofupresence makes for Christianity like under Roman paganism; so for that matter does the ascendancy of Islam.

But in all this there is something easy to forget. When, under Rome, Constantine ended the persecution against Christians, saints complained that easy times rob the Church of her treasures. It is said that the faithful need temptations in order to be saved. And whether or not we are the New Early Christians matters surprisingly little. We are under the care of an awesome God, and Heaven is wherever the saints are. Even if our priest does get arrested for marrying a youth and maiden without the required permit.

And that is why even know, when the blows are coming, and the Antichrist keeps knocking at the door, there is nothing to fear where we are. For the Christians there is no Antichrist, only Christ, who is ever risen and ever alive.

Christ is risen! The story of the Passion is long and detailed. And three words, "Christ is risen!" peel off the nothing and show that everything is inside. The Antichrist is knocking at the door; I know that as well as you. But then Christ will triumph, and an eternal glory will come next to which the worst persecutions of the Antichrist do not possess a shadow that is measurable at all.

Christ is risen!

Branding is the New Root of All Evil

I would like to talk about something I am grateful to my parents for. From a very young age, my parents tried to free me from advertising's allure and the sacramental shopping of buying into brands. This did not, at least immediately, stop me from telling my parents I needed to have shoes or whatnot for which I had seen a really well-done ad, but it did take root, enough so that I was unpleasantly surprised when reading in a high school science class how in recording duplicable detail for a science experiment, the brand and model of all scientific equipment should be recorded among other details to try to give a scientific reader the ability to reproduce the experiment.

This may have been an oversight, and I don't think my parents would have failed to see a legitimate exception if they had been posed the question, but my parents gave me a head start on something I would carry for life.

Where did branding come from, anyway?

Before there was really a brand economy, at least some cattle owners would brand animals with a hot branding iron to make a mark that would make it clear whose property a given bovine was. However, this is not at least in its form what we know as branding. There is an unsexy practice today that carries on branding cattle: in the business world, it is seen as due diligence to attach a label to equipment saying "Property of ABC Corporation," and maybe add a serial number, and maybe add that there is a permanent, indelible mark under the sticker that police could trace. And perhaps corporate legal counsel would see this designation of property to be desirable as

a matter of course, but this "brand" is not branding in the sense of today's advertisements; the brand (in today's sense) would be Apple, HP, or whoever else made a corporate asset. Perhaps no one really needs to put an equipment tag so it covers the manufacturer's logo and says "I'm hiding who made this, to better claim it as OUR company's property now." And perhaps no marketer's counsel was sought in the design of these branding asset tags; their job is to keep and maintain the company's brand, or a product's or the line of product, consistently presented and sold to the general public. Marketers do not normally need to make corporate property asset tags tell their company's brand story so customers can better relate, any more than they normally feel the need to make markerboard markers or pads of paper tell their company's brand story.

And what is wrong with branding, anyway?

I once told an economist that he didn't understand money.

I was not much older than 20 at the time, so right time to be brash and arrogant, but I maintain my position.

What I stated then was that economics was a well-developed answer to the wrong question. The wrong question it addresses is, "How can a culture be manipulated so as to maximize economic endeavors?" when the question it should be asking is, "How can an economy best support a beneficial culture?" He answered, "We take people's desires for granted."

That response was a party line, was almost certainly entirely sincere, and was almost certainly entirely wrong. Somewhere in there I adapted a famous question: "Was economic wealth created for man, or man for economic wealth?"

The entire enterprise of marketing and a brand economy tacitly acknowledges that people's natural greed will not stimulate enough purchases to meet the economy's needs. Advertising isn't reining in the horse of love of money and things. It isn't even laying the reins on the horse's neck. It's kicking the horse in the side with your spurs as hard as you can kick.

I remember a later conversation where a professor echoed back what he heard me saying, and said, "So you're an anti-capitalist?" and I winced. Usual objections to capitalism are Marxist in character and critique capitalism from the left. There is also a conservative vein of anti-capitalism, the perspective that motivated Dorothy Sayers to write "The Other Six Deadly Sins," in which Sayers complains, "A man may be greedy and selfish; spiteful, cruel, jealous, and unjust; violent and brutal; grasping, unscrupulous, and a liar; stubborn and arrogant; stupid, morose, and dead to every noble instinct—and still we are ready to say of him that he is not an immoral man." I quote at length what she wrote in the context of a rationed World War II England, because copies of titles with the essay are rare on Amazon:

Let us seize this breathing space [about gluttony in its crassest form], while we are out of temptation, to look at one very remarkable aspect of the sin of [gluttony]. We have all become aware lately of something very disquieting about what we call our economic system. An odd change has come over us since the arrival of the machine age. Whereas formerly it was considered a virtue to be thrifty and content with one's lot, it is now considered to be the mark of a progressive nation that it is filled with hustling, go-getting citizens, intent on raising their standard of living. And this is not interpreted to mean merely that a decent sufficiency of food, clothes, and shelter is attainable by all citizens. It means much more and much less than this. It means that every citizen is encouraged to consider more, and more complicated, luxuries necessary to his well-being. The gluttonous consumption of manufactured goods had become, before [World War II], the prime civic virtue. And why? Because machines can produce cheaply only if they produce in vast quantities; because unless the machines can produce cheaply nobody can afford to keep them running; and because, unless they are kept running, millions of citizens will be thrown out of employment, and the community will starve.

We need not stop now to go round and round the vicious circle of production and consumption. We need not remind ourselves of the furious barrage of advertisements by which people are flattered and frightened out of a reasonable contentment into a greedy hankering after goods that they do not really need; nor point out for the thousandth time how every evil passion—snobbery, laziness, vanity, concupiscence, ignorance, greed—is appealed to in these campaigns. Nor how unassuming communities (described as backward countries) have these desires ruthlessly forced on them by their neighbors to find an outlet for goods whose market is saturated. And we must not take up too much time in pointing out how, as the necessity to sell goods in quantity becomes more desperate, the people's appreciation of quality is violently discouraged and oppressed. You must not buy goods that will last too long, for production cannot be kept going unless the goods wear out, or fall out of fashion, and so can be thrown away and replaced with others.

If a man invents anything that would give lasting satisfaction, his invention must be bought up by the manufacturer so it may never see the light of day. Nor must the worker be encouraged to take too much interest in the thing he makes; if he did, he might desire to make as well as it can be made, and that would not pay. It is better that he should work in a soulless indifference, even though such treatment should break his spirit and cause

him to hate his work. The difference between the factory hand is that the craftsman lives to do the work he loves; but the factory hand lives by doing the work he despises. We know about all this and must not discuss it now, but I will ask you to remember it.

The point I want to make now is this: that whether or not it is desirable to keep up this fearful whirligig of industrial finance based on gluttonous consumption, it could not be kept up for a single moment without the cooperating gluttony of the consumer. Legislation, the control of wages and profits, the balancing of exports and imports, elaborate schemes for the distribution of surplus commodities, the state ownership of enterprise, complicated systems of social credit, and finally wars and revolutions are all invoked in the hope of breaking down the thing known as the present economic system. Now it may well be that its breakdown would be a terrific disaster and produce a worse chaos than that which went before—we need not argue about it. The point is that, without any legislation whatsoever, the whole system would come crashing down if every consumer were voluntarily to restrict purchases to the things really needed. "The fact is," said a workingman the other day at a meeting, "that when we fall for these advertisements we're being had for mugs." So we are. The sin of gluttony, of greed, of overmuch stuffing ourselves, is the sin that has delivered us into the power of the machine.

In the evil days between [World War I and World War II], we were confronted with some ugly contrasts between plenty and poverty. Those contrasts should be, and must be, reduced. But let us say frankly that they are not likely to be reduced so long as the poor admire the rich for the indulgence in precisely that gluttonous way of living that rivets on the world the chain of the present economic system, and do their best to imitate rich men's worst vices. To do that is to play in the hands of those whose interest is to keep the system going. You will notice, that under a war economy, the contrast is being flattened out; we are being forced to reduce and regulate our personal consumption of commodities and revise our whole notion of what constitutes good citizenship in the financial sense. This is the judgment of this world; when we will not amend ourselves by grace, we are compelled under the yoke of law. You will notice also that we are learning certain things. There seems, for example, to be no noticeable diminution in our health and spirits due to the fact that we have only the choice of say, half a dozen dishes in a restaurant instead of forty.

In the matter of clothing, we are beginning to regain our respect for stuffs that will wear well; we can no longer be led away by the specious

argument that it is smarter and more hygienic to wear underlinen and stockings once and then throw them away than to buy things that will serve us for years. We are having to learn, painfully, to save food and material and salvage waste products; and in learning to do these things we have found a curious and stimulating sense of adventure. For it is the great curse of gluttony that it ends by destroying all sense of the precious, the unique, the irreplaceable.

But what will happen to us when the war machine to consume our surplus products for us? Shall we hold fast to our rediscovered sense of real values and our adventurous attitude of life? If so, we shall revolutionize world economy without any political revolution. Or shall we again allow our gluttony to become the instrument of an economic system that is satisfactory to nobody? That system as we know it thrives on waste and rubbish heaps. At present the waste (that is, sheer gluttonous consumption) is being done for us in the field of war. In peace, if we do not revise our ideas, we shall ourselves become its instruments. The rubbish heap will again be piled on our doorsteps, on our own backs, in our own bellies. Instead of the wasteful consumption of trucks and tanks, metal and explosives, we shall have back the wasteful consumption of wireless sets and silk stockings, drugs and paper, cheap pottery and cosmetics—all of the slop and swill that will pour down the sewers over which the palace of gluttony is built...

It was left for the present age to endow covetousness with glamor on a big scale and give it a title that it could carry like a flag. It occurred to somebody to call it enterprise. From the moment of that happy inspiration, covetousness has gone forward and never looked back. It has become a swaggering, swash-buckling, piratical sin, going about with its head cocked over its eye, and pistols tucked into the tops of its jackboots. Its war cries are "Business Efficiency!" "Free Competition!" "Get Out or Get Under!" and "There's Always Room at the Top! It no longer works and saves; it launches out into new enterprises; it gambles and speculates; it thinks in a big way; it takes risks. It can no longer be troubled to deal in real wealth and so remain attached to work and the soil. It has set money free from all hampering ties; it has interests in every continent; it is impossible to pin it down to any one place or any concrete commodity—it is an adventure, a roving, rollicking free lance. It looks so jolly and jovial and has such a twinkle in its cunning eye that nobody can believe that its heart is as cold and calculating as ever.

Sayers's critique, in this passage, has aged extremely well. The chief differences I would note today are:

1. The factories are not first world factories in front of us but third world sweatshops whose workers could only drool over the conditions of first world factories, and:
2. Everything in "The Damned Backswing" is true and we are being stripped of even moderate consumption as the damned backswing plays out past decades' gluttonous consumption that continues today.
3. So far as I can discern, Sayers does not open or foresee the Pandora's box of branding.

This is, I would underscore, a *conservative* critique of *capitalism*. It touches on Marxist critique, or Marxism rather touches on this line of critique, when contrasting the craftsman and the factory hand; but even a stopped clock is right twice a day, including Marxism.

It is an essentially conservative outlook in Robert Grootzaard's *Aid for the Overdeveloped West*, which makes at least one point I hadn't thought of but almost instantly agreed with once I saw it. As a Christian economist, he studied the Mosaic Law and saw a blueprint for paradise, including both gleaning for the poor and an environment where it was very "difficult to get rich." And his work can be taken as a brief, for a book, commentary on the premise that economic wealth is made for mankind and not mankind for economic wealth.

St. Paul wrote, "Love of money is the root of all evil," (I Tim 6:10, KJV), and he did not do so in the context of our ecosystem of brands. He took up the task of taming the horse and reining it in; perhaps he has almost never been completely obeyed, but most of the Bible's advice for a good life has almost never been completely obeyed. The verse has been softened in some translations to say, "Love of money is a root of all kinds of evil," (NIV), but no other sin receives the same indictment from St. Paul, and it is characteristic of the theology of the east that avarice or the love of money is not only named among the eight demons that would become the West's seven deadly sins, but it is one of the top three "gateway sins" that opens the door to all others.

One lunch with Bruce Winter, the head of Tyndale House, commented on what advertising now sees as a sort of dark age before advertising would essentially get its act together. Before that, an ad advertising (for instance) fur coats, would show a fur coat, maybe with someone in it or maybe not, and the word "SALE" once or maybe repeated several times. (It strikes me as a stroke of brilliant wit that one nearby antiques dealer has, out front, a letter sign with the words "ANTIQUES! ANTIQUES! ANTIQUES!" That kind of nostalgic advertising might work for nothing else, it is perfect for communicating antique goods that in some cases would fit how some antiques were

originally advertised.) Bruce mentioned the older school, and said that it comes from before advertisers understood what motivates people. Now, he commented, car ads sell on the premise that they are "mysterious, sensual, and intimate:" as I would later observe, one glitzy car ad ended with a woman's low voice saying, "When you turn your car on... does it return the favor?" Bruce Winter was, I might underscore, *not* someone who would raise an objection to having something be "mysterious, sensual, and intimate" as such, and he spoke of it with awe. He was merely suggesting that we seek something "mysterious, sensual, and intimate" in the setting where we can enjoy it best.

(Australia is a bit of a special case as far as advertising goes. Advertising is legal as such, but advertisers have to sell their wares on the grounds of what their product actually provides; presenting that a product as making you magically irresistible to the opposite sex is off the agenda.)

One of many features of a favor that favors consumption has to do with fashion. In the Middle Ages, clothing styles subtly changed, perhaps once in a generation. It is not clear to me how long a garment would last, but clothing was not casually discarded. Today, fashion provides a social mechanism for frequent purchase of clothing, and the one truly good piece of advice I found in *Tiptionary* was to go for classic clothing rather than what is currently in vogue. Clothing is not built to last, and even if it would last, we have a social mandate that keeps selling us (mostly sweatshop) clothes. (*One way* to reduce one's patronage of sweatshops is to keep clothing until it becomes genuinely unserviceable.)

Another change in habits has to do with why an appliance repair shop in my hometown closed down, having lost their lease. When an appliance breaks down, most people don't want a fix that will restore the status quo. Most people prefer to find an occasion to upgrade. For another example, a senior I know has cookware made in the 1940's or 1950's. His cookware has plenty of use remaining before it will eventually decay. Its expected life, over a half century after when it was first made, is longer than brand new cookware because new cookware is specifically not built to last. Planned obsolescence is another form of life that keeps factory wheels turning. It's not enough to have a darling brand in cars, phones, etc.; people feel an almost entirely unnecessary need to have the latest model.

Sacramental shopping

I have been aware in my own life of a practice that I call "sacramental shopping." Another term is "retail therapy," and perhaps today the lexicon includes "Amazon therapy." It is *shopping that functions as an ersatz sacrament*, and it may be the chief sacrament in the ersatz religion of brand economy.

I might comment briefly, in a book that I've persisted in trying to track down, an analysis which says that brands do the work of spiritual disciplines for many today. The author commented that in one class he asked college students, "Imagine your future

successful self. With which brands do you imagine yourself associating?" Not only could all of the students answer the question and furnish a list of brands, but he didn't see any puzzled looks, a signal that would have blipped loud and clear on his radar as a teacher.

I believe that an example from my own life could be instructive.

When I was getting ready to study theology, in 2002 I purchased a computer that would see me through my studies up through 2007. It was an IBM ThinkPad, a brand and line that were respected and for good reason, and I purchased a computer with ample screen real estate, a 1GhZ processor that was probably overkill for my needs, and maxed-out 1G RAM. And after I did my research and set my heart on a particular purchase, and my conscience held me back. I ran from my conscience and then faced up to it, a conscience saying, "No." And I let go of buying it altogether, and as soon as that my conscience gave me an instantaneous green light.

There were a couple of issues going on here. One of them was the purchase of a practical computer all but necessary for my studies. But the other part was that I was drooling over a major purchase in sacramental shopping, and the way things unfolded was an unfolding grace that let me buy a practical and useful computer but not making a purchase of sacramental shopping.

Now some of you may be wondering why I named and endorsed a brand of computer; my response is that I was not acting on a mystique, but on rational analysis of a brand's track record. Though a Ford was not my first choice, I drive a Ford now, as a brand that creates physically sturdy vehicles that hold up well in a collision. One accident, in which I was hit from behind when I stopped, left me hitting the Honda Accord in front of me, and... um... I saw very directly why people refer to a Honda Accord as a "Honda Accordion." The Accordion suffered severe damage in its trunk. I suffered a bent front license plate. When I went computer shopping, I wanted a good computer that would last, and several years after purchasing it I gave it to my brother in working order. The specs were carefully chosen, and the five or so years I used it vindicated my purchase.

Nonetheless, I believe that moment was permitted me so I could acquire the computer without it being an act of sacramental shopping, which is something quite significant. It has been my experience that when my conscience says, "Let it go, all the way," sometimes I am freed from XYZ forever, and sometimes the instant I fully let go is the instant I get an unexpected green light. After years of struggle about posting from my story at Fordham, at all, ever, I let go... and my conscience gave me a surprisingly sudden green light, the only condition being that I not name individual figures. So I posted Orthodox at Fordham.

It is a great gift to be able to stop drooling before you buy something, or maybe instead of buying something. It is a price of inner spiritual freedom—and a doorway to

contentment, for it is the characteristic of items purchased in sacramental shopping to lose their allure surprisingly quickly.

Advertising promotes a spirit of perennial discontent and a failure to be able to enjoy the things one already has. By rejecting sacramental shopping, perhaps, I was able to enjoy the ongoing use of that one laptop for several years.

Do I have a personal brand? Should I?

I don't think we should buy into personal brands, no matter how many people exhort us to do.

The front matter to *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* notes a fall that had occurred, from a character ethic to a personality ethic with characteristic exhortations to believe in yourself. Now we have had a second fall, from genuine (if shallow) personality with glimpses of character, to recommended best practices being to post stuff to Twitter that's about 70% professional and 30% personal, giving a persona and an illusion of personality but not giving people even your real personality when the rubber hits the sky.

I do not speak highly of personal branding, but I would like first to field an objection that may occur to some of my readers: do I, great critic of brands as I am, am unusually gifted, an Orthodox author who writes in the fashion of some of the great English-language apologists, see things from a different angle, and so on; and, also, I have a distinctive look to my favorites among the books I have written. It would make sense to say, "If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, isn't it a personal brand?"

My response, beyond saying that the objection is entirely understandable, is to talk about what some figures have called a "canon within the Canon." Now this is a perspective that isn't particularly Orthodox and I usually only invoke it with good reason, but there is a tendency for authors in theology to disproportionately quote certain areas in the canon. I imagine if you were to tally Scriptural references in my own writing, you would find heavy reference to the Sermon on the Mount, and the Pauline letters. Now I have no reticence about a debt to the Sermon on the Mount. However, one professor talked about St. Paul as "the Apostle to the heretics," because heretics of many stripes pay disproportionate attention to the letters of St. Paul. So, while I might say "I hope to live up to it" if I am asked how I relate to the Sermon on the Mount, I am more inclined to regard my primary heavy citations of St. Paul as a liability, a holdover from when I was Protestant, and a way I have failed to live up to the Bible's grandeur.

So, if you are to ask, "Do you have a canon within the Canon?" I would answer, "Yes, and I'm not proud of it."

However, this is an "after the fact" canon within the Canon. I never set out to focus on the Sermon on the Mount and the letters of St. Paul, they were what came to

mind when I was recalling from a lifetime of reading Scripture. I never decided to privilege the letters of St. Paul; I just gravitated a certain and imperfect way.

Some considerable distortion, and perhaps a practice that does little to warm Orthodox hearts to the whole concept of canon within the Canon, is in academic theologians who make step one of an article being to identify the canon within the Canon. Honestly, no. That doesn't cut it. An author's "after the fact" canon within the Canon may be to some extent unavoidable, but the idea that you start by taking a scissors to the Bible goes beyond putting the cart before the horse. It is trying to unload the cart at its destination *before* packing it at its source.

I may well enough have an "after the fact" personal brand. (Also, my brief popping in and out of social media when I have something to announce is not intended as the message I want my brand to portray; it is because I feel a need to sharply reduce and limit my time in these unsavory neighborhoods.) And as branding is identified and explained, your brand is the one thing that is essentially you. Besides the points mentioned above about what may be my personal brand, I have had a profound interest in social and religious aspects of technology, and it may well be that my lasting contribution to the conversation will be *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* and not my general-purpose collection of theological favorites in *The Best of Jonathan's Corner*. Social implications of theology are a central and guiding emphasis, but not in any way that engenders an exclusive fidelity. I hardly see "The Angelic Letters" or the even more exalted "Doxology" as peripheral to my "after the fact" marketing proposition, even if I do not recall either saying much about technology and even if my autobiography is titled *Orthodox Theology and Technology*.

However, out of all this there have been few things intended to address concerns of branding. My website has a distinctive and beautiful appearance and background image; and that visual identity flows onto book covers. And in a case of "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you," from (appropriately enough) that Sermon, I have been told that my work is largely known and often endorsed among conservative converts to Orthodoxy, and I've even been told that my name has triletted on Facebook to CSH (meaning C.S. Hayward) which caught me off guard. And I would briefly like to address one question some people have: why am I happy to have fame among conservative converts to Orthodoxy? Why not write for all Orthodox? My answer, I believe, lies in communication style. Any Orthodox Christian, along with other interested parties, is welcome to read my writing. However, the way I write is shaped by English language apologists, as is probably a shared experience with many more converts than people who grew up in the Church, and writing style may be a barrier. There have been some times I have tried to write with a more patristic style, such as "The Arena," "Apprentice gods," and "Technomicon," but it is a liability and a

limitation to my stature as an Orthodox writer that people raised in the Orthodox Church might not as easily connect with my writing.

And in any case, I have not made a marketing decision to specifically target conservative converts to Orthodoxy. I have instead attempted to write works of wonder and beauty such as I am able to and have not found already written. I judge my readership to be a case of "Man proposes, God disposes." And I regard the fact that I have an audience at all is to me astounding. I have prayed for God to guide, help, and support me as I write. I have never prayed to be a household name among certain people.

The human cost of a brand economy: a *decoy* answer

Vincent J. Miller, in *Consuming Religion* (a Marxist text which I checked out because I confused it with Tom Beaudouin, *Consuming Faith*, which I read at Fordham), writes in his introduction, in reference to voluntary simplicity:

[Marketers] want to know where the nerves are so they can position their products to hit them. A stroll through the supermarket illustrates this marketing strategy. Foodstuffs and personal care products are packaged as plain, simple, and honest. The color schemes of labels as well as the products themselves are muted. Beige, lavender, and pale green provide the palette for iced tea and shampoo, risotto mixes, and aroma therapy candles. At the checking, we encounter this color scheme again, this time on the cover of a magazine that includes articles on getting organized, simplifying family life, and making Campari-grapefruit compote. It is full of glossy photo spreads of food, interiors, and clothing. A soft, minimalist aesthetic dominates these images—a hybrid of Martha Stewart and Zen Buddhism. The target audience of this magazine is professional women with incomes above \$65,000 a year. Its title? *Real Simple*. Examples could be multiplied.

Before the point where I dropped reading the title, it also talked about how marketers made a real extravaganza of the 150th anniversary of the printing of the *Communist Manifesto*.

I mention this as an example of a distraction I would like to clear out. I had people say I wasn't sure what I was doing at a jobhunter's group where I balked at creating a personal brand to serve my jobhunt. However, I do not want to gaze endlessly down this chasm.

Albert Einstein is popularly quoted (or misquoted—for the moment I only care about the words) as saying, "The problems we face cannot be solved by the kind of thinking that created them." And here I would say, while I honestly do not know and

honestly do not care whether I am representing Einstein, that level of analysis and critique is valid up to a point but we need to move beyond them if we are to reach higher ground.

An inflection point towards the *real* answer

The Orthodox Church in America saints page has, for Great and Holy Thursday, words from Fr. Alexander Schmemmann about a love that is pure, and also about a love that is destructive:

Two events shape the liturgy of Great and Holy Thursday: the Last Supper of Christ with His disciples, and the betrayal of Judas. The meaning of both is in love. The Last Supper is the ultimate revelation of God's redeeming love for man, of love as the very essence of salvation. And the betrayal of Judas reveals that sin, death and self-destruction are also due to love, but to deviated and distorted love, love directed at that which does not deserve love. Here is the mystery of this unique day, and its liturgy, where light and darkness, joy and sorrow are so strangely mixed, challenges us with the choice on which depends the eternal destiny of each one of us. "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come... having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end..." (John 13:1). To understand the meaning of the Last Supper we must see it as the very end of the great movement of Divine Love which began with the creation of the world and is now to be consummated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

God is Love (1 John 4:8). And the first gift of Love was life. The meaning, the content of life was communion. To be alive man was to eat and to drink, to partake of the world. The world was thus Divine love made food, made Body of man. And being alive, i.e. partaking of the world, man was to be in communion with God, to have God as the meaning, the content and the end of his life. Communion with the God-given world was indeed communion with God. Man received his food from God and making it his body and his life, he offered the whole world to God, transformed it into life in God and with God. The love of God gave life to man, the love of man for God transformed this life into communion with God. This was paradise. Life in it was, indeed, eucharistic. Through man and his love for God the whole creation was to be sanctified and transformed into one all-embracing sacrament of Divine Presence and man was the priest of this sacrament.

But in sin man lost this eucharistic life. He lost it because he ceased to see the world as a means of Communion with God and his life as eucharist, as adoration and thanksgiving. . . He loves himself and the world for their own

sake; he made himself the content and the end of his life. He thought that his hunger and thirst, i.e. his dependence of his life on the world—can be satisfied by the world as such, by food as such. But world and food, once they are deprived of their initial sacramental meaning—as means of communion with God, once they are not received for God's sake and filled with hunger and thirst for God, once, in other words, God is no longer their real "content," can give no life, satisfy no hunger, for they have no life in themselves... And thus by putting his love in them, man deviated his love from the only object of all love, of all hunger, of all desires. And he died. For death is the inescapable "decomposition" of life cut from its only source and content. Man thought to find life in the world and in food, but he found death. His life became communion with death, for instead of transforming the world by faith, love, and adoration into communion with God, he submitted himself entirely to the world, he ceased to be its priest and became its slave. And by his sin the whole world was made a cemetery, where people condemned to death partook of death and "sat in the region and shadow of death" (Matt. 4:16).

But if man betrayed, God remained faithful to man. He did not "turn Himself away forever from His creature whom He had made, neither did He forget the works of His hands, but He visited him in diverse manners, through the tender compassion of His mercy" (Liturgy of Saint Basil). A new Divine work began, that of redemption and salvation. And it was fulfilled in Christ, the Son of God Who in order to restore man to his pristine beauty and to restore life as communion with God, became Man, took upon Himself our nature, with its thirst and hunger, with its desire for and love of, life. And in Him life was revealed, given, accepted and fulfilled as total and perfect Eucharist, as total and perfect communion with God. He rejected the basic human temptation: to live "by bread alone"; He revealed that God and His kingdom are the real food, the real life of man. And this perfect eucharistic Life, filled with God, and, therefore Divine and immortal, He gave to all those who would believe in Him, i.e. find in Him the meaning and the content of their lives. Such is the wonderful meaning of the Last Supper. He offered Himself as the true food of man, because the Life revealed in Him is the true Life. And thus the movement of Divine Love which began in paradise with a Divine "take, eat. ." (for eating is life for man) comes now "unto the end" with the Divine "take, eat, this is My Body..." (for God is life of man). The Last Supper is the restoration of the paradise of bliss, of life as Eucharist and Communion.

But this hour of ultimate love is also that of the ultimate betrayal. Judas leaves the light of the Upper Room and goes into darkness. "And it was night" (John 13:30). Why does he leave? Because he loves, answers the Gospel, and his fateful love is stressed again and again in the hymns of Holy Thursday. It does not matter indeed, that he loves the "silver." Money stands here for all the deviated and distorted love which leads man into betraying God. It is, indeed, love stolen from God and Judas, therefore, is the Thief. When he does not love God and in God, man still loves and desires, for he was created to love and love is his nature, but it is then a dark and self-destroying passion and death is at its end. And each year, as we immerse ourselves into the unfathomable light and depth of Holy Thursday, the same decisive question is addressed to each one of us: do I respond to Christ's love and accept it as my life, do I follow Judas into the darkness of his night?

The human cost of a brand economy is that it draws us into the love of Judas Iscariot.

Fr. Alexander, in this passage, is extremely clear that Judas is not dead to love: he loves what should not be loved, and he loves in the wrong way. He loves "silver:" one could just as well say "even worse, brands." And the love we love when we covet brands—and it *is* love—is love of what is unworthy and the same destructive love by which Judas renounced his Lord to obtain a pittance of silver, the price of a slave and nothing more.

We can do one of two things. We can love God and our neighbor, *or* we can attend to brands, *but we cannot do both.*

Conclusion

This takes us to the doorstep of all things great and wonderful, and all things beautiful and small, the Tradition has to offer. It takes us to St. Paul's hymn to charity and St. John's first epistle on loving one another, to the *Philokalia* and the Divine Liturgy, to morning and evening prayers and *The Way of the Pilgrim*. The right thing to do is to simply step beyond brands and enter one of these doors of love, and love God, including loving God *in* our neighbor.

A Comparison Between the Mere Monk and the Highest Bishop

I believe that if some of the best bishops were asked, "How would you like to step down from all of your honors, and all of your power, and hand the reins over to an excellent successor, and become only the lowest rank of monk at an obscure monastery in the middle of nowhere with no authority over any soul's salvation but your own—would you take it?" their response might be, "Um, uh... *what's the catch?*"

(I deeply respect my heirarch and after a bit of thought, I removed certain remarks because I really think he would rather endure baseless slander than others making a public display of his virtues.)

If I may comment briefly on virginity and marriage: in a culture where you try to rip your opponent's position to shreds instead of aiming for fair balance in a critique, St. Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity* is *meant* to rip marriage to shreds. I don't mean that, and I would say something that I don't think needed to be said, or at least not needed to be said, as much: *true marriage should be seen as having something of the hallowed respect associated with monasticism*. A marriage in its fullest traditional sense, is becoming (or already is) something that should be called exotic if people didn't look down their noses at it. As far as true marriage relates to monasticism, the externals are almost antithetical but the goal is the same: self-transcendence. The person who said, "Men love women. Women love children. Children love pets. Life isn't fair," is on to something. Getting into marriage properly requires stepping beyond an egotism of

yourself; raising children, if you are so blessed, requires stepping beyond an egotism of two. And Biblically and patristically, childlessness was seen as a curse; the priestly father to whom one child was given in old age, the Mother of God herself, bore derision even in his high office because people viewed childlessness as a curse enough to be a sign of having earned divine judgment and wrath. And at a day and age where marriage is being torn from limb to limb, it might befit us to make particular efforts to honor marriage alongside monasticism.

There is one advantage to monasticism; actually, there are several, but one eclipses the others, and that is mentioned when St. Paul recognizes that not everyone can be celibate like him, marriage being a legitimate and honorable option. But he mentions a significant advantage to celibacy: the married person must have divided attention between serving family and the Lord, where a celibate person (today this usually belongs in monasticism) is able to give God an undivided attention, enjoying the blessed estate of a Mary sitting at the Lord's feet as a disciple taking in the one thing that is truly necessary, and not as a Martha who is busily encumbered with many other things. And while St. Paul knows that not everybody can walk the celibate path, he does at least wish that people could offer God an undivided attention. And I have yet to hear Orthodox challenge that any genuine marriage includes a condition of divided attention.

If we leave off talking about bishops just briefly, let's take a brief look at the abbot next to a simple monk under him ("simple monk" is a technical term meaning a monk who has not additionally been elevated to any minor or major degree of sacramental priesthood). The simple monk has lost some things, but he has in full the benefit St. Paul wants celibates to have: everything around him is ordered to give him the best opportunity to work on salvation. Meanwhile, any abbot who is doing an abbot's job is denied this luxury. Some abbots have been tempted to step down from their honored position because of how difficult they've found caring for themselves spiritually as any monk should, and additionally care for the many needs of a monastery and the other monks. An abbot may not focus on his own salvation alone; he must divide his attention to deal with disciples and various secular material needs a monastery must address. An abbot is a monk who must bear a monk's full cross; in addition, while an abbot has no sexual license, he must also bear the additional cross of a father who is dividing his attention in dealing with those under his care. He may be celibate, but he effectively forgoes the chief benefit St. Paul ascribes to living a celibate life.

To be a heirarch brings things another level higher. Right now I don't want to compare the mere monk with a bishop, but rather compare an abbot with a bishop. The abbot acts as a monk in ways that include the full life participation in the services and environment in a monastery. It may be true that the abbot is more finely clad than other monks, but abbot and simple monk alike are involved in the same supportive environment, and what abbot and simple monk share is greater than their difference. By

comparison, unless the bishop is one of few bishops serving in a monastery, the bishop may be excused for perhaps feeling like a fish out of water. It may be desired that a bishop have extensive monastic character formation, but a bishop is compelled to live in the world, and to travel all over the place in ways and do some things that other monastics rightly flee. Now the heirarch does have the nicest robes of all, and has privileges that no one else has, but it is too easy to see a bishop's crownlike mitre in the majesty of Liturgy and fail to sense the ponderous, heavy crown of thorns invisibly present on a bishop's head all the time. Every Christian must bear his cross, but you are very ignorant about the cross a bishop bears if you think that being a bishop is all about wearing the vestments of the Roman emperor, being called "Your Grace" or "Your Eminence," and sitting on a throne at the center of everything.

Now it is possible to be perfectly satisfied to wear a bishop's robes; for that matter it is possible to be perfectly satisfied to wear an acolyte's robe or never wear liturgical vestments at all. But I know someone who is really bright, and has been told, "You are the most brilliant person I know!" The first time around it was really intoxicating; by the fifth or sixth time he felt more like someone receiving uninteresting old news, and it was more a matter of disciplined social skills than spontaneous delight to keep trying to keep giving a graceful and fitting response to an extraordinary compliment. Perhaps the first time a new heirarch is addressed as "Your Grace," "Your Emimence," or "Vladyka," it feels intoxicatingly heady. However, I don't believe the effect lasts much more than a week, if even that. There is reason to address heirarchs respectfully and appropriately, but it is really much less a benefit to the bishop than it is a benefit to us, and this is for the same reason children who respect adults are better off than children who don't respect adults. Children who respect adults benefit much more from adults' care, and faithful who respect clergy (including respect for heirarchs) benefit much more from pastoral care.

As I wrote in *A Pet Owner's Rules*, God is like a pet Owner who has two rules, and only two rules. The first rule, and the more important one, is "I am your Owner. Receive freely of the food and drink I have given you," and the second is really more a clarification than anything else: "Don't drink out of the toilet." The first comparison is to drunkenness. A recovering alcoholic will tell you that being drunk all the time is not a delight; it is suffering you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. "Strange as it may sound, you have to be basically sober even to enjoy getting drunk:" drunkenness is drinking out of the toilet. But you don't need to literally drink to be drinking out of the toilet.

There is something like a confused drinking out of the toilet in ambition, and in my own experience, ambition is not only sinful, but it is a recipe to not enjoy things. Being an abbot may be more prestigious than being a simple monk and being a bishop may be more prestigious than being an abbot but looking at things that way is penny wise and pound foolish.

Ambition reflects a fundamental confusion that sees external honors but not the cross tied to such honors. I hope to write this without making married Orthodox let go of one whit of their blessed estate, but the best position to be in is a simple monastic, end of discussion. It is a better position to be a simple monastic than to be an abbot, and it is a better position to be an abbot than a heirarch. Now the Church needs clergy, including abbots and heirarchs, and it is right to specifically pray for them as the Liturgy and daily prayer books have it. Making a monk into a priest or abbot, or bishop, represents a sacrifice. Now all of us are called to be a sacrifice at some level, and God's grace rests on people who are clergy for good reasons. An abbot who worthily bears both the *cross* of the celibate and the *cross* of the married in this all-too-transient world may shine with a double *crown* for ever and ever. But the lot we should seek for is not that of Martha cumbered about with much serving; it is of Mary embracing the one thing needful.

The best approach is to apply full force to seeking everything that is better, and then have God persistently tell us if we are to step in what might be called "the contemplative life perfected in action."

The Patriarch's throne, mantle, crown, title, and so on are truly great and glorious.

But they pale in comparison to the hidden Heavenly honors given to a simple monk, an eternal glory that can be present in power here and now.

A Cantic to Holy, Blessed Solipsism

O Lord, help me reach poverty, that I may own treasures avarice could never fathom or imagine,
Obedience that I may know utter freedom, first of all of the shackles of my sin and vice,
Chastity, that I may be virile beyond reckoning,
A solipsist that I may embrace Heaven and Earth,
(For Earth can never fail to merit a capital E,
Not since our Saviour walked it.)
Let me be alone with You, through the bridge of a second holy Moses,
Let me love You with my whole being
(A holy Being, grant it might be),
That I may reach you through six billion prisms,
The royal race of men,
And made in Your Divine Image.
And may this love bubble over,
Cascading on animals because I love men,
Cascading onto plants that are also alive,
Cascading onto rocks that exist in some measure,
Cascading on nothingness, You Who have been called Everything and Nothing,
For even nothingness is in some way Your Image,
You Who are beyond existence and nonexistence alike.

Today is a day of interest in genes,
In mortals who want to know their roots,
And I am indeed among them,
Though I dig for a Deeper Root.
A kit and refined science,
Can tell me what lands my ancestors came from,
And had I the wealth, I could go on pilgrimage,
To visit the places,
That gave me my greying red beard.
But my Root is Simple:
God Himself,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
The Triune Pattern after which each man is made,
And I reverence each man as God after God:
To do less is to fail to grasp the One God, Who transcends His Own Transcendence,
Immanent beyond all imagination,
Immanent beyond all measure,
Closer to you than you are to yourself;
The very breath you breathe is God's Own.

My Motherland is Heaven,
And so I go and seek pilgrimage,
To the God who is everywhere and everywhere,
In Holy Russia,
In Holy Russia now though I be on American soil.
Holy Russia has come to me,
And God please, let me come to Holy Russia,
A monk to the end of my days as mortal man.

Who am I to worship You,
Whom Heaven and Earth cannot contain?
Who am I even to give You thanks?
I am unworthy to even give You thanks,
And I thank you anyway.
It is my burden: it is my joy.

"Only God and I exist,"
Or so the saying goes,
For there is only One Will to please:

All else follows suit,
All ducklings in a row.
Christians today do not know that they are pagans:
And not in the sense that Orthodoxy is pagan and neo-paganism isn't.

Do you not understand the radical breach,
Of One God Almighty of sacred Israel?
One thing only could offend God,
A God Who stands besides all possibility of offense,
Except in the person of another:

Sin.

The pagans all around worshipped among the cacophonous din of a treacherous junior
high:

There was no reckoning of sin,
Only appeasement of arbitrary, bickering gods,
Who were not much more than overclocked men,
And truth be told, sometimes far less.

And what appeased one god,
Might well offend anger another.

Are you a Christian?

Then why do you appease so many bickering gods,
And why do you worry with it?

Be thou a solipsist, *please!*

And the voyage to meet first my Root,
Is the simple repentance offered here and now.

"Awaken!" beckon God and the saints,
And rank upon rank of angel hosts!

Repent: for the Kingdom of God is nigh:
Indeed, it is already here.

Your room will teach you everything you need to know,
And the longest journey we will ever take,
Is rightly called the journey from our head to our heart.
Repent!

And lastly become truly a solipsist,

No longer know that you are you and God is God:

For the wall between created nature and Uncreated God only exists that we may rise
above it;

The Son of God became a man that men might become the Sons of God!
God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that men and the sons of men,
Might become gods and the sons of God!
Adam, trying to be God, failed to be god;
Christ became Man that he might make Adam god:
The whole purpose of human life is to become by Grace What Christ is by nature:
Be nothing before God and take down the curtain separating "You" and "me."

Amen! Amen! Amen!

The Commentary

Memories flitted through Martin's mind as he drove: tantalizing glimpses he had seen of how people really thought in Bible times. Glimpses that made him thirsty for more. It had seemed hours since he left his house, driving out of the city, across back roads in the forest, until at last he reached the quiet town. The store had printer's blocks in the window, and as he stepped in, an old-fashioned bell rung. There were old tools on the walls, and the room was furnished in beautifully varnished wood.

An old man smiled and said, "Welcome to my bookstore. Are you—" Martin nodded. The man looked at him, turned, and disappeared through a doorway. A moment later he was holding a thick leatherbound volume, which he set on the counter. Martin looked at the binding, almost afraid to touch the heavy tome, and read the letters of gold on its cover:

COMMENTARY
ON THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS
IN ONE VOLUME
CONTAINING A CAREFUL ANALYSIS OF ALL CULTURAL ISSUES
NEEDFUL TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE
AS DID ITS FIRST READERS

"You're sure you can afford it, sir? I'd really like to let it go for a lower price, but you must understand that a book like this is costly, and I can't afford to sell it the way I do most other titles."

"Finances will be tight, but I've found knowledge to cost a lot and ignorance to cost more. I have enough money to buy it, if I make it a priority."

"Good. I hope it may profit you. But may I make one request, even if it sounds strange?"

"What is your request?"

"If, for any reason, you no longer want the commentary, or decide to get rid of it, you will let me have the first chance to buy it back."

"Sir? I don't understand. I have been searching for a book like this for years. I don't know how many miles I've driven. I will pay. You're right that this is more money than I could easily spare—and I am webmaster to a major advertising agency. I would have only done so for something I desired a great, great deal."

"Never mind that. If you decide to sell it, will you let me have the first chance?"

"Let's talk about something else. What text does it use?"

"It uses the Revised Standard Version. Please answer my question, sir."

"How could anyone prefer darkness to light, obscurity to illumination?"

"I don't know. Please answer my question."

"Yes, I will come to you first. Now will you sell it to me?"

The old man rung up the sale.

As Martin walked out the door, the shopkeeper muttered to himself, "Sold for the seventh time! Why doesn't anybody want to keep it?"

Martin walked through the door of his house, almost exhausted, and yet full of bliss. He sat in his favorite overstuffed armchair, one that had been reupholstered more than once since he sat in it as a boy. He relaxed, the heavy weight of the volume pressing into his lap like a loved one, and then opened the pages. He took a breath, and began reading.

INTRODUCTION

At the present time, most people believe the question of culture in relation to the Bible is a question of understanding the ancient cultures and accounting for their influence so as to be able to better understand Scripture. That is indeed a valuable field, but its benefits may only be reaped after addressing another concern, a concern that is rarely addressed by people eager to understand Ancient Near Eastern culture.

A part of the reader's culture is the implicit belief that he is not encumbered by culture: culture is what people live under long ago and far away. This is not true. As it turns out, the present culture has at least two beliefs which deeply influence and to some extent limit its ability to connect with the Bible. There is what scholars call 'period awareness', which is not content with the realization that we all live in a historical context, but places different times and places in sealed compartments, almost to the point of forgetting that people who live in the year 432, people who live in 1327, and people who live in 1987 are all human. Its partner in crime is the doctrine of progress, which says at heart that we are better, nobler, and wiser people than those who came before us, and our ideas are better, because ideas, like machines, grow rust and need to be replaced. This gives the reader the most extraordinary difficulties in believing that the Holy Spirit spoke through humans to address human problems in the Bible, and the answer speaks as much to us humans as it did to them. Invariably the reader believes that the Holy Spirit influenced a first century man trying to deal with first century problems, and a delicate work of extrication is needed before ancient texts can be adapted to turn-of-the-millennium concerns.

Martin shifted his position slightly, felt thirsty, almost decided to get up and get a glass of water, then decided to continue reading. He turned a few pages in order to get into the real meat of the introduction, and resumed reading:

...is another example of this dark pattern.

In an abstracted sense, what occurs is as follows:

1. Scholars implicitly recognize that some passages in the Bible are less than congenial to whatever axe they're grinding.
2. They make a massive search, and subject all of the offending passages to a meticulous examination, an examination much more meticulous than orthodox scholars ever really need when they're trying to understand something.
3. In parallel, there is an exhaustive search of a passage's historical-cultural context. This search dredges up a certain kind of detail—in less flattering terms, it creates disinformation.
4. No matter what the passage says, no matter who's examining it, this story always has the same ending. It turns out that the passage in fact

means something radically different from what it appears to mean, and in fact does not contradict the scholar at all.

This dark pattern has devastating effect on people from the reader's culture. They tend to believe that culture has almost any influence it is claimed to; in that regard, they are very gullible. It is almost unheard-of for someone to say, "I'm sorry, no; cultures can make people do a lot of things, but I don't believe a culture could have *that* influence."

It also creates a dangerous belief which is never spoken in so many words: "If a passage in the Bible appears to contradict what we believe today, that is because we do not adequately understand its cultural context."

Martin coughed. He closed the commentary slowly, reverently placed it on the table, and took a walk around the block to think.

Inside him was turmoil. It was like being at an illusionist show, where impossible things happened. He recalled his freshman year of college, when his best friend Chaplain was a student from Liberia, and come winter, Chaplain was not only seared by cold, but looked betrayed as the icy ground became a traitor beneath his feet. Chaplain learned to keep his balance, but it was slow, and Martin could read the pain off Chaplain's face. How long would it take? He recalled the shopkeeper's words about returning the commentary, and banished them from his mind.

Martin stepped into his house and decided to have no more distractions. He wanted to begin reading commentary, now. He opened the book on the table and sat erect in his chair:

Genesis

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

1:2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

1:3 And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

The reader is now thinking about evolution. He is wondering whether Genesis 1 is right, and evolution is simply wrong, or whether evolution is right, and Genesis 1 is a myth that may be inspiring enough but does not actually tell how the world was created.

All of this is because of a culture phenomenally influenced by scientism and science. The theory of evolution is an attempt to map out, in terms appropriate to scientific dialogue, just what organisms occurred, when, and

what mechanism led there to be new kinds of organisms that did not exist before. Therefore, nearly all Evangelicals assumed, Genesis 1 must be the Christian substitute for evolution. Its purpose must also be to map out what occurred when, to provide the same sort of mechanism. In short, if Genesis 1 is true, then it must be trying to answer the same question as evolution, only answering it differently.

Darwinian evolution is not a true answer to the question, "Why is there life as we know it?" Evolution is on philosophical grounds not a true answer to that question, because it is not an answer to that question at all. Even if it is true, evolution is only an answer to the question, "How is there life as we know it?" If someone asks, "Why is there this life that we see?" and someone answers, "Evolution," it is like someone saying, "Why is the kitchen light on?" and someone else answering, "Because the switch is in the on position, thereby closing the electrical circuit and allowing current to flow through the bulb, which grows hot and produces light."

Where the reader only sees one question, an ancient reader saw at least two other questions that are invisible to the present reader. As well as the question of "How?" that evolution addresses, there is the question of "Why?" and "What function does it serve?" These two questions are very important, and are not even considered when people are only trying to work out the antagonism between creationism and evolutionism.

Martin took a deep breath. Was the text advocating a six-day creationism? That was hard to tell. He felt uncomfortable, in a much deeper way than if Bible-thumpers were preaching to him that evolutionists would burn in Hell.

He decided to see what it would have to say about a problem passage. He flipped to Ephesians 5:

5:21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

5:22 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.

5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

5:24 As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.

5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

5:26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

5:27 that he might present the church to himself in splendor,

without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

5:28 Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

5:29 For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church,

5:30 because we are members of his body.

5:31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

5:32 This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church;

5:33 however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The reader is at this point pondering what to do with this problem passage. At the moment, he sees three major options: first, to explain it away so it doesn't actually give husbands authority; second, to chalk it up to misogynist Paul trying to rescind Jesus's progressive liberality; and third, to take this as an example of why the Bible can't really be trusted.

To explain why the reader perceives himself caught in this unfortunate choice, it is necessary to explain a powerful cultural force, one whose effect cannot be ignored: feminism. Feminism has such a powerful effect among the educated in his culture that the question one must ask of the reader is not "Is he a feminist?" but "What kind of feminist is he, and to what degree?"

Feminism flows out of a belief that it's a wonderful privilege to be a man, but it is tragic to be a woman. Like Christianity, feminism recognizes the value of lifelong penitence, even the purification that can come through guilt. It teaches men to repent in guilt of being men, and women to likewise repent of being women. The beatific vision in feminism is a condition of sexlessness, which feminists call 'androgyny'.

Martin stopped. "What kind of moron wrote this? Am I actually supposed to believe it?" Then he continued reading:

This is why feminism believes that everything which has belonged to men is a privilege which must be shared with women, and everything that has belonged to women is a burden which men must also shoulder. And so naturally, when Paul asserts a husband's authority, the feminist sees nothing but a privilege unfairly hoarded by men.

Martin's skin began to feel clammy.

The authority asserted here is not a domineering authority that uses power to serve oneself. Nowhere in the Bible does Paul tell husbands how to dominate their wives. Instead he follows Jesus's model of authority, one in which leadership is a form of servanthood. Paul doesn't just assume this; he explicitly tells the reader, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." The sigil of male headship and authority is not a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns.

Martin was beginning to wish that the commentary had said, "The Bible is misogynistic, and that's good!" He was beginning to feel a nagging doubt that what he called problem passages were in fact perfectly good passages that didn't look attractive if you had a problem interpretation. What was that remark in a theological debate that had gotten so much under his skin? He almost wanted not to remember it, and then—"Most of the time, when people say they simply cannot understand a particular passage of Scripture, they understand the passage perfectly well. What they don't understand is how to explain it away so it doesn't contradict them."

He paced back and forth, and after a time began to think, "The sword can't always cut against me, can it? I know some gay rights activists who believe that the Bible's prohibition of homosexual acts is nothing but taboo. Maybe the commentary on Romans will give me something else to answer them with." He opened the book again:

1:26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, 1:27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

The concept of 'taboo' in the reader's culture needs some explanation. When a person says, "That's taboo," what's being said is that there is an unthinking, irrational prejudice against it: one must not go against the prejudice because then people will be upset, but in some sense to call a restriction a taboo is de facto to show it unreasonable.

The term comes from Polynesia and other South Pacific islands, where it is used when people recognize there is a line which it is wiser not to cross. Thomas Aquinas said, "The peasant who does not murder because the law of

God is deep in his bones is greater than the theologian who can derive, 'Thou shalt not kill' from first principles."

A taboo is a restriction so deep that most people cannot offer a ready explanation. A few can; apologists and moral philosophers make a point of being able to explain the rules. For most people, though, they know what is right and what is wrong, and it is so deeply a part of them that they cannot, like an apologist, start reasoning with first principles and say an hour and a half later, "and this is why homosexual acts are wrong."

What goes with the term 'taboo' is an assumption that if you can't articulate your reasons on the drop of a hat, that must mean that you don't have any good reasons, and are acting only from benighted prejudice. Paradoxically, the term 'taboo' is itself a taboo: there is a taboo against holding other taboos, and this one is less praiseworthy than other taboos...

Martin walked away and sat in another chair, a high wooden stool. What was it that he had been thinking about before going to buy the commentary? A usability study had been done on his website, and he needed to think about the results. Designing advertising material was different from other areas of the web; the focus was not just on a smooth user experience but also something that would grab attention, even from a hostile audience. Those two goals were inherently contradictory, like mixing oil and water. His mind began to wander; he thought about the drive to buy the commentary, and began to daydream about a beautiful woman clad only in—

What did the commentary have to say about lust? Jesus said it was equivalent to adultery; the commentary probably went further and made it unforgiveable. He tried to think about work, but an almost morbid curiosity filled him. Finally, he looked up the Sermon on the Mount, and opened to Matthew:

5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

5:28 But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

There is a principle here that was once assumed and now requires some explanation. Jesus condemned lust because it was doing in the heart what was sinful to do in the hands. There is a principle that is forgotten in centuries of people saying, "I can do whatever I want as long as it doesn't harm you," or to speak more precisely, "I can do whatever I want as long as I don't see how it harms you." Suddenly purity was no longer a matter of the heart and hands, but a matter of the hands alone. Where captains in a fleet of

ships once tried both to avoid collisions and to keep shipshape inside, now captains believe that it's OK to ignore mechanical problems inside as long as you try not to hit other ships—and if you steer the wheel as hard as you can and your ship still collides with another, you're not to blame. Heinrich Heine wrote:

Should ever that taming talisman break—the Cross—then will come roaring back the wild madness of the ancient warriors, with all their insane, Berserker rage, of whom our Nordic poets speak and sing. That talisman is now already crumbling, and the day is not far off when it shall break apart entirely. On that day, the old stone gods will rise from their long forgotten wreckage and rub from their eyes the dust of a thousand years' sleep. At long last leaping to life, Thor with his giant hammer will crush the gothic cathedrals. And laugh not at my forebodings, the advice of a dreamer who warns you away from the . . . Naturphilosophen. No, laugh not at the visionary who knows that in the realm of phenomena comes soon the revolution that has already taken place in the realm of spirit. For thought goes before deed as lightning before thunder. There will be played in Germany a play compared to which the French Revolution was but an innocent idyll.

Heinrich Heine was a German Jewish poet who lived a century before Thor's hammer would crush six million of his kinsmen.

The ancient world knew that thought goes before deed as lightning before thunder. They knew that purity is an affair of the heart as well as the hands. Now there is grudging acknowledgment that lust is wrong, a crumbling acceptance that has little place in the culture's impoverished view, but this acknowledgment is like a tree whose soil is taken away. For one example of what goes with that tree, I would like to look at advertising.

Porn uses enticing pictures of women to arouse sexual lust, and can set a chain of events in motion that leads to rape. Advertising uses enticing pictures of chattels to arouse covetous lust, and exists for the sole reason of setting a chain of events in motion that lead people to waste resources by buying things they don't need. The fruit is less bitter, but the vine is the same. Both operate by arousing impure desires that do not lead to a righteous fulfillment. Both porn and advertising are powerfully unreal, and bite those that embrace them. A man that uses porn will have a warped view of women

and be slowly separated from healthy relations. Advertising manipulates people to seek a fulfillment in things that things can never provide: buying one more product can never satisfy that deep craving, any more than looking at one more picture can. Bruce Marshall said, "...the young man who rings at the door of a brothel is unconsciously looking for God." Advertisers know that none of their products give a profound good, nothing like what people search for deep down inside, and so they falsely present products as things that are transcendent, and bring family togetherness or racial harmony.

It has been asked, "Was the Sabbath made for man, or was man made for the Sabbath?" Now the question should be asked, "Was economic wealth made for man, or was man made for economic wealth?" The resounding answer of advertising is, "Man was made for economic wealth." Every ad that is sent out bears the unspoken message, "You, the customer, exist for me, the corporation."

Martin sat in his chair, completely stunned.

After a long time, he padded off to bed, slept fitfully, and was interrupted by nightmares.

The scenic view only made the drive bleaker. Martin stole guiltily into the shop, and laid the book on the counter. The shopkeeper looked at him, and he at the shopkeeper.

"Didn't you ask who could prefer darkness to light, obscurity to illumination?" Martin's face was filled with anguish. "How can I live without my darkness?"

The Consolation of Theology

Song I.

The Author's Complaint.

The Gospel was new,
When one saint stopped his ears,
And said, 'Good God!
That thou hast allowed me,
To live at such a time.'
Jihadists act not in aught of vacuum:
Atheislam welcometh captors;
Founded by the greatest Christian heresiarch,
Who tore Incarnation and icons away from all things Christian,
The dragon next to whom,
Arius, father of heretics,
Is but a fangless worm.
Their 'surrender' is practically furthest as could be,
From, 'God and the Son of God,
Became Man and the Son of Man,
That men and the sons of men,
Might become Gods and the Sons of God,'
By contrast, eviscerating the reality of man.
The wonder of holy marriage,

Tortured and torn from limb to limb,
 In progressive installments old and new,
 Technology a secular occult is made,
 Well I wrote a volume,
 The Luddite's Guide to Technology,
 And in once-hallowed halls of learning,
 Is taught a 'theology,'
 Such as one would seek of Monty Python.
 And of my own life; what of it?
 A monk still I try to be;
 Many things have I tried in life,
 And betimes met spectacular success,
 And betimes found doors slammed in my face.
 Even in work in technology,
 Though the time be an economic boom for the work,
 Still the boom shut me out or knocked me out,
 And not only in the Church's teaching,
 In tale as ancient as Cain and Abel,
 Of The Wagon, the Blackbird, and the Saab.
 And why I must now accomplish so little,
 To pale next to glorious days,
 When a-fighting cancer,
 I switched discipline to theology,
 And first at Cambridge then at Fordham,
 Wished to form priests,
 But a wish that never came true?

I.

And ere I moped a man appeared, quite short of stature but looking great enough
 to touch a star. In ancient gold he was clad, yet the golden vestments of a Patriarch were
 infinitely eclipsed by his Golden Mouth, by a tongue of liquid, living gold. Emblazoned
 on his bosom were the Greek letters X, and A. I crossed myself thrice, wary of devils,
 and he crossed himself thrice, and he looked at me with eyes aflame and said, 'Child,
 hast thou not written, and then outside the bounds of Holy Orthodoxy, a koan?':

A novice said to a master, "I am sick and tired of the immorality that is
 all around us. There is fornication everywhere, drunkenness and drugs in the

inner city, relativism in people—s minds, and do you know where the worst of it is?"

The master said, "Inside your heart."

He spoke again. 'Child, repent of thine own multitude of grievous sins, not the sins of others. Knowest thou not the words, spoken by the great St. Isaac and taken up without the faintest interval by the great St. Seraphim, "Make peace with thyself and ten thousand around thee shall be saved?" Or that if everyone were to repent, Heaven would come to earth?

'Thou seemest on paper to live thy conviction that every human life is a life worth living, but lacking the true strength that is behind that position. Hast thou not read my *Treatise to Prove that Nothing Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*? How the three children, my son, in a pagan court, with every lechery around them, were graced not to defile themselves in what they ate, but won the moral victory of not bowing to an idol beyond monstrous stature? And the angel bedewed them in external victory after they let all else go in *internal* and eternal triumph?

'It is possible at all times and every place to find salvation. Now thou knowest that marriage or monasticism is needful; and out of that knowledge you went out to monasteries, to the grand monastery of Holy Cross Hermitage, to Mount Athos itself, and thou couldst not stay. What of it? Before God thou art *already* a monk. Keep on seeking monasticism, without end, and whether thou crossest the threshold of death a layman or a monk, if thou hast sought monasticism for the rest of thy days, and seekest such repentance as thou canst, who knows if thou mightest appear a monk in lifelong repentance when thou answerest before the Dread Judgement-Throne of Christ?

'Perhaps it is that God has given thee such good things as were lawful for God to give but unlawful and immature for thou to seek for thyself. Thou hast acquired a scholar's knowledge of academic theology, and a heresiologist's formation, but thou writest for the common man. Canst not thou imagine that this may excel such narrow writing, read by so few, in the confines of scholarship? And that as thou hast been graced to walk the long narrow road of affliction, thou art free now to sit in thy parents' splendid house, given a roof when thou art homeless before the law whilst thou seekest monasticism, and writest for as long as thou art able? That wert wrong and immature to seek, sitting under your parents' roof and writing as much as it were wrong and immature to seek years' training in academic theology and heresy and give not a day's tribute to the professorial asceticism of pride and vainglory (thou hadst enough of thine own). Though this be not an issue of morality apart from asceticism, thou knewest the settled judgement that real publication is traditional publication and vanity press is what self-publication is. Yet without knowing, without choosing, without even guessing, thou wert again & time again in the right place, at the right time, amongst the manifold

shifts of technology, and now, though thou profitest not in great measure from thy books, yet have ye written many more creative works than thou couldst bogging with editors. Thou knowest far better to say, "Wisdom is justified by her children," of thyself in stead of saying such of God, but none the less thou hadst impact. Yet God hath granted thee the three, unsought and unwanted though thou mayest have found them.'

I stood in silence, all abashed.

Song II.

His Despondency.

The Saint spoke thus:

'What then? How is this man,
 A second rich young ruler become?
 He who bore not a watch on principle,
 Even before he'd scarce more than
 Heard of Holy Orthodoxy,
 Weareth a watch built to stand out,
 Even among later Apple Watches.
 He who declined a mobile phone,
 Has carried out an iPhone,
 And is displeased to accept,
 A less fancy phone,
 From a state program to provide,
 Cell phones to those at poverty.
 Up! Out! This will not do,
 Not that he hath lost an item of luxury,
 But that when it happened, he were sad.
 For the rich young ruler lied,
 When said he that he had kept,
 All commandments from his youth,
 For unless he were an idolater,
 The loss of possessions itself,
 Could not suffice to make him sad.
 This man hast lost a cellphone,
 And for that alone he grieveth.
 Knoweth he not that money maketh not one glad?
 Would that he would recall,
 The heights from which he hath fallen,
 Even from outside the Orthodox Church.'

II.

Then the great Saint said, 'But the time calls for something deeper than lamentation. Art thou not the man who sayedst that we cannot *achieve* the Holy Grail, nor even *find* it: for the only game in town is to *become* the Holy Grail? Not that the Orthodox Church tradeth in such idle romances as Arthurian legend; as late as the nineteenth century, Saint IGNATIUS (Brianchaninov) gaveth warnings against reading novels, which His Eminence KALLISTOS curiously gave embarrassed explanations. Today the warning should be greatly extended to technological entertainment. But I would call thy words to mind none the less, and bid thee to become the Holy Grail. And indeed, when thou thou receivest the Holy Mysteries, thou receivest Christ as thy Lord and Saviour, thou art transformed by the supreme medicine, as thou tastest of the Fount of Immortality?

'Thou wert surprised to learn, and that outside the Orthodox Church, that when the Apostle bade you to put on the whole armour of Christ, the armour of Christ wert not merely armour owned by Christ, or armour given by Christ: it were such armour as God himself wears to war: the prophet Isaiah tells us that the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation are God's own armour which he weareth to war.

'Thou art asleep, my son and my child; awaken thou thyself! There is silver under the tarnishment that maketh all seem corrupt: take thou what God hath bestowed, rouse and waken thyself, and find the treasure with which thy God hath surrounded thee.'

Song III.

A Clearer Eye.

'We suffer more in imagination than reality,'
 Said Seneca the Younger,
 Quoted in rediscovery of Stoicism,
 That full and ancient philosophy,
 Can speak, act, and help today,
 Among athletes and business men,
 And not only scholars reading dusty tomes.
 And if thus much is in a school of mere philosophy,
 An individualist pursuit deepening division,
 What of the greatest philosophy in monasticism,
 What of the philosophy,
 Whose Teacher and God are One and the Same?

I stood amazed at God,
Trying to count my blessings,
Ere quickly I lost count.

III.

Then said I, 'I see much truth in thy words, but my fortunes have not been those of success. I went to Cambridge, with strategy of passing all my classes, and shining brightly on my thesis as I could; the Faculty of Divinity decided two thirds of the way through the year that my promptly declared dissertation topic was unfit for Philosophy of Religion, and made me choose another dissertation topic completely. I received no credit nor recognition for the half of my hardest work. That pales in comparison with Fordham, where I were pushed into informal office as ersatz counselour for my professors' insecurities, and the man in whom I had set my hopes met one gesture of friendship after another with one retaliation after another. Then I returned to the clumsy fit of programming, taken over by Agile models which require something I cannot do: becoming an interchangeable part of a hive mind. I have essayed work in User eXperience, but no work has yet crystallised, and the economy is adverse. What can I rightly expect from here?'

Ere he answered me, 'Whence askest thou the future? It is wondrous. And why speakest thou of thy fortune? Of a troth, no man hath ever had fortune. It were an impossibility.'

I sat a-right, a-listening.

He continued, 'Whilst at Fordham, in incompetent medical care, thou wert stressed to the point of nausea, for weeks on end. Thy worry wert not, "Will I be graced by the noble honourific of Doctor?" though that were far too dear to thee, but, "Will there be a place for me?" And thus far, this hath been in example "We suffer more in imagination than in reality." For though what thou fearest hath happened, what be its sting?

'Thou seekedst a better fit than as a computer programmer, and triedst, and God hath provided other than the success you imagined. What of it? Thou hast remained in the house of thy parents, a shameful thing for a man to seek, but right honourable for God to bestow if thou hast sought sufficiency and independence. Thou knowest that we are reckoned come Judgement on our performance of due diligence and not results achieved: that due diligence often carrieth happy results may be true, but it is nothing to the point. Thou art not only provided for even in this decline; thou hast luxuries that thou needest not.

'There is no such thing as fortune: only an often-mysterious Providence. God has a care each and all over men, and for that matter over stones, and naught that happeneth in the world escapeth God's cunning net. As thou hast quoted the Philokalia:

We ought all of us always to thank God for both the universal and the particular gifts of soul and body that He bestows on us. The universal gifts consist of the four elements and all that comes into being through them, as well as all the marvellous works of God mentioned in the divine Scriptures. The particular gifts consist of all that God has given to each individual. These include:

- Wealth, so that one can perform acts of charity.
- Poverty, so that one can endure it with patience and gratitude.
- Authority, so that one can exercise righteous judgement and establish virtue.
- Obedience and service, so that one can more readily attain salvation of soul.
- Health, so that one can assist those in need and undertake work worthy of God.
- Sickness, so that one may earn the crown of patience.
- Spiritual knowledge and strength, so that one may acquire virtue.
- Weakness and ignorance, so that, turning one's back on worldly things, one may be under obedience in stillness and humility.
- Unsought loss of goods and possessions, so that one may deliberately seek to be saved and may even be helped when incapable of shedding all one's possessions or even of giving alms.
- Ease and prosperity, so that one may voluntarily struggle and suffer to attain the virtues and thus become dispassionate and fit to save other souls.

- Trials and hardship, so that those who cannot eradicate their own will may be saved in spite of themselves, and those capable of joyful endurance may attain perfection.

All these things, even if they are opposed to each other, are nevertheless good when used correctly; but when misused, they are not good, but are harmful for both soul and body.

'And again:

He who wants to be an imitator of Christ, so that he too may be called a son of God, born of the Spirit, must above all bear courageously and patiently the afflictions he encounters, whether these be bodily illnesses, slander and vilification from men, or attacks from the unseen spirits. God in His providence allows souls to be tested by various afflictions of this kind, so that it may be revealed which of them truly loves Him. All the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs from the beginning of time traversed none other than this narrow road of trial and affliction, and it was by doing this that they fulfilled God's will. 'My son,' says Scripture, 'if you come to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for trial, set your heart straight, and patiently endure' (Ecclus. 2 : 1-2). And elsewhere it is said: 'Accept everything that comes as good, knowing that nothing occurs without God willing it.' Thus the soul that wishes to do God's will must strive above all to acquire patient endurance and hope. For one of the tricks of the devil is to make us listless at times of affliction, so that we give up our hope in the Lord. God never allows a soul that hopes in Him to be so oppressed by trials that it is put to utter confusion. As St Paul writes: 'God is to be trusted not to let us be tried beyond our strength, but with the trial He will provide a way out, so that we are able to bear it (I Cor. 10 : 13). The devil harasses the soul not as much as he wants but as much as God allows him to. Men know what burden may be placed on a mule, what on a donkey, and what on a camel, and load each beast accordingly; and the potter knows how long he must leave pots in the fire, so that they are not cracked by staying in it too long or rendered useless by being taken out of it before they are properly fired. If human understanding extends this far, must not God be much more aware, infinitely more aware, of the degree of trial it is right to impose on each soul, so that it becomes tried and true, fit for the kingdom of heaven?

Hemp, unless it is well beaten, cannot be worked into fine yarn, whilst the more it is beaten and carded the finer and more serviceable it becomes.

And a freshly moulded pot that has not been fired is of no use to man. And a child not yet proficient in worldly skills cannot build, plant, sow seed or perform any other worldly task. In a similar manner it often happens through the Lord's goodness that souls, on account of their childlike innocence, participate in divine grace and are filled with the sweetness and repose of the Spirit; but because they have not yet been tested, and have not been tried by the various afflictions of the evil spirits, they are still immature and not yet fit for the kingdom of heaven. As the apostle says: 'If you have not been disciplined you are bastards and not sons' (Heb. 12 : 8). Thus trials and afflictions are laid upon a man in the way that is best for him, so as to make his soul stronger and more mature; and if the soul endures them to the end with hope in the Lord it cannot fail to attain the promised reward of the Spirit and deliverance from the evil passions.

'Thou hast earned scores in math contests, yea even scores of math contests, ranking 7th nationally in the 1989 MathCounts competition. Now thou hast suffered various things and hast not the limelight which thou hadst, or believeth thou hadst, which be much the same thing. Again, what of it? God hath provided for thee, and if thou hast been fruitless in a secular arena, thou seekest virtue, and hast borne some fruit. Moreover thou graspest, in part, virtue that thou knewest not to seek when thou barest the ascesis of a mathematician or a member of the Ultramet. Thou seekest without end that thou mayest become humble, and knowest not that to earnestly seek humility is nobler than being the chiefest among mathematicians in history?

'The new Saint Seraphim, of Viritsa, hath written,

Have you ever thought that everything that concerns you, concerns Me, also? You are precious in my eyes and I love you; for his reason, it is a special joy for Me to train you. When temptations and the opponent [the Evil One] come upon you like a river, I want you to know that This was from Me.

I want you to know that your weakness has need of My strength, and your safety lies in allowing Me to protect you. I want you to know that when you are in difficult conditions, among people who do not understand you, and cast you away, This was from Me.

I am your God, the circumstances of your life are in My hands; you did not end up in your position by chance; this is precisely the position I have appointed for you. Weren't you asking Me to teach you humility? And there—I placed you precisely in the "school" where they teach this lesson. Your environment, and those who are around you, are performing My will. Do you

have financial difficulties and can just barely survive? Know that This was from Me.

I want you to know that I dispose of your money, so take refuge in Me and depend upon Me. I want you to know that My storehouses are inexhaustible, and I am faithful in My promises. Let it never happen that they tell you in your need, "Do not believe in your Lord and God." Have you ever spent the night in suffering? Are you separated from your relatives, from those you love? I allowed this that you would turn to Me, and in Me find consolation and comfort. Did your friend or someone to whom you opened your heart, deceive you? This was from Me.

I allowed this frustration to touch you so that you would learn that your best friend is the Lord. I want you to bring everything to Me and tell Me everything. Did someone slander you? Leave it to Me; be attached to Me so that you can hide from the "contradiction of the nations." I will make your righteousness shine like light and your life like midday noon. Your plans were destroyed? Your soul yielded and you are exhausted? This was from Me.

You made plans and have your own goals; you brought them to Me to bless them. But I want you to leave it all to Me, to direct and guide the circumstances of your life by My hand, because you are the orphan, not the protagonist. Unexpected failures found you and despair overcame your heart, but know That this was from Me.

With tiredness and anxiety I am testing how strong your faith is in My promises and your boldness in prayer for your relatives. Why is it not you who entrusted their cares to My providential love? You must leave them to the protection of My All Pure Mother. Serious illness found you, which may be healed or may be incurable, and has nailed you to your bed. This was from Me.

Because I want you to know Me more deeply, through physical ailment, do not murmur against this trial I have sent you. And do not try to understand My plans for the salvation of people's souls, but uncomplainingly and humbly bow your head before My goodness. You were dreaming about doing something special for Me and, instead of doing it, you fell into a bed of pain. This was from Me.

Because then you were sunk in your own works and plans and I wouldn't have been able to draw your thoughts to Me. But I want to teach you the most deep thoughts and My lessons, so that you may serve Me. I want to teach you that you are nothing without Me. Some of my best children are those who, cut off from an active life, learn to use the weapon of ceaseless prayer. You were called unexpectedly to undertake a difficult and responsible

position, supported by Me. I have given you these difficulties and as the Lord God I will bless all your works, in all your paths. In everything I, your Lord, will be your guide and teacher. Remember always that every difficulty you come across, every offensive word, every slander and criticism, every obstacle to your works, which could cause frustration and disappointment, This is from Me.

Know and remember always, no matter where you are, That whatsoever hurts will be dulled as soon as you learn In all things, to look at Me.

Everything has been sent to you by Me, for the perfection of your soul.

All these things were from Me.

'The doctors have decided that thy consumption of one vital medication is taken to excess, and they are determined to bring it down to an approved level, for thy safety, and for thy safety accept the consequence of thy having a string of hospitalizations and declining health, and have so far taken every pain to protect thee, and will do so even if their care *slay* thee.

'What of it? Thy purity of conscience is in no manner contingent on what others decide in their dealings with thee. It may be that the change in thy medicaments be less dangerous than it beseemeth thee. It may be unlawful to the utmost degree for thou to seek thine own demise: yet it is full lawful, and possible, for our God and the Author and Finisher of our faith to give thee a life complete and full even if it were cut short to the morrow.

'Never mind that thou seest not what the Lord may provide; thou hast been often enough surprised by the boons God hath granted thee. Thou hast written Repentance, Heaven's Best-Kept Secret, and thou knowest that repentance itself eclipseth the pleasure of sin. Know also that grievous men, and the devil himself, are all ever used by God according to his design, by the God who worketh all for all.

We do not live in the best of all possible worlds. Far from it. But we live under the care of the best of all possible Gods, and it is a more profound truth, a more vibrant truth, a truth that goes much deeper into the heart of root of all things to say that we may not live in the best of all possible worlds, but we live under the care of the best of all possible Gods.

'Know and remember also that happiness comes from within. Stop chasing after external circumstances. External circumstances are but a training ground for God to build strength within. Wittest thou not that thou art a man, and as man art constituted by the image of God? If therefore thou art constituted in the divine image, why lookest thou half to things soulless and dead for thy happiness?'

Song IV.*Virtue Unconquerable.*

I know that my Redeemer liveth,
 And with my eyes yet shall I see God,
 But what a painful road it has been,
 What a gesture of friendship has met a knife in my back.
 Is there grandeur in me for my fortitude?
 I only think so in moments of pride,
 With my grandeur only in repentance.
 And the circumstances around me,
 When I work, have met with a knife in the back.

IV.

The Golden-Mouthed said, 'Child, I know thy pains without thy telling, aye, and more besides: Church politics ain't no place for a Saint! Thou knowest how I pursued justice, and regarded not the face of man, drove out slothful servants, and spoke in boldness to the Empress. I paid with my life for the enemies I made in my service. You have a full kitchen's worth of knives in your back: I have an armory! I know well thy pains from within.

'But let us take a step back, far back.

'Happiness is of particular concern to you and to many, and if words in the eighteenth century spoke of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," now there are many people who make the pursuit of happiness all but a full-time occupation.

'In ages past a question of such import would be entrusted to enquiry and dialogue philosophic. So one might argue, in brief, that true happiness is a supreme thing, and God is a supreme thing, and since there can not be two separate supreme essences, happiness and God are the same, a point which could be argued at much greater length and eloquence. And likewise how the happy man is happy not because he is propped up from without, by external circumstance, but has chosen virtue and goodness inside. And many other things.

'But, and this says much of today and its berzerkly grown science, in which the crowning jewel of superstring theory hath abdicated from science's bedrock of experiment, happiness is such a thing as one would naturally approach through psychology, because psychology is, to people of a certain bent, the only conceivable tool to best study to understand men.

'One can always critique some detail, such as the import of what psychology calls "flow" as optimal experience. The founder of positive psychology, Martin Seligman,

outlined three versions of the good life: the *Pleasant Life*, which is the life of pleasure and the shallowest of the three; the *Engaged Life*, or the life of flow, called optimal experience, and the *Meaningful Life*, meaning in some wise the life of virtue.

'He says of the Pleasant Life that it is like vanilla ice cream: the first bite tastes delicious, but by the time you reach the fifth or sixth bite, you can't taste it any more. And here is something close to the Orthodox advice that a surplus of pleasures and luxuries, worldly honours and so on, do not make you happy. I tell you that one can be lacking in the most basic necessities and be happy: but let this slide.

'Of the Meaningful Life, it is the deepest of the three, but it is but a first fumbling in the dark of what the Orthodox Church has curated in the light of day. Things like kindness and mercy have built in to the baseline, curated since Christ or rather the Garden of Eden, so Orthodox need not add some extra practice to their faith to obtain kindness or gratitude. Really, the number of things the Orthodox Church has learned about the Meaningful Life far eclipse the *Philokalia*: the fount is inexhaustible.

'But my chief concern is with the Engaged Life, the life of flow. For flow is not "the psychology of optimal experience," or if it is, the *theology* of optimal experience hath a different base. Flow is legitimate and it is a wonder: but it is not additionally fit to be a normative baseline for mankind as a whole.

'Flow, as it occurs, is something exotic and obscure. It has been studied in virtuosos who are expert performers in many different domains. Once someone of surpassing talent has something like a decade of performance, it is possible when a man of this superb talent and training is so engrossed in a performance of whatever domain, that sits pretty much at the highest level of performance where essentially the virtuoso's entire attention is absorbed in the performance, and time flies because no attention is left to observe the passage of time or almost any other thing of which most of us are aware when we are awake.

'It seemeth difficult to me to market flow for mass consumption: doing such is nigh unto calling God an elitist, and making the foundation of a happy life all but impossible for the masses. You can be a subjectivist if you like and say that genius is five thousand hours' practice, but it is trained virtuoso talent and not seniority that even gets you through flow's door. For that matter, it is also well nigh impossible for the few to experience until they have placed years into virtuoso performance in their craft. Where many more are capable of being monastics. Monastics, those of you who are not monastics may rightly surmise, have experiences which monastics call it a disaster to share with you. That may be legitimate, but novices would do well not to expect a stream of uninterrupted exotic experiences, not when they start and perhaps not when they have long since taken monastic vows. A novice who seeth matters in terms of "drudgework" would do well to expect nothing but what the West calls "drudgework" for a long, long time. (And if all goeth well and thou incorporatest other obediences to the

diminution of drudgery, thou wilt at first lament the change!) A monastic, if all goes well, will do simple manual labour, but freed from relating to such labour as drudgery: forasmuch as monastics and monastic clergy recall "novices' obediences", it is with nostalgia, as a yoke that is unusually easy and a burden unusually light.

'And there is a similitude between the ancient monastic obedience that was par excellence the bread and butter of monastic manual labour, and the modern obedience. For in ancient times monks wove baskets to earn their keep, and in modern times monks craft incense. And do not say that the modern obedience is nobler, for if anything you sense a temptation, and a humbler obedience is perhaps to be preferred.

'But in basket making or incense making alike, there is a repetitive manual labour. There are, of course, any number of other manual obediences in a monastery today. However, when monasticism has leeway, its choice seems to be in favour of a repetitive manual labour that gives the hands a regular cycle of motion whilst the heart is left free for the Jesus Prayer, and the mind in the heart practices a monk's watchfulness or *nipsis*, an observer role that traineth thee to notice and put out temptations when they are a barely noticeable spark, rather than heedlessly letting the first temptation grow towards acts of sin and waiting until thy room be afire before fightest thou the blaze. This watchfulness is the best optimal experience the Orthodox Church gives us in which to abide, and 'tis no accident that the full and unabridged title of the *Philokalia* is *The Philokalia of the Niptic Fathers*. If either of these simple manual endeavours is unfamiliar or makes the performer back up in thought, this is a growing pain, not the intended long-term effect. And what is proposed is proposed to everybody in monasticism and really God-honoured marriage too, in force now that the *Philokalia* hath come in full blossom among Orthodox in the world, that optimum experience is for everyone, including sinners seeking the haven of monasticism, and not something exotic for very few.

'And remember how thou wast admonished by a monk, perhaps in echo of St. James the Brother of God who said, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." For thou wert in the trapeza, with the monk and with a janitorial lady, and he told the janitorial lady that she was fortunate, for her manual labour left her free to pray with her mind, and thou, a computer programmer at the time, wert unfortunate because thy work demanded thy full mental attention.

'Forsooth! If thou canst have optimal experience, the Jesus Prayer in thy heart as the metronome of silence, if thy business were to weave baskets or craft incense, why not indeed can one attend to the Jesus Prayer, rising as incense before God, in mopping a floor or cleaning windows? For however great monasticism may be, it hath not aught of monopoly in meditative work and prayer before God. Marriage is the older instrument of salvation. The door is open, if thou canst do some manual labour, to do so

in prayer to God. And monks are not alone permitted prayerful manual labour: monasticism is but the rudiments of the Gospel, and if monasticism seeketh out perhaps a boon in prayerful manual labour, this is hardly a barbed wire fence with a sign saying that prayerful manual labour is reserved only for monastics.

'Let us say that this is true, and the theology of optimum experience is virtually accepted for the sake of argument, or if thou preferest, thou mayest answer it "Yes" and "Amen." Still, I say it is a quibble, compared to the darker import. Let us set the point aside, and with good reason.'

Then he paused, and ere a moment resumed explaining. 'If I may pull a rare note from the wreckage postmodern, there is the concept of a semiotic frame, perhaps a myth, that determines a society's possibles et pensables, that which is understood to be possible in a society, and that which is found to even be thinkable. The knife cuts well against some radicals. And people are in blinders about activism and psychology.

'Think of thy feminist theology professor, who said both right and full that she believed in Tradition, and in the same breath placed Arius, the father of heretics, alongside St. Athanasius as equally full representatives of that Tradition. When in your theological anthropology class she picked two texts for disability, the obvious agenda, the one and only thing to do for autism (as her agenda fell) was to engage some activist political advocacy for to make conditions in some wise more favourable for that particular victim class. No expression of love was possible save additional political activism. And I would say, and thou wouldst say, that she were too political in her response, and not nearly political enough. (For when all is civil warfare carried on by other means, real concern for the life of the polis but starves.)

'Yet one of these reading assignments contained what she did not grasp. Of the two, one was what could be straightforwardly be called either or both of political ideology and identity politics, and it was complete with the standard, footnoteless, boilerplate opening assertion that no one else in the whole wide world could possibly have suffering that could be compared to that of one's own poor, miserable demographic.

'But the other text was different in many ways. It was entitled "Love Without Boundaries," and it was a text about love written by the father of a severely autistic son. This latter text did not come close to calling for agitation or plans for a better future: far from it—on these points it is silent. What it did do, however, was take an approach in ascesis, and learn to love without limits. The father did not and could not cure his son, but whether or not the father's love transformed his son, the love the father expressed transformed the father. His love was cut from the same cloth as the peace with oneself which St. Isaac and St. Seraphim with one voice exhort us to acquire, and the love the father expressed rendered him Godlike, in a humble, everyday, ordinary fashion.

'And in like wise to how thy professor automatically jumped to political activism as how one might exhibit right care for the severely autistic and other disabled, in this day and age the go-to discipline for understanding humans is psychology, and a psychology fashioning itself after hard science, introducing itself by what might be called the physics envy declaration: psychologists-are-scientists-and-they-are-just-as-much-scientists-as-people-in-the-so-called-hard-sciences-like-physics.

'It is a side point that psychologists treat subjects as less-than-human: a near-universal feature of psychological experiment is some stripe of guile, because psychological experimental value would be ruined under normal conditions of intelligent and informed cooperation between fellow men. (Though the enterprise may be named "psychology", the name were oafishly or treacherously applied: for the name be drawn from the Greek for the study that understands the psyche or soul, a psyche or soul is precisely what the discipline will not countenance in man.) Forsooth! Men running experiments think and make decisions; subjects in experiments are governed by laws. Moreover, since physics hath worked long and hard to de-anthropomorphise what it studies, physics envy biddeth psychology to seek well a de-anthropomorphised theory of ἀνθρώπος (anthropos), man.

'It hath been noted, as psychology reinvent more of religion, that classical clinical psychology can raise a person suffering from some mental illness to be as normal, but nought more. And so positive psychology chaseth after means of enhancement and excellence, to best make use of giftedness. Meanwhilst, whilst this invention is brand new, it is well over a millennium since monasticism was at one stroke a hospital for repentant sinners and an academy for excellence.

'The point primarily to be held is that psychology is not the ultimate real way, but one among many ways, of understanding how people work, and one that hath stopped its ear to our being created in the image of God. *All great Christian doctrines are rendered untranslatable.* The article form of what is also thine advisor's thesis hath as its subtitle "From Christian Passions to Secular Emotions," and it discusseth the formation of psychology as an emergent secular realm which hath displaced older candidates. But in the West before the reign of psychology there were pastoral paradigms for understanding the human person, and thou knowest that one of the first technical terms Orthodoxy asketh its converts to learn is "passion:" and if the passions thine advisor hath discussed are not point-for-point identical to the passions repented of in Eastern Orthodoxy, still they be by far closer than any of the several emergent framings and meanings of "emotion" as pushed for in the discipline of psychology.

'That there be a common term for psychology, and more dubiously one for what it replaced, is of little import for us. The term "pneumatology" may have existed and named practitioners from an older tradition; but such were under religious auspices. The study and field of communication is, among fields of enquiry studied in the

academy, of vintage historically recent: yet it would be right stunning to deny that people communicated, and tried better to communicate, before the change when a university department door now heralded and announced, "DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION."

'And what has psychology done since being established as a secular arena? Robert Heinlein in *Stranger in a Strange Land* gets on very quickly to utterly dismissing marriage. But no sooner does Michael stop flailing marriage's lifeless corpse, but he hath made a gaping hole and buildeth up a bond of water brotherhood that is meant to be every bit as heroic, beautiful, and magnificent, that the only remaining way to make water brotherhood truly more wondrous and amazing were to enlarge it until it grew to become true marriage.

'Psychology, whilst being secular, in its completion offers ersatz religion that, though meant to be value-free, provides a secular mystical theology. That this secular religion, fit for all religions and patients, uses guided imagery allegedly from some generic copy-paste of Chinese medicine, Tibetan Buddhism, Native American traditions, and goeth back to Graeco-Roman times; mindfulness from Buddhism's Eightfold Noble Path; and yoga from Hinduism is but an illustration of G.K. Chesterton's observation: the man who does not believe in God does not believe in nothing; he believes anything. But put this aside and take psychology's claim of secularity at face value. The *Philokalia* is scarcely but a library of collected works about how to rightly live the inner life. It is not in the main concerned with pleasure or joy: but it has an infinite amount to say about repenting from sins that bear Hell each and every one. Psychology does not trade in temptation, sin, or passion: but it too offers a rudder for one's inner life, and if it teacheth not the extirpation of things that sully the soul's purity, it has infinite reach in a battleplan to not be conquered by negative emotion.

'And if I may speak to thee of TED talks, there is probably a TED talk to be made, "The Trouble with TED," for they exacerbate this. As thou knowest, one talk gave the staggering announcement that after decades of each generation having higher self-esteem than the last, and the lamented consequence arising that our youth in particular reach record levels of narcissism. Well might she announce that if thou sprayest fuel around and throwest lighted matches on the fuel, sooner or sooner thou wilt have a blaze about thee.

'She also talked about self-touch, about it being soothing to place thy hand over thy heart. Forsooth! This is placed among the same general heading of making love without a partner. Not a whisper was heard mentioning affection towards another person, or for that matter a pet; the remedy stepped not an inch away from solipsism. Monks as thou knowest are admonished to refrain from embraces: be that as it may, it would be healthier for a monk to embrace another than to embrace himself.'

I said, 'What is the trouble with TED? For I sense something askance, yet to put a finger on it is hard.'

His All Holiness answered me and said, 'All world religions have grandeur, and for an analysis secular all world religions represent a way that a society can live together and persevere. Hinduism is not the sort of thing one uses up, whether across years, lifetimes, or centuries even; its spiritual paths are millennia old, and to destroy it would likely take nuclear war or an apocalyptic event. By contrast, remember thou how thou hast said, "No form of feminism that has yet emerged is stable:" easily enough one finds the living force of body image feminism today, whilst it would scarce be live in the academy in fifty years. Thy friend answered thy remark of something called "Christian feminism," which articulates how traditional Christianity cares for, and seeks, the good of women: for an example, it takes politically incorrect words about husbands and wives and offers the breathtaking change of addressing women as moral agents, and never telling husbands to keep wives in line. That is if anything the exception that proves the rule: for it may bear the external label of "feminism," but its core be much slower to decay than any feminism at all, for it is not feminism at all. In thy feminist theology class one author said that in feminist theology, "all the central terms are up for grabs." Meanwhilst, remember thy superior when thou wert an assistant at a bookstore. He hath told thee that books of liberal theology have a shelf life; after five years, perhaps, they are hard to sell. Meanwhilst, his shop published and sold Puritan sermons three centuries old. Thou mayest have a care that they are heterodox: but do not have a care that they will go out of fashion, or if they do go out of fashion, it will not be because the sermons lost their appeal to future Protestants seeking Biblical faith, but something else hath changed features of Protestantism that have survived since the Reformation.

'Thou needest not refute TED talks; a few years and a given talk will likely be out of fashion. There is something in the structure of TED that is liberal, even if many talks say nothing overtly political: forasmuch, there is more to say than that they are self-contained, controlled, plastic things, where world religions are something organic that may or may not have a central prophet, but never have a central planner. TED is a sort of evolving, synthetic religion, and it cannot fill true spiritual hunger.

'But let us return to psychology, or rather treat psychology and TED talks, for psychology hath of ages hoped for a Newton who would lead them into the Promised Land full status of being scientists. The study of Rocks and Nothing is the exemplar after which to pattern the study of Man. Forsooth! The problems in psychology are not so much where psychology has failed to understand Man on the ensauple of empirical science. The real concerns are for where they have *succeeded*.

'In a forum discussion thou readst, a conversation crystallised on care for diabetes, and cardinally important advice not to seek a book-smart nurse, but a diabetic nurse. For it is the case with empirical science that it entirely lacketh in empirical

character. In psychology, as oft in other disciplines, a sufficiently skilled practitioner can pick up a book about part of the subject he does not yet understand, and understand well enough what there is to understand. Understanding were never nursed on the practice of direct experience, and understanding here is malnourished.

'However, the Orthodox Church with monasticism as its heart has genuine empiricism as its spine; you know with the knowing by which Adam knew Eve. All else is rumour and idle chatter. If there are qualifications to being a spiritual father, one of the chief of these must be that he speaks and acts out of first-hand encounter and first-hand knowledge, not that he learned by rumour and distortion. Dost wish that thou be healed by a spiritual physician? Seek thou then a man which will care for thee as a diabetic nurse.'

Song V.

O Holy Mother!

O Holy Mother! Art Thou the Myst'ry?
 Art Thou the Myst'ry untold?
 For I have written much,
 And spent much care,
 In *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*,
 And looked all the whilst,
 Down the wrong end,
 Of the best telescope far and away that I could find.
 I have written of man and creation defiled,
 Yet for all my concerns,
 Of so-called 'space-conquering technologies,'
 Which it beseemeth me 'body-conquering technologies,'
 Sidestepping the God-given and holy bounds,
 Of our embodied state,
 Where better to seek healing,
 For an occult-free simulation,
 Of the unnatural vice of magick arts,
 Than in the perfect creaturely response,
 'Behold the handmaiden of the Lord.
 Be it unto me according to thy word.'
 Then, the gates, nay, the foundations,
 The foundations of Hell began a-crumbling,
 The New Eve, the Heavenly Mother,
 Whom Christ told the Disciple,

'Behold thy Mother!
 In Her is the microcosm of Creation aright,
 And She is the Friend and Comfort,
 Of the outcast, and the poor:
 My money, my property, I stand to lose:
 But no man can take from me,
 A Treasure vaster than the Heavens;
 Perhaps I would do well,
 To say little else of technologies progressively degrading humanity,
 And pray an Akathist to the Theotokos,
 And put a trust in Her that is proto-Antiochian,
 Rather than proto-Alexandrian,
 And give Her a trust in the great Story,
 Diminished not one whit,
 If She happeneth not to be a teacher,
 Offering such ideas as philosophers like:
 Her place in the Great Story is far greater than that:
 And such it is also,
 With illumined teachers,
 Who offer worship to God as their teaching,
 And are in travail,
 Until Christ be formed in their disciples.

V.

He said, 'But let us return to the pursuit of happiness, which hath scathingly been called "the silliest idea in the history of mankind." And that for a junior grade of pursuing happiness, not the clone of a systematic science which worketh out a combination of activities and practices, an America's Test Kitchen for enjoying life, studying ways of manipulating oneself to produce pleasure and happiness.

'It were several years ago that thou tookest a Fluxx deck to play with friends, and the group included five adults and one very little boy. So the adults took turns, not just in their moves, but (for a player who had just played a move) in paying attention to the little one, so that he were not looking on a social meeting that excluded him.

'When it were thy turn to look after the boy, thou liftedst him to thy shoulders and walkedst slowly, gingerly, towards the kitchen, because thou wishedst to enter the kitchen, but thou wert not sure thou couldst walk under the kitchen's lower ceiling without striking his head.

'Shortly after, thou realizedst three things: firstly, that the boy in fact had *not* struck his head on the kitchen ceiling, even though thou hadst advanced well into the kitchen area; secondly, that the boy was dragging his fingers on the ceiling; and thirdly and finally, that he was laughing and laughing, full of joy.

'That wert a source of pleasure that completely eclipsed the game of Fluxx, though it were then a favourite game. And when thou askedst if it were time for thy next move, it were told thee that the game was won.

'In the conversation afterwards, thou wert told a couple of things worthy of mention.

'First, and perhaps of no great import, thou gavest the boy a pleasure that neither of his parents could offer. The boy's father wert a few inches taller than thee, and were he to attempt what thou attemptedst, he in fact *would* have struck his son's head against the ceiling. The boy's mother could not either have offered the favour to her son; whether because her thin arms were weaker, or something else: God wot.

'Second of all, as mentioned by an undergraduate psychologist, it gives people joy to give real pleasure to another person, and the case of children is special. She did not comment or offer comparison between knowing thou hast given pleasure to any age in childhood and knowing thou hast given pleasure to an adult, but she did comment, and her comment were this: the boy were guileless: too young to just be polite, too young for convincing guile, perhaps too young for any guile worthy of the name. That meant, whether or not thou thoughtest on such terms, that his ongoing and delighted laughter were only, and could only be, from unvarnished candour. Wherewith thou hadst no question of "Does he enjoy what I am doing with him, or is he just being polite?" Just being polite were off the table.

'And this is not even only true for the royal race of men. Thou hast not right circumstance to lawfully and responsibly own a pet, but without faintest compromise of principle, thou visitest a pet shelter nearby to thine own home, and at the shelter also, guile is off the agenda, at least for the pets. A cat can purr, or if it hath had enough human attention for the nonce and thou hast perhaps not attended to its swishing tail, a light nip and swipe of claw is alike of unvarnished candour. Whereby thou knowest of a truth what a cat desireth and conveyeth if it purreth and perchance licketh thine hand.

'Which were subsumed under a general troth, that it is better to serve than to be served, and it is better to give than receive. What is more, the most concentrated teaching about who be truly happy is enshrined in the Sermon on the Mount, and enshrined again as the shorthand version of that great Sermon chanted in the Divine Liturgy:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

'The word translated, "blessed," μακαριος (makarios, hath what we would count as at least two meanings in English: "blessed," and "happy." Among English Bible translations there are some, but a few, translations which render the word as "happy," including Young's Literal Translation:

Happy the poor in spirit — because theirs is the reign of the heavens.

Happy the mourning — because they shall be comforted.

Happy the meek — because they shall inherit the land.

Happy those hungering and thirsting for righteousness — because they shall be filled.

Happy the kind — because they shall find kindness.

Happy the clean in heart — because they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers — because they shall be called Sons of God.

Happy those persecuted for righteousness' sake — because theirs is the reign of the heavens.

Happy are ye whenever they may reproach you, and may persecute, and may say any evil thing against you falsely for my sake — Rejoice ye and be glad, because your reward [is] great in the heavens, for thus did they persecute the prophets who were before you.

'In English this is usually, but not always, found in more free translations; the Amplified Bible naturally shines in cases like these as an deliberately unusual translation style intended to render two or more faces of an ambiguity or a phrase bearing multiple meanings. Other languages can be different; in French, for instance, there are separate words *beni* and *heureux* which respectively mean "blessed" and

"happy," but *heureux* appears to be the term of choice in French translation of the Beatitudes.

'Here, though, the Gospel hath aught in common with Plato. Plato investigated happiness, and the Greek term used was εὐδαιμονία, eudaimonia, almost exactly a literal equivalent to "in good spirits," but the literal sense was taken much more seriously and much farther. It was a primary term for happiness, but what was seen as true happiness was having one's spirit in good health. This happiness would not be easily confused by counterfeit pleasures such as one can immediately procure with narcotics; and the point is not that real-world narcotics create addiction and horrible misery. The happiness would be just as counterfeit in the pleasure of a person unhealthy in spirit to take some imaginary narcotic that created intense and endless pleasure, without either addiction or the misery that loom in the grievous backswing of narcotic pleasure.

'Thou rememberest thy surprise, when reading thine undergraduate psychology text, when thou readedst what wert said of the pleasure principle. For the pleasure principle art an artifact of bad philosophy, which noting perchance that most of our actions bring some pleasure or pleasing result, assumes and defines that every action anyone ever takes is that which is calculated to bring thee the most pleasure. In settings less far back, thou hast listened to people saying that the only motivation anyone takes for any action is that it is calculated to bring them the greatest economic profit, and thou hast borrowed an answer, to say that several people have essayed to convince thee of this as truth, and so far as thou knewest, not one of them stood to gain financial profit from convincing thyself of this purported truth.

'Thy textbook, like those who try to convince with a charming smile where a reasoned argument is ordinarily polite to offer, said that it were more a virtue than a vice to show kindnesses to others because one enjoyed the feelings it gave, and thou hadst two answers in thy heart: first of all, past the sugar-coating of "more a virtue than a vice" lies an assertion that virtue is impossible in principle, and secondly, that the only theoretical possibility thou couldst care for the poor in order to help thy fellow men is if one received absolutely no pleasure or consolation in any stripe or dimension to care for the poor out of a genuine motive of benefitting others and not whatever probable pleasures their generosity and service might come back their way. That appalling price tag reaches beyond exorbitant. And thou desirest to speak of a "masochism principle" or "pain principle" whereby all decisions and all actions at all times by all men are whatever is calculated to bring them the greatest sufferings, alike useless to assert for any philosopher worthy of the name. It is hardly to be denied that most decisions bring some pain or have some downside on the part of the persons who make them, so a pain principle mirroring a pleasure principle is alike unprovable, and alike unfalsifiable, an untestable guess that hath not any place in science and scarcely more any place in

disciplines seeking to be established as science. It was not until later that thou readst a competent philosopher who said that the existence of pleasure and a reward does not in and of itself make any action which brings pleasure to be motivated solely as a means to obtain pleasure. The thought-experiment were posed, that a man who gives to the poor and enjoys doing so were offered a pill which would give him the full pleasure and benefits of his generosity, but do nothing at all for the practical needs of the poor, would be in but rare cases utterly spurned as a right empty and worthless counterfeit.

Song VI.

Crossing the Great Threshold.

The tale were told,
 Of a child starkly scant of mind,
 Who received a glittering package, a gift,
 And kept the glittering package,
 Indeed taking it with him well nigh everywhere,
 And after long time,
 When the disposable wrapping paper,
 Were well battered and now dingy,
 An adult asked,
 'Aren't you going to open the package?'
 The child exclaimed with joy,
 Once the toy emerged from the tatters,
 And squealed with joy, saying,
 "Oh, there's *another* present!"
 My Lord and my God!
 Perhaps I will never open,
 The Sermon on the Mount.

VI.

I said myself then, 'O John! O glorious Saint John! Canst thou lead me on a path into the The Sermon on the Mount? For I have trod the path of self-direction, and it well nigh destroyed me.'

Then the Saint said to me, 'Thanks to thee, son, for thy request. I awaited that thou mightest ask, for that thou mightest have the Heavenly reward for asking.

'That which you ask were a work of years or lifetimes; let me chase a humbler quarry: unfolding the first verse only of that great Sermon, which declareth the poor in spirit to be blessed and happy. I will speak to you of the riches of poverty but not the

heights of humility, though they be one and the same. Though I may call on other verses to tell what riches are in poverty, I will make no attempt to unfold these other Beatitudes, though to them that which declared the blessedness of poverty that wert one and the same. And I tell thee, through thine interests, that to be poor in spirit is to be no self-sufficient solipsist; rather, it is utterly dependent on the infinite riches of God, and that it is royal: for kings are forbidden to touch money, and in another sense all Christians and especially all monastics are forbidden to touch aught possession, not solely money, in stead of grasping as did the rich young ruler. But poverty be the unstopping of yon Sermon, an unstopping of virtue in which flowing fount eclipseth flowing fount.

That true poverty extendeth beyond a lack of possessions is taught by calling those blessed who are "poor in spirit," beyond mere poverty of the body, and it is taught that the monastic vow of poverty includeth the other two: for a monk is bereft of the normal blessing of holy matrimony, and even of his own self-will. That thou knowest as treasure, for thou wishest to trade thine own idiorhythmic self-direction for a coenobetic monastery, and to speak even more plainly, the direction of an abbot.

'In the Sermon on the Mount, poverty beseemeth to be special, for there are two passages: that which commendeth the storing treasures up in Heaven and rejecting the storing up of treasures on earth, then discussion of the eye as the lamp of the body, then exhortation to take no thought for the morrow, for God knoweth and willeth to care for our needs. And when thou hast wealth, be merciful to others, and thou wilt be repaid at great usury by thy true Debtor, God.

'In fact there is one passage and topic, the longest though length in verses is a trivial measure. The tri-unity is harder to see in modern translations that translate something out to be accessible; one reads of one's eye being "healthy" or "sound". The King James version rightly renders "single", for an undivided wholeness. Fr. Thomas Hopko hath said, before the surge of enthusiasm for mindfulness, "Be awake and attentive, fully present where you are." This attentiveness and full presence is the operation of an activity that is single, that neither layeth up possessions, nor defendeth them in worry, nor doubteth that the God who provideth will overlook thee in His care. In all these is dispersal and dissipation. Poverty of spirit maketh for singleness of eye, and a singleness destroyed by so many of the technologies you trade in.

'It has from ancient times been reckoned that if thou givest to the poor, God is thy Debtor, and under what you would call third world living conditions, I told married Christians to leave to their children brothers rather than things. This too is poverty of spirit, even if it belong only in marriage, in a condition monks renounce. Thou hast read of those who suggest that thou asketh not, "Can I afford what I need?" but "Do I need what I can afford?"

'It is monastic poverty that monastics do not defend themselves, not only by force, but even with words, showing the power that terrified Pontius Pilate. It is monastic poverty not to struggle again over any temporal matter. It is poverty of spirit not to have plans, nor, in the modern sense, an identity. For in ancient times, Christians who were martyred, answered when asked their names, none other than "Christian." And beyond this further layers yet beckon. Poverty is not an absence of treasures; it is a positive, active, thing that slices sharper than any two-edged sword. And monks who renounce property sometimes have something to say beyond "Good riddance!" The force of the rejection, and the freedom that is gained in letting riches go, is more like the obscene and thundering announcement: "I lost 235 pounds in one weekend!"

"Thou readedst a church sign saying, "Who is rich? The person who is content." And I tell thee that thou canst purchase by poverty of spirit many times and layers more than contentment with what thou possessest now. I have not even scratched the surface of experiences of monastics who were poor in spirit to a profound degree, but thou knowest that there are limits to what is lawful for me to utter to thee, and thou knowest that thou art not bidden to chase after experiences, but seek to repent of thy sins for the rest of thy life, which thou knowest to reckon as monastic privilege.'

Song VII.

I Sing a Song to my Apple.

Betimes my salad days were right begun,
 I programmed an Apple][,
 In gradeschool adventure games and a 4D maze,
 Simple arithmetic- and trigonometric-powered animations.
 My father a computer scientist,
 Who shared with me his joy,
 And in high school a Unix system administrator became.
 My family got, and still hath the carcass,
 Of one original 'fat Mac',
 So named because it had an available maximum 512k of RAM.
 My calculator in high school,
 On which I programmed computer-generated art,
 And a simple video game, had as much.
 Ere my salad days were dwindled,
 I remained a Unix programmer,
 And judged Mac OSX my preferred flavor of Unix.
 Later I had iPhones,
 And for the first time in my life,

Owned a computer where I lacked root privilege.
Along the way I got an Apple Watch,
My desire increased as I read about it,
And vanished when I learned it were,
Bereft of such things as even a web browser.
I gave it to my brother,
Who later gave it back before it broke.
I sing a song to my Apple,
A peerless 17" MacBook Pro,
Which through minor design flaw,
Burned through video cards oft enough,
And when the Apple Store stopped receiving those cards,
So with it went any hope of keeping my Mac without frequent \$500 repairs.
And along the way,
With the sweetness of a Linux virtual machine,
Realized that OSX had grown monstrous as a version of Unix.
When I asked about one cardinaly important open source project,
I were told that Apple had removed parts of the operating system,
That the project needed to run,
But information technology work in my Linux virtual machine,
Was the command line equivalent of point and click.
It were a discovery as if I had returned to Paradise.
I sing a song to Apple's technical support,
For when I asked a question,
About command-line-driven Apache configuration,
It took escalations up to level 3 technical support,
Before a Genius knew that Macs *have* a command line.
I purchased a computer meant to last many years.
I sing a song to my late iPhone,
Bewailed by men who made the Mac great,
Which slipped a pocket near a food bank,
Booted my laptop into Windows and found,
That Find My iPhone was now rendered useless.
I went to see an Apple Store,
And received a followup call,
Giving a good ten days before I could access my iPhone,
And found out also that Macs were as useless,
As my computer booted into Windows,
To Find My iPhone.

Once I had one from each four,
Offerings for Apple computers:
A laptop one, an iPad one,
An iPhone one, an Apple Watch one;
And ere I were negotiating,
For to buy a replacement iPhone on eBay,
I said that there were many Android devices within my budget,
And whilst in bed realized,
I wanted full well that the negotiation fail.
Apple's indirect gift to desktops may be Windows,
And Apple's indirect gift to smartphones may be Android;
For surely no iPhone killer before Android even came close.
Certainly Windows Mobile answered the wrong question.
But even if one may argue, legitimately,
That a Mac and a PC have grown remarkably similar,
And iOS and Android are also more alike than different,
I was not poisoned by technical merits.
I was poisoned by the corporate mindset,
That all but killed my prospects,
Of finding my iPhone before the battery were drained completely,
And when I called my iPhone to perchance find it in my car,
I went to voicemail immediately:
My iPhone's battery wert already dead.
I had known, but not paid attention earlier,
To Steve Jobs as beyond toxic, as a boss;
Screaming and abusive,
To employees he had every reason to cherish,
And after a technical fumble,
Publicly fired an Apple technician,
At an employee motivational event.
And I believed it.
More disturbed I was,
When I read of Jobs's spiritual practices,
Such as an Orthodox might interpret,
As opening the mind to listen,
And draw the milk of dragons.
Technology does things for us,
Though I have found that when I shared my iOS devices with children,
Squabble and squabble ensued.

Technology does things for us,
But this Trojan horse does things for devils also,
Who cannot give exquisitely beneficial gifts,
Even wert they to try.
The power of devils is real but limited:
Such teaches the *Philokalia*,
Which though it be filled with love of the beautiful,
Says more about the operations and activities of devils,
Than aught else that I have read.
And one thing it sayeth,
Through Orthodox Christian Tradition,
Says that devils can tell a man's spiritual state,
And try to inject venomous thoughts in temptation,
Where men have free will, still,
The devils cannot read minds,
Even if they by ruse give one man certain thoughts,
Sting another that the thoughts are in the first man,
And behold, they speak and art deceived,
That devils can read people's minds.
Devilish predictions are called guesses,
Which are sometimes wrong,
The devils see a man walking to journey,
And guess that he travels to visit another specific man,
But 'tis guesswork; devils can well enough be wrong.
St. Nilus's alleged prophecies are dubious at present,
But we may not yet be in the clear.
And if the U.S. has been called "One nation under surveillance,"
Where No Such Agency has received every email,
It is now clear and open knowledge,
To those that will reflect,
That among most most Americans,
'Every breath and step Americans take,'
Is monitored by Big Brother,
But perhaps it is not just human agencies,
That reap the information collected.
++ungood

(Did anyone besides my most reverend Archbishop mention that it used to be that you had to seek out pornography, and leave your car in front of a store with papered-over windows, and wear your trenchcoat disguise for the mission, whereas

now pornography seeks you?

It is something like a water cooler that hath three faucets,
Serving cold water, hot water, and antifreeze,
And the handles perplexing in their similitude.)

VII.

The Saint turned to me and said, 'I would remind thee of Fr. Thomas's famous 55 maxims:

55 Maxims by Fr. Thomas Hopko

1. Be always with Christ and trust God in everything.
2. Pray as you can, not as you think you must.
3. Have a keepable rule of prayer done by discipline.
4. Say the Lord's Prayer several times each day.
5. Repeat a short prayer when your mind is not occupied.
6. Make some prostrations when you pray.
7. Eat good foods in moderation and fast on fasting days.
8. Practice silence, inner and outer.
9. Sit in silence 20 to 30 minutes each day.
10. Do acts of mercy in secret.
11. Go to liturgical services regularly.
12. Go to confession and holy communion regularly.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings.

14. Reveal all your thoughts and feelings to a trusted person regularly.
15. Read the scriptures regularly.
16. Read good books, a little at a time.
17. Cultivate communion with the saints.
18. Be an ordinary person, one of the human race.
19. Be polite with everyone, first of all family members.
20. Maintain cleanliness and order in your home.
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
22. Exercise regularly.
23. Live a day, even a part of a day, at a time.
24. Be totally honest, first of all with yourself.
25. Be faithful in little things.
26. Do your work, then forget it.
27. Do the most difficult and painful things first.
28. Face reality.
29. Be grateful.
30. Be cheerful.
31. Be simple, hidden, quiet and small.
32. Never bring attention to yourself.

"The Good Parts"

33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake and attentive, fully present where you are.
35. Think and talk about things no more than necessary.
36. Speak simply, clearly, firmly, directly.
37. Flee imagination, fantasy, analysis, figuring things out.
38. Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
39. Don't complain, grumble, murmur or whine.
40. Don't seek or expect pity or praise.
41. Don't compare yourself with anyone.
42. Don't judge anyone for anything.
43. Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
44. Don't defend or justify yourself.
45. Be defined and bound by God, not people.
46. Accept criticism gracefully and test it carefully.
47. Give advice only when asked or when it is your duty.
48. Do nothing for people that they can and should do for themselves.
49. Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim and caprice.
50. Be merciful with yourself and others.

51. Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.
52. Focus exclusively on God and light, and never on darkness, temptation and sin.
53. Endure the trial of yourself and your faults serenely, under God's mercy.
54. When you fall, get up immediately and start over.
55. Get help when you need it, without fear or shame.

The Saint continued: 'Wouldst thou agree that we are in a high noon of secret societies?'

I answered, 'Of a troth.'

He asked, 'Wouldst thou agree that those societies are corrosive?'

I answered, 'As a rule, yes, and I wit that Orthodox are forbidden on pain of excommunication to join the Freemasons.'

He spoke again and asked me, 'And hast thou an opinion about the assassination of JFK, whether it wert a conspiracy?'

I said, 'A friend whose judgement I respect in matters political hath told me an opinion that there in fact was a conspiracy, and it were driven by LBJ.'

He said, 'And hast thou spent five full minutes in worrying about either in the past year?'

I said, 'Nay.'

He said, 'Thou hast secular intelligence if thou canst ask if "surveillance from Hell" in an obviously figurative sense might also be "surveillance from Hell" far more literally speaking, but such intelligence as this does not help one enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The devils each and every one are on a leash, and as thy priest hath said many times, every thing that happeneth to us is either a blessing from God, or a temptation that God hath allowed for our strengthening. Wherefore whether the devils have more information than in ages past, thou wert still best to live:

Focus exclusively on God and light, and never on darkness, temptation and sin.

Song VIII.*A Hymn to Arrogance.*

The Saint opened his Golden Mouth and sang,
'There be no war in Heaven,
Not now, at very least,
And not ere were created,
The royal race of mankind.
Put on your feet the Gospel of peace,
And pray, a-stomping down the gates of Hell.
There were war in Heaven but ever brief,
The Archangel Saint Michael,
Commander of the bodiless hosts,
Said but his name, "Michael,"
Which is, being interpreted,
"Who is like God?"
With that the rebellion were cast down from Heaven,
Sore losers one and all.
They remain to sharpen the faithful,
God useth them to train and make strength.
Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?
Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?
As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up,
Or as if the staff should lift up itself,
As if it were no wood.
Therefore be not dismayed,
If one book of Holy Scripture state,
That the Devil incited King David to a census,
And another sayeth that God did so,
For God permitted it to happen by the Devil,
As he that heweth lifteth an axe,
And God gave to David a second opportunity,
In the holy words of Joab.
Think thou not that God and the Devil are equal,
Learnest thou enough of doctrine,
To know that God is greater than can be thought,
And hath neither equal nor opposite,
The Devil is if anything the opposite,
Of Michael, the Captain of the angels,

Though truth be told,
 In the contest between Michael and the Devil,
 The Devil fared him not well.
 The dragon wert as a little boy,
 Standing outside an Emperor's palace,
 Shooting spitwads with a peashooter,
 Because that wert the greatest harm,
 That he saweth how to do.
 The Orthodox Church knoweth well enough,
 'The feeble audacity of the demons.'
 Read thou well how the Devil crowned St. Job,
 The Devil and the devils aren't much,
 Without the divine permission,
 And truth be told,
 Ain't much with it either:
 God alloweth temptations to strengthen;
 St. Job the Much-Suffering emerged in triumph.
 A novice told of an odd clatter in a courtyard,
 Asked the Abbot what he should do:
 "It is just the demons.
 Pay it no mind," came the answer.
 Every devil is on a leash,
 And the devout are immune to magic.
 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
 The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.
 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
 Wherefore be thou not arrogant towards men,
 But be ever more arrogant towards devils and the Devil himself:
 "Blow, and spit on him."

VIII.

I told St. John, 'I have just read the panikhida service, and it appeareth cut from the same cloth as the divine services in general.'

He said, 'Doth that surprise thee?'

I said, 'Perhaps it should not. But the *Philokalia* describes a contrast between life and death: for instance, in the image of an inn, where lodgers come for a night, bearing whatever they possess; some sleep on beds, some sleep on the floor, but come daybreak, all of them pick up their belongings and walk on hence.'

He said, 'How readest thou that parable?'

I said, 'In this life, some live in riches, and some in poverty, but all alike leave this life carrying only their deeds with them. The last English homily I heard, the priest quoted someone who said, "I have never seen a trailer attached to a hearse." Which were, "You can't take it with you," save that terrifying tale of a monk who died with over a hundred gold pieces. ('Twas said he was not avaricious, but merely stingy.) When he died, the community discussed what to do with his nigh incalculable sum of wealth: some suggested a building or other capital project, others some kindness to the poor. And when all was discussed, *they buried all the gold with him*, a costly, potent reminder to monastics that they should not want to be buried with even one gold piece. But the monk could not take the gold with him ere it were buried with him.'

The Saint told me, 'Thou hast read part of *Prayers by the Lake*, in which St. Nikolai says that birth and death are an inch apart, but the ticker tape goes on forever.

'Rememberest thou also that in the *Philokalia* we read that those who wish one suffering to die were like one holding a deeply confused hope hope that a doctor would break up the bed of a sick man? For our passions we take with us beyond death, which passions the body mediateth to some degree.'

I said, 'May I comment something? Which soundeth as a boast?'

He said, 'Speak on.'

I said, 'I am mindful that I am mortal, and that I am the chief of sinners. But the day of my death be more real to me than my salvation, and that I be the chief of sinners eclipseth that God be merciful. I have needed the reminder of the core promise in For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thus there be twain of deep pairs, and I have of the twain grasped each one the lesser alone.'

He said, 'Hast thou not been astonished at God's perfect Providence of years betimes?'

I said, 'Yes.'

He said, 'What thou sayest resoundeth not as boasting in my ears, but many people have wished for the remembrance of death and not reached it, no, not in monasticism even.'

I asked, 'Will I reach monasticism?'

He smiled at me, and said, 'Whither askest thou the future? It is wondrous.'

He said, 'Remembrance of death doeth not to drain life. It is a reminder that life is not a dress rehearsal: or rather that it is a dress rehearsal, and our performance in this rehearsal determineth what we will meet the Resurrection having rehearsed.

'With death cometh a realization of, "I shall not pass this wise again."

'Such death as we have giveth life a significance eternal in its import. For thou knowest that all ye in the Church Militant stand as it were in an arena before God and His Christ, before all the saints and angels and even devils, as God's champions summoned to vindicate God as St. Job the Much-Suffering and others vindicate God. And whereinever thou triumphest, Christ triumpheth in thee.

'Knowest thou not that the saints who have run the race and be adorned with an imperishable and incorruptible crown stand about all ye, the Church Triumphant cheering on the Church Militant until every last one hath crossed the finish line in triumph?

'Knowest thou not that every saint and angel, the Mother of God and Christ enthroned on high, all cheer ye who still run the course, each and every one?

'The times preceding the Second Coming of Christ are not only apocalyptic; they are the very thing which giveth the term "apocalyptic" its meaning in thy day. And they be trials and tribulations which perhaps will happen in ages later on, and perhaps may already be begun. But in the end Christ will triumph, and all alike who are faithful. And if thou art alive for the Second Coming of Christ, or if not, God hath provided and will provide a way for thee. Be thou faithful, and remember, "The righteous shall live by his faith."

I said, 'I should like to know where God will lead me. I can guess promises of good, but I am happier at least leaving a vessel open for God to fill.'

The Saint's face began to glow, and he said, 'In my day, I said something you may have met in the Reformers: that the age of miracles was no more, or in crasser tongue, "God wrote the book and retired." So I called "opening the eyes of the blind" to be cleansing eyes from lust, which wert a fair claim in any case, and in particular if there miracles are no more. Thou, it seemeth, art in another age of miracles, or perhaps the age of miracles has never stopped from before the Nativity of Christ, but hath merely hid from time to time. Thou knowest thyself not to be the Orthodox Church's fourth Theologian, but thou hast known some beginnings of theology already, and hath seen more miracles in thine earthly pilgrimage than have I. I perchance engaged in rhetorical discourse about God, and never on earth saw the Uncreated Light. Thou hast seen icons like and thou hast also seen a photograph of inside an altar, where paten and chalice glowed purest white, and unlike mine own self, thou hast been anointed with more than one miraculous oil, dear Christos...'

Then he bowed deeply, and prostrated himself before me, and his face glowed brightly, brightly, ten thousand times brighter than the sun and yet hurt not my mortal eyes, and he asked of me, 'Friend, wherewith askest thou the future? It is wondrous.'

Then there was a scintillating flash of light, beyond intense, and the Saint was gone.

I wept until I realized I was the happiest I had been in my life.

The Damned Backswing

Kaine: What do you mean and what is the "damned backswing"?

Vetus: Where to start? Are you familiar with category theory?

Kaine: I have heard the term; explain.

Vetus: Category theory is the name of a branch of mathematics, but on a meta level, so to speak. Algebraists study the things of algebra, and number theorists study the things of number theory—an arrangement that holds almost completely. But category theory studies common patterns in other branches of mathematics, and it is the atypical, rare branch of mathematics that studies all branches of mathematics. And, though this is not to my point exactly, it is abstract and difficult: one list of insults to give to pet languages is that you must understand category theory to write even the simplest of all programs.

The achievements of category theory should ideally be juxtaposed with Bourbaki, the pseudonym of a mathematician or group of mathematicians who tried to systematize all of mathematics. What came out of their efforts is that trying to systematize mathematics is like trying to step on a water balloon and pin it down; mathematicians consider their discipline perhaps

the most systematic of disciplines in academia, but the discipline itself cannot be systematized.

But the fact that Bourbaki's work engendered a realization that you cannot completely systematize even the most systematic of disciplines does not mean that there are patterns and trends that one can observe, and the basic insight in category theory is that patterns recur and these patterns are not limited to any one branch of mathematics. Even if it does not represent a total success of doing what Bourbaki tried and failed to do, it is far from a total loss: category theory legitimately observes patterns and trends that transcend the confines of individual subdisciplines in mathematics.

Kaine: So the "damned backswing" is like something from category theory, cutting across disciplines?

Vetus: Yes.

Kaine: And why did you choose the term of a damned backswing?

Vetus: Let me comment on something first. C.S. Lewis, in a footnote in *Mere Christianity*, says that some people complained about his light swearing in referring to certain ideas as "damned nonsense." And he explained that he did not intend to lightly swear at all; he meant that the ideas were incoherent and nonsense, and they and anyone who believed in them were damned or accursed. And I do not intend to swear lightly either; I intend to use the term "damned" in its proper sense. Instead there is a recurring trend, where some seemingly good things have quite the nasty backswing.

Kaine: And what would an example be?

Vetus: In the U.S., starting in the 1950's there was an incredibly high standard of living; everything seemed to be getting better all the time. And now we are being cut by the backswing: the former great economic prosperity, and the present great and increasing economic meltdown, are cut from the same cloth; they are connected. There was a time of bait, and we sprung for it and are now experiencing the damned backswing.

Kaine: So the damned backswing begins with bait of sorts, and ends in misery? In the loss of much more than the former gain? Do you also mean like addiction to alcohol or street drugs?

Vetus: Yes, indeed; for a while drinking all the time seems an effective way to solve problems. But that is not the last word. The same goes from rationalism to any number of things.

Kaine: Do you see postmodern trends as the backswing of modern rationalism?

Vetus: All that and less.

Kaine: What do you mean by "and less"?

Vetus: The damned backswing did not start with Derrida. The understanding of "reason" that was held before the Enlightenment was a multifaceted thing that meant much more than logic; even as Reason was enthroned (or an actress/prostitute), Reason was pared down to a hollowed-out husk of what reason encompassed in the West before then. It would be like celebrating "cars", but making it clear that when the rubber hits the road, the truly essential part of "a set of wheels" is the wheel—and enthroning the wheel while quietly, deftly stripping away the rest of the car, including not just the frame but engine, and seats. The Damned Backswing of rationalism was already at work in the Enlightenment stripping and enthroning reason. And the damned backswing was already at work in economic boom times in the West, saying that yes, indeed, man can live by bread alone.

And perhaps the strongest and most visible facet of the damned backswing occurs in technology. There are other areas: a country erected on freedoms moves towards despotism, just as Plato said in his list of governments, moving from the best to the worst. But in technology, we seem to be able to be so much more, but the matrix of technology we live in is, among other things, a surveillance system, and something we are dependent on, so that we are vulnerable if someone decides to shut things off. Man does not live by bread alone, but it is better for a man to try to live by bread alone than live by SecondWife alone, or any or all the array of technologies and gadgetry. The new reality man has created does not compare to the God-given reality we have spurned to embrace the new, and some have said

that the end will come when we no longer make paths to our neighbors because we are entirely engrossed in technology and gadgetry.

Kaine: And are there other areas?

Vetus: There are other areas; but I would rather not belabor the point. Does this make sense?

Kaine: Yes, but may I say something strange?

Vetus: Yes.

Kaine: I believe in the damned backswing, and in full.

Vetus: You're not telling me something.

Kaine: I believe in the damned backswing, but I do not believe that the fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.

Vetus: What? Do you mean that you partly believe in the damned backswing, and partly not? Do you believe in the damned backswing "is true, from a certain point of view"?

Kaine: I understand your concern but I reject the practice of agreeing with everyone to make them feel better. If I believed in the damned backswing up to a point, I would call it such.

Vetus: How do you believe it, if you reject that the fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge?

Kaine: Let me ask: do Calvinists believe in the Sovereignty of God?

Vetus: Is the Pope Catholic? (I mean besides John XXIII and Poop Francis.)

Kaine: Let me suggest that the Reformed view of Divine Sovereignty could go further than it actually does.

Vetus: How? They are the most adamant advocates of Divine Sovereignty, and write books like *No Place for Sovereignty: What's Wrong with Freewill Theism*.

Kaine: There's an awfully strong clue in the title.

Vetus: That the author believes so strongly in the Divine Sovereignty that he cannot countenance creaturely freedom?

Kaine: Not quite.

Vetus: Then what is the clue? I don't want to guess.

Kaine: The clue is that the author believes in the Divine Sovereignty so weakly that he cannot countenance creaturely freedom, and that if there is one iota of creaturely freedom, there is not one iota of Divine Sovereignty.

His is a fragile Divine Sovereignty, when in actual fact God's Sovereignty is absolute, with the last word after every exercise of creaturely freedom. There is no exercise of freedom you can make that will impede the exercise of the Divine Sovereignty.

Vetus: I could sin. In fact, I do sin, and I keep on sinning.

Kaine: Yes, but God is still Sovereign and can have the last word where there is sin. To get back to Lewis for a second, "All of us, either willingly or unwillingly, do the will of God: Satan and Judas as tools or instruments, John and Peter as sons." The Divine Sovereignty is the Alpha and the Omega, the Founder of the beginning, and works in and through all: "even Gollum may have something yet to do."

Vetus: But what?

Kaine: "But what?", you ask?

For starters, there is Christmas. Good slips in unnoticed. God slips in unnoticed. True, it will become one of the most celebrated holidays in the Western world, and true, the Western world will undertake the nonsensical task of keeping a warm, fuzzy Christmas without Christ or Christmas

mentioned once. But us lay aside both Christian bloggers speaking in defense of a secularized Christmas, and bloggers telling retailers, "You need Christmas, but Christmas doesn't need you." Thou speakest of the damned backswing coming from an unexpected place; this is nothing next to God slipping in unnoticed.

There will be a time when God will be noticed by all. At the first Christmas, angel hosts announced good news to a few shepherds. When Christ returns, he will be seen by all, riding on the clouds with rank upon rank of angels. At the first Christmas, a lone star heralded it to the Magi. When he returns, the sky will recede as a vanishing scroll. At the first Christmas, a few knees bowed. When he returns, every knee will bow. And the seed for this victory is planted in Christmas.

And the same seeds of glory are quietly planted in our lives. You are not wrong to see the damned backswing and see that it is real: but one would be wrong to see it and think it is most real. Open one eye, and you may see the damned backswing at work. Open both eyes wide, and you may see God at work, changing the game.

And God will work a new thing in you. Not, perhaps, by taking you out of your sufferings or other things that you may pray for; that is at his good pleasure. But you have heard the saying, "We want God to change our circumstances. God wants to use our circumstances to change us." Whole worlds open up with forgiveness, or repentance, or any virtue. If you are moulded as clay in the potter's hands, unsought goods come along the way. "The Best Things in Life are Free," and what is hard to understand is that this is not just a friend's smile, but suffering persecution for the sake of Christ. It was spiritual eyes wide open that left the apostles rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame [and violence] for Christ's name. And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." This newness begins here and now, and it comes when in circumstances we would not choose God works to give us a larger share in the real world. We enter a larger world, or rather we become larger ourselves and more able to take in God's reality. And all of this is like the first Christmas, a new thing and unexpected. We are summoned and do not dare disobey: "Sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord all the earth." And it is this whole world with angels, butterflies, the Church,

dandelions, energetic work, friends, family, and forgiveness, the Gospel, holiness, the I that God has made, jewels, kairos, love, mothers, newborn babes, ostriches, preaching, repentance from sins, singing, technology, unquestioning obedience, variety, wit and wisdom, xylophones, youth and age, and zebras.

The damned backswing is only a weak parody of the power of God the Gamechanger.

Dark Patterns / Anti-Patterns and Cultural Context Study of Scriptural Texts: A Case Study in Craig Keener's "Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul"

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Abstract

The author suggests how the concept of 'patterns' in architecture and computer science, or more specifically 'dark patterns' / 'anti-patterns', may provide a helpful

vehicle to explicitly communicate tacit knowledge concerning problematic thought. The author also provides a pilot study which seeks to provide a sample analysis identifying indicators for the 'surprising cultural find' pattern in which cultural context is misused to explain away offending Bible passages.

Introduction to Patterns, Dark Patterns, and Anti-patterns

The technical concept of *pattern* is used in architecture and computer science, and the synonymous *dark patterns* and *anti-patterns* refer to patterns that are not recurring best practices so much as recurring pathologies; my encounter with them has been as a computer programmer in connection with the book nicknamed 'GoF'[1]. Patterns do not directly provide new knowledge about how to program; what they do provide is a way to take knowledge that expert practitioners share on a tacit level, and enable them both to discuss this knowledge amongst themselves and effectively communicate it to novice programmers. It is my belief that the concept is useful to Biblical studies in providing a way to discuss knowledge that is also held on a tacit level and is also beneficial to be able to discuss explicitly, and furthermore that dark patterns or anti-patterns bear direct relevance. I hope to give a brief summary of the concept of patterns, explaining their application to Biblical studies, then give a pilot study exploring one pattern, before some closing remarks.

Each pattern consists of a threefold rule, describing:

1. A context.
2. A set of forces within that context.
3. A resolution to those forces.

In the contexts of architecture and computer science, patterns are used to describe best practices which keep recurring and which embody a certain 'quality without a name'. I wish to make a different application, to identifying and describing certain recurring problematic ways of thought in Biblical or theological inquiry which may be understood as dark patterns, which often seem to be interlaced with sophistry and logical fallacy.

Two examples of what a dark pattern, or anti-pattern might be are the *consolation prize*, and the *surprising cultural find*. I would suggest that the following provide instances of the consolation prize: discussion of a spiritual resurrection, flowering words about the poetic truth of Genesis 1, and Calvin's eucharistic theology. If you speak of a spiritual resurrection that occurs instead of physical resurrection, you can draw Christians far more effectively than if you plainly say, 'I do not believe in Christ's physical resurrection.' The positive doctrine that is presented is a consolation prize meant to keep the audience from noticing what has been taken away. The context

includes a text that (taken literally) a party wants to dismiss. The forces include the fact that Christians are normally hesitant to dismiss Scripture, and believe that insights can give them a changed and deepened understanding. The resolution is to dress up the dismissal of Scripture as a striking insight. Like other patterns, this need not be all reasoned out consciously; I suggest, via a quasi-Darwinian/meme propagation mechanism, that dismissals of Scripture that follow some such pattern are more likely to work (and therefore be encountered) than i.e. a dismissal of Scripture that is not merely undisguised but offensive.

In the surprising cultural find, a meticulous study is made of a passage's cultural context to find some basis to neutralise the passage so that its apparent meaning does not apply to us. The context is similar to that of the consolation prize, if more specific to a contemporary Western cultural setting. The forces, beyond those mentioned for the consolation prize, include ramifications of period awareness and the Standard Social Science Model: there is a very strong sense of how culture and period can influence people, and they readily believe claims about long ago and far away that which would seem fishy if said about people of our time and place. The resolution is to use the passage's cultural setting to produce disinformation: the fruits of careful scholarly research have turned up a surprising cultural find and the passage's apparent meaning does not apply to us. The passage may be presented, for instance, to mean something quite different from what it appears to mean, or to address a specific historical situation in a way that clearly does not apply to us.

It is the dark pattern of the surprising cultural find that I wish to investigate as a pilot case study in this thesis.

Case Study

Opening Comments

The aim of this case study is to provide a pilot study of how the surprising cultural find may be identified as a dark pattern. In so doing, I analyse one sample text closely, with reference to comparison texts when helpful.

I use the terms *yielding* to refer to analysis from scholars who presumably have interests but allow the text to contradict them, and *unyielding* to refer to analysis that will not allow the text to contradict the scholar's interests. Yielding analysis does not embody the surprising cultural find dark pattern, while unyielding analysis does. I consider the boundary to be encapsulated by the question, 'Is the text allowed to say "No!" to a proposed position?'

Ideally, one would compare two scholarly treatments that are alike in every fashion save that one is yielding and the other is unyielding. Finding a comparison text, I believe, is difficult because I was searching for a yielding text with the attributes of one that was unyielding. Lacking a perfect pair, I chose Peter T. O'Brien's *The Letter to the*

Ephesians[2] and Bonnie Thurston's *Reading Colossians, Ephesians & 2 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary*[3] to represent yielding analysis and Craig Keener's *Paul, Women, Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* [4] to represent unyielding analysis. I was interested in treatment of Ephesians 5:21-33. When I use Biblical references without a book, I will always be referring to Ephesians. All three of secondary sources present themselves as making the fruits of scholarly research accessible to the layperson. O'Brien provides an in-depth, nonfeminist commentary. Thurston provides a concise, feminist commentary. Keener provides an in-depth, Biblical Egalitarian monograph. Unfortunately, the ordered copy of Thurston did not arrive before external circumstances precluded the incorporation of new materials (and may have been misidentified, meaning that my advisor and I both failed after extensive searching to find a yielding feminist or egalitarian treatment of the text). My study is focused on Keener with comparison to O'Brien where expedient.

There seems to be an interconnected web of distinguishing features to these dark patterns, laced with carefully woven sophistry, and there are several dimensions on which a text may be examined. The common-sense assumption that these features are all independent of each other seems to be debatable. One example of this lack of independence is the assumption that what an author believes is independent of whether the analysis is yielding: the suboptimal comparison texts were selected partly because of the difficulty a leading Christians for Biblical Equality scholar and I experienced trying to locate yielding feminist analyses other than Thurston in Tyndale's library. I do not attempt to seriously investigate the interconnections, beyond commenting that features seem interconnected and less independent of each other than most scholars would assume by default.

The substance of my inquiry focuses on observable attributes of the text. I believe that before that point, observing a combination of factors may provide cues. I will mention these factors, but not develop them; there are probably others:

- Is the book a monograph organised around one of today's hot issues, or e.g. a commentary organised around the contents of a Biblical text?
- If you just open the book to its introduction, do you meet forceful persuasion? Are those first pages written purely to persuade, or do they attempt other endeavours (e.g. give factual or theoretical background that is not especially polemical)? What is the approach to persuasion?
- Does the book contain anything besides cultural arguments finding that Biblical texts which apparently contradict the author's camp need not be interpreted that way?

- How much does the author appear able to question our Zeitgeist (in a direction other than a more thorough development of assumptions in our Zeitgeist)?
- What, in general, does the publisher try to do? The publisher is not the author, but publishers have specific aims and goals. It would seem to require explanation to say that a company indiscriminately publishes yielding and unyielding analysis because both resonate equally well with its editorial climate.

There will be a decided imbalance between attention paid to Keener and O'Brien. Part of this is due to external constraints, and part is due to a difference between O'Brien and Keener. With one major exception, described shortly, O'Brien's analysis doesn't run afoul of the concern I am exploring. If I were writing cultural commentary for my texts as Keener and O'Brien write cultural commentary for their texts, I would ideally spend as much time explaining the backgrounds to what Keener and O'Brien said. I believe they are both thinkers who were shaped by, draw on, and are critical of their cultures and subcultures. Explaining what they said, as illuminated by their context, would require parity in treatment. However, I do not elaborate their teachings set in context, but explore a problem that is far more present in Keener than in O'Brien or Thurston. I have more of substance to say about how Keener exhibits a problem than how O'Brien doesn't. As such, after describing a problem, I might give a footnote reference to a passage in O'Brien which shows some analogy without seeming to exhibit the problem under discussion, but I will not systematically attempt to make references to O'Brien's yielding analysis as wordy as explanations of Keener's unyielding analysis.

The one significant example of unyielding analysis noted in O'Brien is in the comment on 5:21: O'Brien notes that reciprocal submission is not enjoined elsewhere in the Bible, points out that 'allelous' occurs in some contexts that do not lend themselves to reciprocal reading ('so that men should slay one another'[5]), and concludes that 'Believers, submit to one another,' means only that lower-status Christians should submit to those placed above them. This is as problematic as other instances of unyielding analysis, and arguably more disturbing as it lacks some of the common indicators alerting the careful reader to be suspicious. There is a point of contact between this treatment and Keener's: both assume that 5:21 and 5:22-6:9 are not merely connected but are saying the same thing, and it is one thing only. It is assumed that the text cannot enjoin of us both symmetrical and asymmetrical submission, so one must be the real commandment, and the other is explained away. Both Keener and O'Brien end up claiming that something is commanded in 5:21 with clarificatory examples following, without asserting that either 5:21 or 5:22-6:9 says something substantively different from the other about submission. I will not further analyse this passage beyond this mention: I consider it a clear example of unyielding analysis. This is the one part of

O'Brien I have read of which I would not say, '...and this is an example of analogous concerns addressed by yielding scholarship.'

The introductions to O'Brien and Keener provided valuable cues as to the tone subsequently taken by the texts. Both are written to persuade a claim that some of their audience rejects, but the divergence in how they seek to persuade is significant. Keener's introduction is written to persuade the reader of Biblical Egalitarianism: in other words, of a position on one of today's current issues. The beginning of O'Brien's introduction tries to persuade the reader of Pauline authorship for Ephesians, which they acknowledge to be an unusual position among scholars today; the introduction is not in any direct sense about today's issues. O'Brien's introduction is written both to persuade and introduce the reader to scholarly perspectives on background; while nontechnical, it is factually dense and heavy with footnotes. Keener's introduction seems to be written purely to persuade: he give statistics[6] concerning recent treatment of women which are highly emotionally charged, no attempt being made to connect them to the text or setting of the Pauline letters. Keener's introduction uses emotion to bypass rationality, using loaded language and various other forms of questionable persuasion explored below; a naive reader first encountering this debate in Keener's introduction could well wonder how any compassionate person could be in the other camp. O'Brien works to paint a balanced picture, and gives a fair account of the opposing view before explaining why he considers it inadequate. O'Brien seeks to persuade through logical argument, and his book's pages persuade (or fail to persuade) as the reader finds his arguments to be sufficient (or insufficient) reason to accept its conclusions.

Emotional Disinformation

Among the potential indicators found in Keener, the first broad heading I found could be described as *factual disinformation* and *emotional disinformation*. 'Disinformation', as used in military intelligence ordinarily denotes deception through careful presentation of true details; I distinguish 'factual disinformation' (close to 'disinformation' traditionally understood) from 'emotional disinformation', which is disinformation that acts on emotional and compassionate judgment as factual disinformation acts on factual judgment. While conceptually distinct, they seem tightly woven in the text, and I do not attempt to separate them.

An Emotional Plea

One distinguishing feature of Keener's introduction is that it closes off straightforward rebuttal. Unlike O'Brien, he tries to establish not only the content of debate but the terms of debate itself, and once Keener has established the terms of debate, it is difficult or impossible to argue the opposing view from within those terms.

Rebuttal is possible, of course, but here it would seem to require pushing the discussion back one notch in the meta-level hierarchy and arguing at much greater length. O'Brien seems more than fair in his style of argument; Keener loads the dice before his reader knows what is going on.

One passage is worth citing for close study [7]:

There are issues where most Biblically conservative Christians, including myself, disagree with prominent elements of the feminist movement... But there are other concerns which nearly all Christians, including myself, and nearly the whole women's movement plainly share....

[Approximately two pages of alarming claims and statistics, including:] ...Although "bride-burning" is now illegal in India, it still happens frequently; a bride whose dowry is insufficient may be burned to death so that her husband can find a new partner. There is no investigation, of course, because it is said that she simply poured cooking oil over herself and set herself on fire accidentally.... A Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center study of 1700 teenagers, cited in a 1990 InterVarsity magazine, reported that 65% of the boys and 47% of the girls in sixth through ninth grades say that a man may force a woman to have sex with him if they've been dating for more than six months.... Wife-beating seems to have been a well-established practice in many patriarchal families of the 1800's....

But while some Christians may once have been content to cite proof-texts about women's subordination to justify ignoring this sort of oppression, virtually all of us would today recognise that oppression and exploitation of any sort are sinful violations of Jesus's commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves and to love fellow-Christians as Christ loved us. [Keener goes on to later conclude that we must choose between a feminist conception of equality and an un-Christian version of subordination.]

The text starts by presenting Keener as Biblically conservative, moves to a heart-wrenching list of wrongs against women, implicitly conflates nonfeminist Christians with those who condone rape and murder, and presents a choice crystallising the fallacy of the excluded middle that had been lurking in prior words. It has more than one attribute of emotional disinformation.

Keener both identifies himself as Biblically conservative and says that, among some Christians, the egalitarian position is the conservative one (contrast chapter 4, where 'conservative' means a reactionary misogynist). Why? People are more likely to

listen to someone who is perceived of the same camp, and falsely claiming membership in your target's camp is a tool of deceptive persuasion.

The recitation of statistics is interesting for several reasons.

On a strictly logical level, it is a non sequitur. It has no direct logical bearing on either even its rhetorical position assumes that conservative, as well as liberal, members of his audience believe that rape and murder are atrocities. This is a logical non sequitur, chosen for its emotional force and what impact that emotional recoil will have on susceptibility. The trusting reader will recoil from the oppression listed and be less guarded when Keener provides his way to oppose such oppression. The natural response to such a revolting account is to say, 'I'm not that! I'm the opposite!' and embrace what is offered when the fallacy of the excluded middle is made explicit, in the choice Keener later presents.

Once a presentation of injustice has aroused compassion to indignation, most people do not use their full critical faculties: they want to right a wrong, not sit and analyse. This means that a powerful account of injustice (with your claims presented as a way to fight the injustice) is a powerful way to get people to accept claims that would be rejected if presented on their logical merits. Keener's 'of course' is particularly significant; he builds the reader's sense of outrage by adding 'of course' with a (carefully studied but) seemingly casual manner. It is not obvious to a Western reader that a bride's murder would be left uninvestigated; adding 'of course' gives nothing to Keener's logical case but adds significantly to the emotional effect Keener seeks, more effectively and more manipulatively than were he to visibly write those words from outrage.

The sentence about proof-texts and loving one's neighbour is of particular interest. On a logical level, it is restrained and cannot really be attacked. The persuasive and emotional force—distinct from what is logically present—is closer to, 'Accepting those proof-texts is equivalent to supporting such oppression; following the Law of Love contradicts both.'

This is one instance of a broader phenomenon: a gap between what the author *entails* and *implicates*. Both 'entail' and 'implicate' are similar in meaning to 'imply', but illustrate opposite sides of a distinction. What a text *entails* is what is implied by the text in a strictly logical sense; what a text *implicates* is what is implied in the sense of what it leads the reader to believe. What is implicated includes what is entailed, and may often include other things. The entailed content of 'But while some Christians...' is modest and does not particularly advance a discussion of egalitarianism. The implicated content is much more significant; it takes a logically tight reading to recognise that the text does not entail a conflation claiming that nonfeminist Christians condone rape and murder. The text implicates much more than it entails, and I believe that this combination of restricted entailment with far-reaching implication is a valuable cue. *It can be highly informative to read a text with an eye to the gap between what is entailed and what is*

implicated. The gap between entailment and implicature seemed noticeably more pronounced in Keener than in yielding materials I have read, including O'Brien. Another example of a gap between entailment and implicature is found close[8], '...the secular generalization that Christians (both men and women) who respect the Bible oppose women's rights is an inaccurate caricature of these Christians' admits a similar analysis: the entailment is almost unassailable, while the implicature establishes in the reader's mind that the conservative position is excisable from respect for the Bible, and that the nonfeminist position denies something basic to women that they should have. The term 'women's rights' is by entailment the sort of thing one would not want to oppose, and by implicature a shorthand for 'women's rights as understood and interpreted along feminist lines'. As well as showing a significant difference between entailment and implicature, this provides an example of a text which closes off the most obvious means of rebuttal, another rhetorical trait which may be produced by the same mindset as produces unyielding analysis.

What is left out of the cited text is also significant. The statistics given are incomplete (they focus on profound ways in which women suffer so the reader will not think of profound ways in which men suffer) but as far as describing principles to discriminate yielding versus unyielding analysis, this seems to be privileged information. I don't see a way to let a reader compare the text as if there were a complementary account written in the margin. Also, a careful reading of the text may reveal a Biblical nonfeminist position as the middle fallaciously excluded earlier, in which sexual distinction exists on some basis *other* than violence. All texts we are interested in—yielding or unyielding—must stop somewhere, but it is possible to exclude data that should have been included and try to conceal its absence. Lacunae that seem to have been chosen for persuasion rather than limitation of scope may signal unyielding analysis.

Further Examples

In a discussion[9] of the *haustafel's* (Ephesians 5:21 and following[10] injunction that the husband love his wife based on Christ's love for the Church, Keener says, 'Indeed, Christ's love is explicitly defined in this passage in terms of self-sacrificial service, not in terms of his authority.' The passage does not mention that self-sacrificial service is a defining feature of Christ's model of authority, and in these pages the impression is created that the belief in servant love is a Biblical Egalitarian distinctive, so that the reader might be surprised to find the conservative *O'Brien* saying[11]:

...Paul does not here, or anywhere else for that matter, exhort husbands to rule over their wives. They are nowhere told, 'Exercise your headship!' Instead, they are urged repeatedly to love their wives (vv. 25,

28, and 33). This will involve each husband showing unceasing care and loving service for his wife's entire well-being...

O'Brien is emphatic that husbands must love their wives; examples could easily be multiplied. Keener argues for loving servanthood as if it were a claim which his opponents rejected. The trusting reader will believe that nonfeminists believe in submission and egalitarians alone recognise that Paul calls husbands to servant love. I believe that this selective fact-telling is one of the more foundational indicators: some factual claims will be out of a given reader's competence to evaluate, but so far as a reader can evaluate whether a fair picture is presented, the presence or absence of selective fact-telling may help.

Chapter 4 is interesting in that there are several thoughts that are very effectively conveyed without being explicitly stated. The account of 'conservatives' (i.e. misogynistic reactionaries) is never explicitly stated to apply to Christians who disagree with Keener, but works in a similar fashion (and for similar reasons) to the 'Green Book' which introduces the first major argument in *The Abolition of Man*.^[12] By the same mechanism as the Green Book leads the reader to believe that claims about the outer world are in fact only claims about ourselves, not the slightest obstacle is placed to the reader believing that Keener exposes the true nature of 'conservatism', and that the picture of Graeco-Roman conservatism portrayed is a picture of conservatism, period, as true of conservatism today as ever.

A smaller signal may be found in that Keener investigates inconvenient verses in a way that never occurs for convenient ones. Keener explores the text, meaning, and setting to 5:22-33 in a way that never occurs for 5:21; a careless reader may get the impression that 5:21 doesn't *have* a cultural setting.

Drawing on Privileged Information

I would next like to outline a difference between men's and women's communication, state what Keener's Roman conservatives did with this, and state what Keener did with the Roman conservatives. One apparent gender difference in communication is that when a woman makes a claim, it is relatively likely to mean, 'I am in the process of thinking and here is where I am now,' while a man's claim is more likely to mean, 'I have thought. I have come to a conclusion. Here is my conclusion.' Without mentioning caveats, there is room for *considerable* friction when men assume that women are stating conclusions and women assume that men are giving the current state of a developing thought. The conservatives described by Keener seem frustrated by this friction; Keener quotes Josephus ^[13]:

Put not trust in a single witness, but let there be three or at least two, whose evidence shall be accredited by their past lives. From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the levity and temerity of their sex; neither let slaves bear witness, because of the baseness of their soul.

This passage is introduced, "...regards the prohibition of women's testimony as part of God's law, based in the moral inferiority inherent in their gender." The reader is not likely to question whether it's *purely* misogyny for a man (frustrated by women apparently showing levity by changing their minds frequently) to find this perceived mutability a real reason why these people should not be relied on as witnesses when someone's life may be at stake. Keener has been working to portray conservatives as misogynistic. Two pages earlier[14], he tells us,

An early Jewish teacher whose work was undoubtedly known to Paul advised men not to sit among women, because evil comes from them like a moth emerging from clothes. A man's evil, this teacher went on to complain, is better than a woman's good, for she brings only shame and reproach.

This, and other examples which could be multiplied, deal with something crystallised on the previous page[15]. Keener writes,

Earlier philosophers were credited with a prayer of gratitude that they were not born women, and a century after Paul a Stoic emperor could differentiate a women's soul from that of a man.

The moral of this story is that believing in nonphysical differences between men and women is tantamount to misogyny. This is a highly significant claim, given that the questions of women's ordination and headship in marriage are largely epiphenomenal to the question of whether we are created masculine and feminine at every level of our being, or ontologically neuter spirits in reproductively differentiated bodies. Keener produces a conclusion (i.e. that the human spirit is neuter) *without ever stating it or drawing the reader to consciously consider* whether this claim should be believed. In a text that is consistently polite, the opposing view is not merely negated but vilified: to hold this view (it is portrayed) is tantamount to taking a view of women which is extraordinarily reprehensible. Either of these traits may signal unyielding analysis; I believe the combination is particularly significant.

Tacit and Overt Communication

Although the full import of tacit versus overt communication is well beyond my competency to address, I would like to suggest something that merits further study. [16] Keener seemed, to a significant degree, to:

- Tacitly convey most of his important points, without stating them explicitly.
- Present claims so the opposing view is never considered.
- Build up background assumptions which will produce the desired conclusions, more than give explicit arguments.
- Work by manipulating background assumptions, often provided by the reader's culture.

As an example of this kind of tacit communication, I would indicate two myths worked with in the introduction and subsequently implied. By 'myth' I do not specifically mean 'widespread misconception', but am using a semiotic term comparable in meaning to 'paradigm': '[M]yths act as scanning devices of a society's 'possibles' and 'pensables' [17]. The two myths are:

- *Men are powerful and violent aggressors, whilst women are powerless and innocent victims.* The alarming claims and statistics[18] mention aggression against men only in the most incidental fashion.
- *The accurate spokesperson for women's interests is the feminist movement.* Keener diminishes this myth's force by disclaiming support for abortion (and presenting a pro-choice stance as separable from other feminist claims), but (even when decrying prenatal discrimination in sex-selective abortion[19]) Keener refers to the feminist movement interchangeably as 'the feminist movement'[20] and 'the women's movement'[21], and does not lead the reader to consider that one could speak for women's interests by contradicting feminism, or question the a priori identification of women's interests with the content of feminist claims. As well as the emotional disinformation explored in many of the examples above, there are several points where the nature of the argument is of interest. Five argument-like features are explored:

- Verses which help our position are principles that apply across all time; verses which contradict our position were written to address specific issues in a specific historical context.
- X had beneficial effect Y; X was therefore purely instrumental to Y, and we may remove X if we no longer require X as an instrument to Y.
- The absolute position taken in this passage addresses a specific historical idiosyncrasy, but the relative difference between this passage and its surroundings is a timeless principle across all times.
- If X resonates with a passage's cultural context, then X need not be seen as part of the Bible's revelation.
- We draw the lines of equivalence in the following manner...

'Verses which help our position are principles that apply across all time; verses which contradict our position were written to address specific issues in a specific historical context' is less an argument than an emergent property. It's not argued; the text just turns out that way. Keener gives a diplomatically stated reason why Paul wrote the parts of 5:22-6:9 he focuses on: 'Paul was very smart.'^[22] The subsequent argument states that Paul wrote in a context where Christians behaving conservatively would diminish he perceived threat to social conservatives. Keener writes^[23], 'Paul is responding to a specific cultural issue for the sake of the Gospel, and his words should not be taken at face value in all cultures.' There is a fallacy which seems to be behind this argument in Keener: being timeless principles and being historically prompted are non-overlapping categories, so finding a historical prompt suffices to demonstrate that material in question does not display a timeless principle.' The absolute position taken in this passage addresses a specific historical idiosyncrasy, but the relative difference between this passage and its surroundings is a timeless principle across all times.' A text embodies both an absolute position *in se*, and a relative difference by how it is similar to and different from its surrounding cultural mainstream. 5:22-33 requires submission of wives and love of husbands; that absolute position can be understood with little study of context, while the relative difference showed both a continuity with Aristotelian *haustafels* and a difference by according women a high place that was unusual in its setting. The direction of Keener's argument is to say explicitly^[25] that the verses should not be taken at face value, and to implicitly clarify that the absolute position should not be taken at face value, but *part* of the relative position, namely the sense in which Paul

was much more feminist-like than his setting ('[A quote from Plutarch] is one of the most "progressive" social models in Paul's day... It is most natural to read Paul as making a much more radical statement than Plutarch, both because of what Paul says and because of what he does not say,'[26]) is a timeless principle that should apply in our day as well as Paul's. Without proper explanation of why the relative difference should be seen as absolute, given that the absolute position is idiosyncratic, the impression is strongly conveyed that respecting Paul's spirit means transposing his absolute position so that a similar relative difference exists with relation to our setting. 'We draw equivalences in the following manner...' This is not a single argument so much as an attribute of arguments; I believe that what is presented as equivalent can be significant. In the autobiographical comments in the introduction, Keener writes[27]: What Keener has been arguing is not just the relevance of culture but the implicit necessity of a piecemeal hermeneutic. The implication (beyond an excluded middle) is that using culture to argue a piecemeal, feminist modification to Paul is the same sort of thing as not literally practicing the holy kiss.[28] The sixth of seven chapters, after emotionally railing against slavery, argues that retaining the institution of marriage while excising one dimension is the same sort of thing as abolishing the institution of slavery; 'The Obedience of Children: A Better Model?'[29] explicitly rejects the claim that marriage is more like parenthood than owning slaves. While no comparison is perfect, I believe that these are examples of comparisons where it is illuminating to see what the author portrays as equivalent. In my own experience at least, this kind of argument is not purely the idiosyncrasy of one book. The idea this thesis is based on occurred to me after certain kinds of arguments recurred. Certain dark patterns, or anti-patterns, came up in different contexts like a broken record that kept on making its sound. I'm not sure how many times I had seen instances of 'X had beneficial effect Y; X was therefore purely instrumental to Y, and we may remove X if we no longer require X as an instrument to Y,' but I did not first meet that argument in Keener. These arguments represent fallacies of a more specialised nature than *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* ("after the fact, therefore because of the fact") or *argumentum ad ignorantiam* ("appeal to ignorance"). I believe that they allow a persuasive, rational-seeming argument of a conclusion not yet justified on logical terms. The experience that led to the formation of my thesis was partly from repeatedly encountering such fallacies in surprising cultural find arguments. I have tried to provide a pilot study identifying indicators of unyielding analysis. These indicators are not logically tied in the sense of 'Here's something which, on logical terms, can only indicate unyielding analysis.' The unyielding analysis I have met, before and in Keener, has been constructed with enough care to logic that I don't start by looking at logic. There are other things which are not of logical necessity required by unyielding analysis, but which seem to be produced by the same mindset. I have encountered these things both in the chosen text and in repeated

previous experiences which first set me thinking along these lines. It is unfortunate that my control text made little use of emotion. I believe my case study would have been better rounded, had I been able to contrast emotion subverting logic in Keener with emotion complementing logic in the control text. As it is, the case study lends itself to an unfortunate reading of "logic is good and emotion is bad", and gives the impression that I consider the bounds of legitimate persuasion to simply be those of logic.

Directions for Further Inquiry

There were other indicators which I believe could be documented from this text with greater inquiry, but which I have not investigated due to constraints. Among these may be mentioned:

- Misrepresentation of material. Recognising this would seem to require privileged information, and work better for an area where the reader knows something rather than nothing, but I believe that a reader who knows part of the covered domain stands to benefit from seeing if it is covered fairly.
- Doing more than a text presents itself as doing. A certain kind of deceit, in which the speaker works hard to preserve literal truth, has a complex quality caused by more going on than is presented. I believe an exploration of this quality, and its tie to unyielding analysis, may be fruitful.
- Shared attributes with a test case. A small and distinctive minority of cases qualify to become test cases in American legal practice; they possess a distinct emotional signature, and portions of Keener's argument (i.e. 'Would [Paul] have ignored her personal needs in favour of the church's witness?'[31]) are reminiscent in both argument and emotional appeal of test cases.
- An Amusement Park Ride with a Spellbinding Showman. Especially in their introductions, O'Brien seems to go out of his way to let the reader know the full background to the debate; Keener seems more like a fascinating showman who directs the reader's attention to certain things *and away from others*; knowing the other side to statistics cited[32]—or even knowing that there is another side—destroys the effect. A careful description of this difference in rhetoric may be helpful, and I believe may be tied to disinformation in that there is a difference in working style; yielding persuasion suffers far less from the reader knowing

the other side than does unyielding persuasion. Lastly, I would suggest that a study of *sharpening* and *leveling* would be fruitful.[34] 'Sharpening' and 'leveling' refer to a phenomenon where people remembering a text tend to sharpen its main points while leveling out attenuating factors. For many texts, sharpening and leveling are an unintended effect of their publication, while Keener seems at times to write to produce a specific result after sharpening and leveling have taken effect. What he writes *in itself* is more carefully restrained than what a reader would walk away thinking, and the latter appears to be closer to what Keener wants to persuade the reader of. Combining narrow entailment with broad implicature is a way for an author to write a text that creates a strong impression (sharpening and leveling produce an impression from what is implicated more than what is entailed) while being relatively immune to direct criticism: when a critic rereads a text closely, it turns out that the author didn't really say the questionable things the critic remembers the author to have said.[1] I.e. the 'Gang of Four': Gamma, Erich; Helm, Richard; Johnson, Ralph; Vlissides, John, *Design Patterns: Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software*, Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1994. [4] Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992.[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9; compare almost any of O'Brien pp. 4-47.[10] A haustafel is a household code such as the one found in Ephesians; for my purposes, the Ephesians haustafel stretches from 5:21 to 6:9.[13] Keener, p. 163; O'Brien in pp. 405-438 does not cite a non-Biblical primary source likely to be similarly repellent, and portrays opposing secondary sources as mistaken without setting them in a disturbing light, i.e. in footnote 211, page 413.[16] My attempts to find material discussing how these things work, academic or popular, have had mixed success. If I were to write a thesis around this issue, I would initially explore works such as Michael I. Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, and anthropological treatments of the high-context/low-context and direct/indirect axes of human communication (which suggest relevant lines of inquiry). C.S. Lewis's account of the Un-man's dialogue with the Lady in Perelandra (chapters 8-11, pp. 274-311 in *Out of the Silent Planet / Perelandra*, Surrey: Voyager Classics, 1938 / 1943), seems to represent a very perceptive grappling with the issue of tacit communication in relation to deceit.[19] *Ibid.*, p. 7.[22] *Ibid.*, p. 141. Contrast O'Brien's comments on 6:5-9 in 447-456, seemingly the most obvious place to portray at least some of the text as parochial; O'Brien disclaims that Paul was making any social comment on slavery (p. 448), but unpacks the verses without

obviously approaching the text from the same mindset as Keener.
 [25] Keener, p. 170.[28] Remember that Keener is an American. The suggestion he makes is more significant in U.S. than English culture. U.S. culture has a place for giving kisses to one's romantic partner, to family, and to small children, but not ordinarily to friends. Because of this, culture shock affects almost any attempt to consider ecclesiastical usage. 'Greet one another with a holy kiss.' serves in U.S. Evangelical conversation as the standard example of a New Testament injunction which cannot be taken seriously as a commandment to follow. It seem to be often assumed as an example of cultural noise in the Bible.[31] Keener, p. 148.[34] Comments from Asher Koriat, Morris Goldsmith, and Ainat Pansky in 'Toward a Psychology of Memory Accuracy (in the 2000 Annual Review of Psychology as seen in 2003 at http://www.findarticles.com/cf_o/m0961/2000_Annual/61855635/p7/article.jhtml?term=) provide a summary, with footnotes, suggesting the basic psychological mechanism. An accessible treatment of a related, if not identical, application to what I suggest here is found on pp. 91-94 in Thomas Gilovich's *How We Know What Isn't So*, New York: The Free Press, 1993.

- [33] I.e. the 'Gang of Four': Gamma, Erich; Helm, Richard; Johnson, Ralph; Vlissides, John, *Design Patterns: Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software*, Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1994.
- [32] *Ibid.* pp. 7-8.
- [30] Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- [29] Keener, pp. 186-188; contrast O'Brien, pp. 409-438, where he elaborates the text's analogy with Christ and the Church as a model for understanding marriage, rather than comparing to slavery (which Keener not only does but works to give the reader a reservoir of anger at slavery which may transfer when he argues that marital submission is like slavery).
- [27] *Ibid.*, p. 4; contrast the series preface before O'Brien: 'God stands over against us; we do not stand in judgment of him. When God speaks to us through his Word, those who profess to know him must respond in an appropriate way...' (page viii).

- [26] Ibid., p. 170.
- [24] Ibid., pp. 174-8. O'Brien covers some of the same basic facts without obviously presenting argument in this vein (pp. 405-409).
- [23] Keener, p. 170.
- [21] Ibid., p. 9.
- [20] Ibid., p. 6.
- [18] Keener, pp. 7-9.
- [17] Maranda, Pierre, 'Elusive Semiosis', *The Semiotic Review of Books*, Volume 3, Issue 1, seen in 2003 at <http://www.bdk.rug.nl/onderzoek/castor/srb/srb/elusive.html>.
- [15] Ibid., p. 160.
- [14] Keener, p. 161.
- [12] Lewis, C.S., chapter 1, pp. 1-26, San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco, 1943, 2001.
- [11] O'Brien, p. 419.
- [9] Ibid., p. 167.
- [8] Keener, p. 9.
- [6] Keener, pp. 7-9.
- [5] Rev. 6:8, RSV.
- [3] Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1999.
- [2] Leicester: Apollos, 1999.

Footnotes

- More broadly, I believe there is room for inquiry into the relation between this use of patterns and that in other disciplines. The application I have made is not a straight transposition; in architecture and computer science patterns are a tool to help people communicate about best practices to follow, not identify questionable practice to criticise as I have done here. What becomes of the Quality Without a Name may be interesting. This thesis only suggests two patterns; GoF[33] describes twenty-three computer programming patterns broken into three groups, so that they provide a taxonomy of recurring solutions and not merely a list. A taxonomy of Biblical studies patterns could be a valuable achievement.
- On a broader scale, it is my hope that this may serve not only as a pilot study regarding unyielding analysis but a tentative introduction of a modified concept of 'pattern', or rather 'dark pattern' or 'anti-pattern' in theology. The concept of pattern was introduced by the architect Christopher Alexander and is sufficiently flexible to be recognised as powerful in computer science. I believe there are other patterns that can be helpful, and I would suggest that books like Alexander's *The Timeless Way of Building*[30] are accessible to people in a number of disciplines.
- At a fairly basic level, the case study is a study of a cultural dimension of communication. I believe that portions of this pilot study may be deepened by the insights of scholars from humanities which study human culture and communication. I believe that some of my remarks would be improved by a serious attempt to connect them with high-context and low-context communication as studied in anthropology. If I am doing a pilot study that cannot provide much of any firm answers, I do hope to suggest fruitful lines of inquiry and identify deep questions which for which interdisciplinary study could be quite fruitful.
- Conclusion
- In some cases, the argument types I have described are not things which must be wrong, but things which lack justification. The claim that an absolute position is parochial but the relative difference is timeless is not a claim I consider to be unjustifiable, but it is a claim which I believe requires justification, a justification which is not necessarily provided.

- "But it's part of the Bible!" I protested. "If you throw this part out, you have to throw everything else out, too." I cannot recall anyone having a good response to my objection, but even as a freshman I knew very well that if I were consistent in my stance against using culture to interpret the Bible, I would have to advocate women's head coverings in church, the practice of holy kisses, and parentally arranged marriages.
- 'If X resonates with a passage's cultural context, then X need not be seen as part of the Bible's revelation.' This is often interwoven with the previous two arguments. Apart from showing a feminist-like relative difference, Keener works to establish that Paul used a haustafel in a way that reduced Christianity's perceived threat to conservatives. This is presented as establishing that therefore wives are not divinely commanded to submit.
- 'X had beneficial effect Y; X was therefore purely instrumental to Y, and we may remove X if we no longer require X as an instrument to Y.' Keener argues[24] that the haustafel mitigated prejudice against Christianity, which is presented as a reason why we need not observe the haustafel if we do not perceive need for that apologetic concern.
- Argument Structure

Death

In the time of life,
Prepare for death.

Dost thou love life?
Be thou of death ever mindful,
For the remembrance of death,
Better befits thee,
Than closing fast thine eyes,
That the snares before thee may vanish.
All of us are dying,
Each day, every hour, each moment,
Of death the varied microcosm,
The freedom given us as men,
To make a decision eternal,
The decision we build and make,
In each microcosm of eternity,
Until one day cometh our passing,
And what is now fluid,
Forever fixed will be made,
When we will trample down death by death,
Crying out from life to death,
O Death, where is thy victory?

O Grave, where is thy sting?
So even death and the grave,
Claim us to their defeat,
Or else,
After a lifetime building the ramp,
Having made earth infernal,
Closing bit by bit the gates of Hell,
Bolting and barring them from the inside,
We seal our decision,
Not strong enough to die rightly in life,
We sink to death in death,
Sealing ourselves twice dead.
Choolest thou this day,
Which thou shalt abide.

Seekest thou a mighty deed,
Our broken world to straighten out?
Seek it not! Knowest thou not,
That the accursed axe ever wielded in the West,
To transform society, with a program to improve,
Is a wicked axe, ever damned,
And hath a subtle backswing, and most grievous?
Wittest thou not that to heal in such manner,
Is like to bearing the sword,
To smite a dead man to life therewith?
Know rather the time-honeyed words,
True and healthgiving when first spoken,
Beyond lifesaving in our own time:
Save thyself,
And ten thousand around thee shall be saved.

We meet death in microcosm,
In the circumstances of our lives and the smallest decisions,
The decision, when our desire is cut off,
In anger to abide, or to be unperturbed.
Politeness to show to others, little things,
A rhythm of prayer to build up,
Brick by brick, even breath by breath,
Our mind to have on the things of Heaven or on earth,

A heart's answer of love and submission,
To hold when the Vinedresser takes knife to prune,
The Physician takes scalpel to ransack our wounds,
With our leave, to build us up,
Or to take the gold,
The price of our edification,
And buy demolition in its stead.
Right poetic and wondrous it may sound right now,
Right poetic and wondrous it is in its heart,
But it cometh almost in disguise,
From a God who wishes our humility never to bruise,
To give us better than we know to ask,
And until we see with the eyes of faith,
Our humble God allows it to seem certain,
That he has things wrong,
That we are not in the right circumstances for his work,
When his greatest work is hid from our eyes,
Our virtue not to crush,
Knowing that we are dust,
And not crushing our frame dust to return.
Right frail are we,
And only our Maker knows the right path,
That we may shine with his Glory.

Canst thou not save thyself even?
Perchance thou mayest save another.
Be without fear, and of good cheer:
He saved others, himself he cannot save,
Is but one name of Heaven.
Canst not save thyself?
Travail to save another.
Can God only save in luxury?
Can God only save when we have our way?
Rather, see God his mighty arm outstretched in disaster,
Rather, see glory unfurl in suffering.
Suffering is not what man was made for,
But bitter medicine is better,
And to suffer rightly is lifegiving,
And to suffer unjustly has the Treasure of Heaven inside,

Whilst comfort and ease sees few reach salvation:
 Be thou plucked from a wide and broad path?
 Set instead on a way strait and narrow?
 Give thanks for God savest thee:
 Taking from thee what thou desirest,
 Giving ever more than thou needest,
 That thou mightest ever awaken,
 To greater and grander and more wondrous still:
 For the gate of Heaven appears narrow, even paltry,
 And opens to an expanse vast beyond all imagining,
 And the gate of Hell is how we imagine grandeur,
 But one finds the belly of the Wurm constricting ever tighter.

Now whilst the noose about our necks,
 Tightens one and all,
 Painful blows of the Creator's chisel stern and severe,
 Not in our day, nor for all is it told,
 That the Emperor hears the words,
 In this sign conquer,
 The Church established,
 Persecutions come to an end,
 And men of valor seeking in monastery and hermitage,
 Saving tribulations their souls to keep,
 The complaint sounded,
 Easy times rob the Church of her saints,
 Not in our day does this happen:
 For the noose is about our necks,
 More than luxury is stripped away;
 A Church waxen fat and flabby from easy living,
 Must needs be sharpened to a fighting trim,
 Chrismated as one returning to Orthodoxy,
 Anointed with sacred oil for the athlete,
 And myrrh for the bride.
 And as Christian is given gifts of royal hue,
 Gold, frankincense, and myrrh:
 Gold for kingship,
 Frankincense for divinity,
 Myrrh for anointing the dead,
 A trinity of gifts which are homoousios: one,

Gold and frankincense which only a fool seeks without myrrh,
Myrrh of pain, suffering, and death,
Myrrh which befits a sacrifice,
Myrrh which pours forth gold and frankincense.
And as the noose tightens about our neck,
As all but God is taken from us,
And some would wish to take God himself,
The chisel will not wield the Creator,
The arm of providence so deftly hid in easy times,
Is bared in might in hard times,
And if those of us who thought we would die in peace,
Find that suffering and martyrdom are possible,
We must respond as is meet and right:
Glory to God in all things!

Be thou ever sober in the silence of thine heart:
Be mindful of death, and let this mindfulness be sober.
Wittest thou not the hour of thy death:
Wete thou well that it be sooner than thou canst know.
Put thy house in order, each day,
Peradventure this very night thy soul will be required of thee.
Be thou prepared,
For the hour cometh like a thief in the night,
When thou wilt be summoned before Christ's dread judgment seat.
If thou wilt not to drown,
Say thou not, I can learn to swim tomorrow,
For the procrastinator's tomorrow never cometh,
Only to-days, to use right or wrong.
If thou wilt not to drown,
Learn, however imperfectly, to swim today,
A little better, if thou canst:
Be thou sober and learn to swim,
For all of our boats will sink,
And as we have practiced diligently or neglected the summons,
So will we each sink, or each swim,
When thy boat is asink, the time for lessons is gone.

For contemplation made were we.
Unseen warfare exists because contemplation does not.

Yet each death thou diest well,
A speck of tarnish besmircheth the mirror no more,
The garden of tearful supplication ever healeth,
What was lost in the garden of delights:
Ever banished our race may be from the garden of delights:
'Til we find its full stature in vale of tears,
'Til we find what in death God hath hid,
'Til each microcosm of death given by day to day,
Is where we seek Heaven's gate, ever opening wide.

The Lord shepherdeth me even now,
And nothing shall be wanting:
There shall be lack of nothing thou shalt need,
In a place of verdure, a place of rest, where the righteous dwell,
Hath he set my tabernacle today,
He hath nourished me by the waters of rest,
Yea, even baptism into Christ's lifegiving death.
My soul hath he restored from the works of death,
He hath led me in the paths of righteousness,
That his name be hallowed.
Yea though my lifelong walk be through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evils;
Thy rod and thy staff themselves have comforted me:
Thy staff, a shepherd's crook,
A hook of comfort to restore a sheep gone astray,
Thy rod a glaive, a stern mace,
The weapon of an armed Lord and Saviour protecting,
Guarding the flock amidst ravening wolves and lions,
Rod and staff both held by a stern and merciful Lord.
Thou preparest before me table fellowship,
In the midst of all them that afflict me:
Both visible and invisible, external and internal.
Thou hast anointed me with oil,
My head with the oil of gladness,
And thy chalice gives the most excellent cheer.
Thy mercy upon me, a sinner, shall follow me,
All my days of eternal life even on earth,
And my shared dwelling shall be in the house of the Lord,
Unto the greatest of days.

Death may be stronger than mortal men, yet:
Love is stronger than death.

Does God Suffer?

I had the privilege of reading *A Foot in Two Worlds* recently, and posting the following five star review titled, "REAL Theology":

I'm Orthodox where Vince is old-style UMC, and one of the things valued in theology is that it's not some sort of game you play in your head; it is what you work out, what you live. In that sense real theology is more like a wrestling class than a math class.

This is a book of real theology. The pastor who wrote it met a terrible pain, the abrupt news that his son, the kind of child who has it rough and who is especially dear to a parent's loving heart, without warning collapsed in death. One day there, the next gone.

And in the midst of a pain no man should have to suffer, Pastor Vince dug down, deep down, and found that the bottom was solid, and built his house on rock. This is real theology. I don't agree with every detail of what he says; if I were responsible for sorting out his ideas, a duty no one has appointed me to, I might try to convince him that all he says about the people who he calls sparrows in life is true, but the God who loves sparrows with an infinite and everlasting love, and sees every sparrow fall, is beyond suffering. No one can force him to suffer: but he chooses to enter into the suffering of his Creation. Even the formula "One of the Trinity has suffered" has been considered and roundly rejected. And the point is important; it is wrestling and not mental chess, but it is not one I would force upon the book. The

theology in the book is real, and I would not try to argue him out of his belief that the God who loves the suffering ones, is compelled to Himself suffer. It would be less real theology if we entered a debate and he acknowledged I scored that point.

I mention theology because that is of cardinal interest to me. But that is, perhaps, not the biggest point to be made. He has taken pain, again a pain no parent should know, and crafted a work that is human and beautiful. It is painful, but it is beautiful, and if I were at my young age to keel over dead this instant, as abruptly as Vince's son Gabe collapsed having no pulse, and leave my parents to sort out what would be left behind, I would scarcely have a better final message to give them than to leave my computer open to "*A Foot in Two Worlds*."

Disclosure: I am a poet, of sorts, and Pastor Vincent Homan asked permission to quote my poem "Open", taken from the volume *The Best of Jonathan's Corner: An Anthology of Orthodox Christian Theology*. Permission was gladly granted, and I am glad to have provided one of the many beautiful quotes Vince wove into this book.

I stand by every accolade I gave in that review, not to mention that the book represents superb writing. And if I were to pass away at my young age, I would want my parents to read *A Foot in Two Worlds*. But the more time passes, the less the question of whether God suffers looks purely academic. It is a question of doctrine of God, of theology proper, and it has more than meets the eye. And I am grateful to Pastor Vince because in writing his book he gave me the possibility of writing this work. In a real sense I owe the possibility of writing it to him.

There is a quote, "I would not give a fig for the simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity." My point is that God does not suffer in the sense of being a God too small to avoid suffering. My point is that "on the other side of complexity", a God whom no one can constrain to suffer, a God utterly beyond anything we can imagine, has chosen to suffer.

I will look at several authors, some of them Eastern and some of them Western, and try to unfold the grandeur of a God who is beyond suffering, yet chooses to suffer in us, closing with why a God who is not bound to suffer is better news to us who suffer than a God who suffers would be.

The first stop I wish to make is with Anselm of Canterbury. His *Monologion* makes different arguments about God and is a bit of a hodge-podge that Anselm seemed to want to simplify on second thought. So he wrote the *Proslogion*. In it he presents the following argument:

God, whether or not he exists, is by definition that than which nothing greater can be thought. Now either he exists a real God in actuality, or only as a concept in people's minds. But it is greater to be a God who exists in actuality than to exist only in people's minds, so God must exist, or else reality is based on contradiction.

Most people on hearing this think the argument has slipped something past them, and atheists respond to this backward argument from the Middle Ages by saying, "But if that is true, by the same logic there must be some ultimate exotic paradise where it rains Champagne, and filet mignon and lobster grow on trees!" And in fact this argument has a quite venerable precedent; a man named Gaunilo published this argument soon after Anselm and Anselm offered a rebuttal arguing, "Yes, but not in the case of God." Anselm expressed a wish that Gaunilo's objection, and Anselm's own response, be published together with the original piece, and so far that wish has been honored; *my link to the Proslogion is actually to a translation that contains the Proslogion, Gaunilo's objection, and Anselm's reply*. And I have never heard an atheist show knowledge of Gaunilo's having anticipated their objection centuries ago, or of Anselm's attempt to respond to it.

I am not asking that you accept this argument; it has been called the most controversial argument in the history of philosophy, and I'm not completely sure what to make of it. Something said of Bishop Berkeley's strange arguments might be said of this "ontological argument": "They admit no answer and produce no conviction." My own reasons relate to why Thomas Aquinas said that the peasant who does not murder because the law of God is so deep in his bones is greater than the theologian who can reason, "Do not murder" from first principles. I have seen the argument compel a grudging head; I have never known the argument to directly compel a heart. And for that reason I hold it with tongs.

But I bring this up because whatever the status of the argument as a whole, it hits the nail on the head in terms of nature of God. God is greater than anything else that can be thought; Anselm rightly goes further in saying that God is greater than *can* be thought. God is the Greatest God That Could Possibly Be.

Editors often have the right aesthetic distance to pick out a title for a work, and are sometimes much better than authors about picking an appropriate title to a work that the author has deeply burrowed into. One editor described to me the title "Maximum Christology" to an article on the Christological Councils: the Councils met the various debates of their day by affirming that Christ is maximally God, maximally Man, and the Divine and human natures are both maximally united and maximally unconfused. This is the essence of what is called Chalcedonian Christology.

Humans suffer, and human parents suffer when their children suffer. But it is my thesis, which I will argue below, that God does not suffer in himself, as creatures do. He chooses to suffer in others, in Christ and in mankind: in the *communicatio idiomatum*, God "without change became Man," as the Liturgy says, and Christ transcended his own state beyond suffering so that the Son of God suffered in the Son of Man everything Jesus suffered as a man. In fact the God whom no external force could compel to suffer, but chooses to suffer in Christ and in Creation, has something to offer suffering men that a God that could be forced to suffer would not. Perhaps the greatest God that we can think of is one bound to suffer. But there is a God who is greater than we can think of, and nothing can make him suffer against his will.

Let me try to explain.

Rudolf Bultmann is perhaps known for "de-mythologizing:" stripping out the mythological elements of Scripture to get at the truths behind them. What is perhaps less well known is that well over a millenium before, *St. Dionysius, also called Pseudo-Dionysius*, had done a much better and more interesting job of the de-mythologizing project.

Some hint of this project came up, as all theological issues came up, on a Sunday where the Gospel message had two Apostles, James and John (or, perhaps more embarrassingly, their mother) ask to sit on the right and left hand of Christ in glory. He said, "This is a strange request. What could it possibly mean?" I pointed out that the Creed, chanted in church every Liturgy, says that Christ "[sits to] the right hand of the Father," and this "cannot be taken literally", which he corrected to, "cannot literally be true." This is an example of de-mythologizing: the Nicene Creed says things that cannot literally be true, and we say and mean them, without crossing our fingers. Some people know that the words are "best approximations", and try to mean what the words are intended to approximate. Other people with less education may mean that Christ "came down from Heaven" literally speaking. But this is a little more a distinction of erudition than a distinction of faith itself; hence, as one person said, there are "grandmothers who don't know the Creed, but are all ready for Heaven." The story is told of a saint who went off in a boat to educate hermits, and spoke with three old hermits who were about as thick students as he could ask for. After an exhausting teaching visit when it seemed that no theology could get through to these thick-headed students, he started to row away, when the three men came out running on the water as if it were dry land, apologizing that they had forgotten even the first line of the "Our Father" and asking him to teach it to them again.

Something like this is why I inwardly winced at someone saying that, in Genesis 1, God spoke with a voice, lips, and a tongue—I think I challenged it in some form, but it was not a failure of faith. And if Orthodoxy admits a form of de-mythologization, it is

not the center of gravity. De-mythologization isn't worth much if it does not lead to a deeper participation in God.

We do not live in the best of all possible worlds, but we have the best of all possible Gods. And we have the best of all possible Gods regardless of how much right de-mythologization we undergo.

Children can be fond of asking, "Can God make a rock so heavy that he cannot lift it?", on hearing that God can do anything. But the Bible, especially in places like Job, portray not exactly a picture of omnipotence, as such, but of absolute authority that extends beyond omnipotence. God cannot be tempted. He cannot change, nor can he lie. His nature is beyond suffering and cannot suffer directly. In the West, Thomas Aquinas said that nothing contradictory falls under the divine omnipotence.

Divine omnipotence does not mean that anything we can conceive or put into words must be something God can do.

It may be closer to the truth to say that what God can do is not anything we can conceive or put into words.

If we are to understand the divine omnipotence, the divine authority, we must let questions like "Could God create a rock so heavy he couldn't lift it?" to fall away, like a booster rocket.

Some things we think are in God are in our relationship to God. And no, this relationship doesn't have to be quasi-romantic in nature; it can be filial. By relationship here I mean how we are connected with God and not a second romance in our lives. We read, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The saved and the damned shall alike bow their knees and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; but their relationships make it entirely different. To the saved, this will be a seal of ultimate victory; to the damned, a crushing blow of ultimate defeat. Here at least, the difference between our absolute victory and absolute defeat lies entirely in our relationship to God.

The difference between victory and defeat is not in what God does here. The difference is in us.

While I was studying as an undergraduate at Calvin, in one of the oldest pieces on my website, I wrote, *The Way of the Way*,

What does Heaven look like?

He who is proud will see that every man present is present, not because of, but despite what he merits.

He who is rebellious will see people serve an absolute King.

He who desires self-sufficiency will see that joy is offered in community.

He who seeks wealth, prestige, power, and other ways to dominate others, will find his effort in Heaven to be like buying a gun in a grocery store.

He who strives will see that there is no one to strive with.

He who despises the physical will see a bodily resurrection.

He who desires his own interpretation and his own set of beliefs, will see absolute truth in crystalline clarity.

To those who will not let God change their character to virtue and love, even Heaven would be Hell.

A friend advised me, "It almost sounds like you are saying that Heaven and Hell are the same thing." At that point, out of what healthy instincts I had, I pulled back and said that Heaven and Hell are two different things. But among the images in Orthodoxy is one image, the River of Fire, in which the Light of God shines on all, and the saints embrace the Light as ultimate bliss, and the damned fight the Light and experience it through their rejection of Him: and to them, the Light of Heaven is experienced as the fire of Hell. The choice Adam made in Eden can be repeated:

Adam reigned as an immortal king and lord over the whole world. He had a wife like nothing else in all Creation, paradise for a home, and harmony with nature such as we could not dream of. And, he was like a little boy with a whole room full of toys who is miserable because he wants another toy and his parents said "No."

God cannot but love. He cannot but shine. He cannot but resurrect. And regardless of how far that image should be taken—or de-mythologized—this much is clear: he resurrects the saved and the damned alike.

And something like this image is known in the West: I have not exactly seen the claim, "God does not send people to Hell, but the fires of Hell are nothing other than the light of Heaven experienced through the rejection of Christ" in Western sources, but C.S. Lewis says, "Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to." He does not go so far as to say that mercenary souls will also see God, but the implication is that the experience of seeing God is in no way welcome or desirable to a mercenary soul. And it is possible—even if the point should not be pressed too far—that all will see God, and the pure in heart will delight in it, while mercenary souls will be beyond squirming; they will be scorched by it. And Lewis may press the point further in *The Great Divorce*:

Hell is a state of mind - ye never said a truer word. And every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind - is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is reality itself. All that is fully real is Heavenly.

The formula, "Unus ex Trinitate passus est." ("One of the Trinity has suffered.") is one of few formulas from my education that I remember first in Latin, then in other languages. It was a debated formula that was considered, rejected by the same Church that rejected Nestorius for dividing the Christ, and ultimately accepted. If you will, it was decided that God is utterly beyond suffering, and then that God transcends this so that the Son of God was crucified. The Chalcedonian affirmation is that Christ is maximally God, maximally man, and the natures are maximally unconfused and maximally united. And suffering belongs to the human nature, not the Divine nature. But there is a distinction between I would speak of suffering in oneself and suffering in another: Not One of the Trinity has suffered in himself, but the Son of God suffered in the man with which he was maximally united, and suffers in the human race he became a member of. But something of this again exists in the creature's relationship to God. Christ has ascended into Heaven, into the glory that we will also participate if we take up God's offer of salvation. Then is there a possibly a way we can describe him as hungering or thirsting, sick or in prison?

The apocalyptic buildup in St. Matthew assures us there is:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" And the King shall answer and say unto them, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." Then shall they also answer him, saying, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" Then shall he answer them, saying, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

This passage is not for Christ's benefit; it's for ours. If we cannot properly love Christ when he comes to us in the person of a beggar, how will we see him in the last day when he brings us to him face to face? The ascended Christ, enthroned in Heaven, is not thirsty in himself. However, each person is made in the image of God, is built according to the presence of God, and if we see beggars as a nuisance rather than an icon of Christ, and an icon in whom Christ suffers, what are we practicing for Judgment Day?

My music teacher in gradeschool emphatically stated, "Practice does not make *perfect*. Practice makes *permanent*," the point being that we should not just log time practicing, but log time practicing as well as we could. Each person we meet is one for whom God ordained that we should cross paths, and with each of these are *practicing* how we will meet Christ in his *own* person on Judgment Day. And one day, the results of our *practicing* will be made irrevocably *permanent*.

But what about the question of whether God suffers? Pastor Vince in *A Foot in Two Worlds* talks at length about "sparrows", a point just nicked on in my review. Literal sparrows, in the Bible, were sold for offerings, two for a penny or five for two pennies: the fifth one thrown in because it wasn't really worth much of anything. Metaphorical sparrows, infinitely dear to a parent's heart, were those who suffer in life: those who lost at sports, or were clumsy, or got lousy grades, or were social outcasts, or didn't look the prettiest. The person who was low man on the totem pole, who had it rough: these were the children dearest to a parent's heart. Vince gives thicker description than the parable of the Last Judgment quoted above, but it is quite a similar roster of usual suspects. And a parent's heart goes out to sparrows, and suffers with them. The greatest virtue the book paints of parental love is that it goes out to sparrows, and suffers with them. Suffering is not an option: the constitution of love demands it. If a child suffers, and a parent loves the child, the parent suffers the child's suffering; and the parent suffers more than the child suffers. This is behind a statement that seems

ludicrous sophistry to a child receiving punishment: "This hurts me more than it hurts you." But it is not ludicrous sophistry: it is quite literally true.

And what can God be if he does not share in his children's sufferings? And, of course, all of the people considered to be God's children really are what the book says they are.

- Where Is the Good of Women? Feminism Is Called "The Women's Movement." But Is It?
- The Patriarchy We Object to
- The Fulfillment of Feminism
- Knights and Ladies

For here, let it suffice to say that I am a conservative Orthodox Christian, and I care *deeply* about the good of women.

Something of the same thinking undergirds some of the texts for my classes: a Radical "Orthodoxy" essay stated that God was masculine, and feminine, and supramasculine, and suprafeminine, and I think neuter may have been thrown in there somewhere. What is going on is the same as texts one would expect Radical Orthodoxy, on the surface of it, to oppose: seeing that men and women exist equally on earth, an identical measure or kind of man-ness and woman-ness must be ascribed to God, and not a God who is masculine beyond any sense of femininity, because if that's the case, then the good of woman is impaired. And scholars won't see things any other way, and the possibility that the good of women could be advanced by the Father for whom every fatherhood in Heaven and earth is named, is inconceivable.

(But to those few who do glimpse what the alternative to the politically correct canon may be, there is a freedom and a fittingness that is like a lifelong experience of falling off a cliff.)

Charles Darwin buried a child, and his theory of evolution was a product of his grieving. Almost a triumph of it. Darwin could not believe that a good God, and one who intervened with miracles, could choose not to save his son. And so he developed a theory where God had not intervened with miracles, not only in the time of Christ, but at any time. Even before humans, the origin of species was to be without miracles. God was like a Watchmaker who carefully built a watch, wound it, set it in motion, and then never needed to touch it again. And so Darwin, in his efforts to save his belief in God, proposed a mechanism, evolution via natural selection, whereby species could appear without miracles. God, a good and honorable God if necessarily a distant one, could thus

remain a good God even if Darwin's son had died, because such a God was necessarily absolved of any guilt for failing to answer prayers. To rescue the goodness of God, Darwin found an ingenious way to cut God down so that the divine goodness would fit into his head. Later, Darwinian and neo-Darwinian evolution would be taken up by some religious faithful, and by many naturalists who want to avoid the conclusion that life is the creation of a Creator God. The consequences are impressive. But the core is that in pain and grief, Charles Darwin cut down God until he would fit inside of his head.

I hesitate very much to lump Pastor Vince in with Darwin; it would be a brutal blow, and in poor taste. But consider this: parents, as a rule, love children. Love for children is part of the landscape even in abortion, where whatever the rhetoric of "my body, my choice" may be, women who have abortions grieve the loss of a child. No competent and honest post-abortion counselor will say that psychologically an abortion is just the removal of an unwanted parasite; the love of mother for child is real and a deeply engraved portion of the landscape, and this is true even when people cut against the grain by setting things up so women believe they are better off with an abortion. In other words, the love of parent for child is a major landmark even when the parent chooses a separation.

O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" But unless one is to do extreme violence to the spirit of Homan's writing, it is clear that he would have willingly died in place of his son in a heartbeat. And his suffering has both aspects; he would not have endured sorrow unless he were pushed out as he was.

I will not treat here the dimension of enduring sorrow, but suffering in the sense of compulsion from outside cannot belong to God. If the infinite God may suffer, and he does suffer, it is something other, something deeper, than being pushed around as a finite creature is pushed around.

If this much is true, what is to be said for a man who has had years to learn to love his son, whose heart goes out to sparrows, who out of love for his neighbor has become a pastor, who pours out his love, his regrets, his sorrow, and his hope into a masterpiece, who still suffers in the suffering of his son and remains in regret even when his pain has come to be coupled by hope so he has one foot in suffering and one foot in hope? And if he believes that God as a parent must be a suffering God? The words, "Do not judge" come to mind. None the less, God does not suffer as earthly parents do. No external force pushes him into grief he did not choose. He is beyond all such constraint.

I have been speaking of the transcendence of God, although I have not used that term much. Words about Christ "[sits to] the right hand of the Father" as words that cannot literally be true, underscore his transcendence. Words about the Greatest God That Could Possibly Be underscore his transcendence. Words about the maximum

Christology of the Maximum Christ underscore his transcendence. The entire thrust of the argument in this article has been to underscore that God infinitely transcends anything we could possibly ask or imagine. And this brings me to one last point:

God transcends his own transcendence.

St. Dionysius, in the height of what may be the height of the Orthodox Church's works of theology on the transcendence of God, wrote:

The fact is that the more we take flight upward, the more our words are confined to the ideas we are capable of forming; so that now as we plunge into that darkness which is beyond intellect, we shall find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing...

So this is what we say. The Cause of all is above all and is not in-existent, lifeless, speechless, mindless. It is not a material body, and hence has neither shape nor form, quality, quantity, or weight. It is not in any place and can neither be seen nor be touched. It is neither perceived nor is he perceptible. It suffers neither disorder nor disturbance and is overwhelmed by no earthly passion. It is not powerless and subject to the disturbances caused by sense perception. It endures no deprivation of light. It passes through no change, decay, division, loss, no ebb and flow, nothing of which the senses may be aware. None of all this can either be identified with it nor attributed to it.

Again, as we climb higher we say this. It is not soul or mind, nor does It possess imagination, conviction, speech, or understanding. Nor is It speech per se, understanding per se. It cannot be spoken of and It cannot be grasped by understanding. It is not number or order, greatness or smallness, equality or inequality, similarity or dissimilarity. It is not immovable, moving, or at rest. It has no power, It is not power, nor is It light. It does not live nor is It life. It is not a substance, nor is It eternity or time. It cannot be grasped by the understanding since It is neither knowledge nor truth. It is not kingship. It is not wisdom. It is neither one nor oneness, divinity nor goodness. Nor is It a spirit, in the sense in which we understand that term. It is not sonship or fatherhood and It is nothing known to us or to any other being. It falls neither within the predicate of nonbeing nor of being. Existing beings do not know It as It actually is and It does not know them as they are. There is no speaking of It, nor name nor knowledge of It. Darkness and light, error and truth—It is none of these. It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to It, but never of It, for It is both beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of his preeminently simple and absolute nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation; It is also beyond every denial.

And yet there is one point further: God transcends his own transcendence.
God is love.

In him we live, and move, and have our being.

The same God who is beyond the farthest stars is infinitesimally near.

We live by feeding off of the energies of God. It may be mediated by food and drink, but it is simply and ultimately God who sustains us.

The fact that God is Father and not Mother matters less than you think. Or rather, it does not hurt things. It is transcended.

Again to return to C.S. Lewis, "Prayer does not change God. Prayer changes me." But the divine Transcendence of God is so great that *the fact that prayer does not change God, matters less than you might think*. Or rather, it does not hurt things. It is transcended. God is Transcendent, and prayer is powerful; it is among the most powerful things we can do. And the fact that we cannot change God's mind detracts *nothing* from the power of prayer. Indeed, it is better for us that we cannot change God's mind, as it is better for us that The Greatest God That Can Possibly Be is untouched by how we would solve problems.

And the fact that God cannot suffer in himself matters less than you think. Or rather, it does not hurt things. It is transcended. Every earthly suffering borne out of love for another who suffers is a shadow of the God who is beyond suffering and yet transcends this to choose to suffer in his Creation.

In his book, Vince spoke of a wound rubbed raw, in people telling him, "I know just how you feel." Now a tangent might speak of genderlects and explain that this is a helpful assurance when speaking to a woman but not to a man; here the Golden Rule needs a little adjustment in that it is wiser not to give a member of the opposite sex the exact same form of encouragement you would best respond to. But this sensitivity was not present, and people assured him that because of some bereavement they'd experienced, "I know just how you feel." (The most offensive example was the loss of a pet.) I've lost both grandparents on my mother's side, and while there was grief—my grandmother's death came as a shock even as it was expected—it's not just sensitivity of "He's said he doesn't like being told others know just how you feel" that stops me from saying that I know just how he feels. I've experienced bereavements that cause pain that fades after time. Some of them hurt much worse than my grandmother's death. But the death of a child can cause lifelong pain, and his experience has been one of unending pain that in one sense improves by being accompanied by hope as time goes on, but in another sense never stops stinging. Thanks be to God, my pains have not been like that. But I would say this: "God *knows just how you feel*. He understands you perfectly. He understands your sorrows, and every nook and cranny of your grief. Every regret you feel, he sees from the inside. And he is at work. *Suffering is God's workshop*. And he is

working on you with eternal intentions. Perhaps he does not suffer in himself. He has chosen to enter your sufferings. He understands and loves you better than if he did." And I would hesitate to say this, because the greatest insensitivity to his nerves has been to calmly say, "I know just how you feel," and speaking personally as a cancer survivor, when I met with my Uncle Mark who had traveled for cancer treatment, he voiced pain at people saying, "I know just how you feel." I didn't offer him any such assurance, even though I possibly did know something like what he felt. But someone who knows just how you feel may connect without saying, "I know just how you feel;" if I did understand my uncle's experience, he picked it up without my making the claim. But with all due respect to a wound rubbed raw, God knows just how the pastor feels, and does this no less because he does not suffer himself.

And here is where the God who is beyond suffering, who suffers because he transcends his own transcendence, has most to give us. In Isaiah, we are told, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. We are dealing, with so to speak, the ultimate benevolent alien Intelligence. (No, not crop circles. Crop circles are toxic and something to turn your back on if you want any spiritual or mental health.) The alien Intelligence, as it were, speaks our language, but is beyond the "abstractions of half a million years of wildly alien culture" found in *Robert A. Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land*, a perennially interesting cult classic that has never gone out of print. The premise of the book is that a rocket ship travels to Mars, a baby boy is born before all adults die or are killed, and the boy is raised in the wisdom and spiritual discipline of Martian culture, and then brought "back" as a young "man" to earth. ("Smith... is... not... a... man." - "Huh? Explain yourself, Captain." - "Smith is an intelligent creature with the ancestry of a man, but he is more Martian than man. Until we came along he had never laid eyes on a man."...) Amidst unfolding space opera political drama, Michael struggles to adapt to survive, has to struggle terribly to adjust to human culture and human language, then becomes adept in both human culture and language, which he fuses with the treasure of Martian culture and becomes a Messiah-figure, bringing to mankind the wisdom and spiritual disciplines of Martian culture, making a quite literal "best of both worlds" that offers a profound improvement to human life. (At least that's a sanitized summary of the story.)

I mention *Stranger* because something like this happens in the Bible and God's drama with the world, and I wrote, "Looking at *Stranger in a Strange Land* as a Modern Christological Heresy," basically because its attraction is a theme more interestingly engaged in the Bible itself. Not, specifically, that *Stranger* is a Christological heresy in the sense of being a flawed attempt at Christology someone worked out; Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* comments that one scholar had made

a *perceptive* study of Martin Luther's momentous crisis of faith in light of the psychological literature of modern midlife identity crises, even though Martin Luther probably would not have understood the comparison and probably would have found it reprehensible if he *had* understood it. In like fashion, Heinlein cannot properly be considered someone who was trying to get Christology right and failed, but his book can be studied in light of the various Christologies of which the Church has said, "This is inadequate to the Maximum Christ... That is inadequate to the Maximum Christ... That one, too, is inadequate to the Maximum Christ..."

I would like to close with the letter I wrote Vince after a bit of time to recoil from the force and power of *A Foot in Two Worlds*. I didn't mention that he had placed my quotation in the most honoring place it could have been, even though I was deeply grateful. I believe it shows something of the Alien Intelligence Who Loves Us, The Greatest God That Could Be, the God Who Cannot Suffer In Himself But Suffers In Us, Embracing Our Suffering, the God Who Is Greater Than Can Be Thought:

Vince, I am in awe of your work of honesty and practical theology. It's been a while since I have read something of this caliber in what I read.

I was wondering if I could give an appropriate response, and I think I will send you an email today. The book you wrote was of unexpected pain; this is of unexpected joy. I don't want to say this is as good as your son's death was bad, when such is manifestly and obviously not the case. But surprises come, and I started reading your book in suffering without hope of release, and to my surprise this is what I have to offer you in my hands in response to what you had to offer from your hands.

I pray that God may bless you.

One of my doctors referred me to a sleep center, which did some studies that seemed to me at first to be a simple disappointment. They didn't seem to offer hope that I could be more awake, when I had decreasing energy during the day.

Then I met with one of their specialists, and he basically unravelled the puzzle reflected by my habits and medications. There had been an earlier conversation on a list when I mentioned nausea, in light of preceding history.

There had been an ill-advised medication switch by one doctor that resulted in a long-term underdose that almost killed me: I experienced nausea that built over months and led to me going without food or water for two days before I figured out that the approved underdose was making nausea. I asked generalists and specialists for help with nausea and the only

thing I found was that if I increased my dosage of some medications [again], I could stave off nausea [for a little longer].

And in light of this conversation, it was singularly helpful that a friend pointed out that ginger is a potent anti-nauseant. This was much more helpful than the doctor's "I dunno", or a pharmacist informing me that non-prescription anti-nauseants boil down to sugar. (I was steered to a chemically engineered concoction of table sugar, [pharmaceutical grade] corn syrup, etc. and decided that if sugar was the only game in town besides a prescription anti-nauseant, which I had been refused, I'd rather have real honey than corn syrup.)

And the specialist I spoke with today explained to me why I felt so tired: the controlled sleep medicine I was given was one that has over 50% still remain in your system 24 hours later, so yes, he saw reason for my trouble escaping sleepiness. He wants to work with me to ratchet down the [prescription] drug complex I have after all my adventures, so I am really at doses that are medically necessary and not at doses that happen to include nausea control.

He wants me to do that, but first I need to make a preliminary adjustment for two weeks: get down to my normal 10 hours of sleep. (I legitimately need more sleep than most people, but not as much as I've been getting.)

I began to try to think about what to do. Jobhunting has had me a little more active, but it has its lulls. Then I remembered that I know little of Dickens, who has been described to me as "the primer for character and plot." Once I finish the piece I'm reading, the humanness of Dickens lies open. And I may ask on social media for reading recommendations, and read and reread the Fathers. Perhaps I will need breaks, but it looks like something to use the time constructively and help me grow as an author and as a man. I want to give my jobhunting first attention, but of all jobhunts this is the one that I would be most happy with my being slow at. I am not in my best state now, and up to a point the longer I wait the better I may be prepared to work. And there are other things I can do; *pro bono* technical work, maybe, and walking.

I feel like I've crossed a threshold. I don't expect any sudden changes of any sort, but vistas lie open. Thanks to Cynthia, the friend mentioned on this mailing list, I have a "nearly side effect free" way of controlling nausea; and now thanks to this I hope for a slow but effective process of waking up from my present state of being medicated to narcosis, and getting back to the Christos Jonathan you knew earlier.

This piece, that you are reading, is the first work of theology I have been able to create in months. My site's list of recent postings has three items from previous months that were posted out of something older, but this is the first blade of grass showing after a thaw.

Doxology

How shall I praise thee, O Lord?
For naught that I might say,
Nor aught that I may do,
Compareth to thy worth.
Thou art the Father for whom every fatherhood in Heaven and on earth is named,
The Glory for whom all glory is named,
The Treasure for whom treasures are named,
The Light for whom all light is named,
The Love for whom all love is named,
The Eternal by whom all may glimpse eternity,
The Being by whom all beings exist,
יהוה
O ΩN.
The King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
Who art eternally praised,
Who art all that thou canst be,
Greater than aught else that may be thought,
Greater than can be thought.
In thee is light,
In thee is honour,
In thee is mercy,

In thee is wisdom, and praise, and every good thing.
For good itself is named after thee,
God immeasurable, immortal, eternal, ever glorious, and humble.
What mighteth compare to thee?
What praise equalleth thee?
If I be fearfully and wonderfully made,
Only can it be,
Wherewith thou art fearful and wonderful,
And ten thousand things besides,
Thou who art One,
Eternally beyond time,
So wholly One,
That thou mayest be called infinite,
Timeless beyond time thou art,
The One who is greater than infinity art thou.
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
The Three who are One,
No more bound by numbers than by word,
And yet the Son is called Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ,
The Word,
Divine ordering Reason,
Eternal Light and Cosmic Word,
Way pre-eminent of all things,
Beyond all, and infinitesimally close,
Thou transcendest transcendence itself,
The Creator entered into his Creation,
Sharing with us humble glory,
Lowered by love,
Raised to the highest,
The Suffering Servant known,
The King of Glory,
Ο ΩΝ.

What tongue mighteth sing of thee?
What noetic heart mighteth know thee,
With the knowledge that drinketh,
The drinking that knoweth,
Of the νοϋς,
The loving, enlightened spiritual eye,

By which we may share the knowing,
Of divinised men joining rank on rank of angels.

Thou art,
The Hidden Transcendent God who transcendest transcendence itself,
The One God who transfigurest Creation,
The Son of God became a Man that men might become the sons of God,
The divine became man that man mighteth become divine.

Beyond measure is thy glory,
The weight of thy power transcendeth,
Thy power of thine all-surpassing authority bespeaketh,
And yet art thou,
Not in fire, not earthquake,
Not wind great as maelstrom,
But in soft gentle whisper,
Thy prophets wait upon thee,
For thy silence is more deafening than thunder,
Thine weakness stronger than the strength of men,
Thy humility surpassingly far exceedeth men's covetous thirst for glory,
Thou who hidst in a manger,
Treasure vaster than the Heavens,
And who offerest us glory,
In those things of our lives,
That seem humble to us,
As a manger rude in a cavern stable.

Thou Christ God, manifest among Creation,
Vine, lamb, and our daily bread,
Tabernacled among us who may taste thy glory,
Art come the priest on high to offer thy Creation up into Heaven,
Sanctified,
Transfigured,
Deified.

Wert thou a lesser god,
Numerically one as a creature is one,
Only one by an accident,
Naught more,

Then thou couldst not deify thine own creation,
Whilst remaining the only one god.

But thou art beyond all thought,
All word, all being,
We may say that thou existest,
But then we must say,
Thou art, I am not.
And if we say that we exist,
It is inadequate to say that thou existest,
For thou art the source of all being,
And beyond our being;
Thou art the source of all mind, wisdom, and reason,
Yet it is a fundamental error to imagine thee,
To think and reason in the mode of mankind.
Thou art not one god because there happeneth not more,
Thou art The One God because there mighteth not be another beside thee.
Thus thou spakest to Moses,
Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
Which is to say,
Thou shalt admit no other gods to my presence.

And there *can* be no other god beside thee,
So deep and full is this truth,
That thy Trinity mighteth take naught from thine Oneness,
Nor could it be another alongside thy divine Oneness,
If this God became man,
That man become god.

Great art thou,
Greater than aught that can be thought,
And thus dealest thou,
With thy Creation.

For thou camest into the world,
O Christ,
Thy glory veiled,
But a few could see thy glory,
In a seed.

But thou returnest soon,
In years, or centuries, or ages untold,
A day or a thousand years, soon,
Then a seed no more.
None shall escape seeing you,
Not an angel choir to shepherds alone,
But rank on rank of angel host.
Every eye shall see thee,
And they also which pierced thee,
Thou camest and a few knees bowed,
Thou wilt return,
And every knee shall bow,
And every tongue shall confess,
Jesus Christ is Lord,
To the glory of God the Father,
As the Father triumphs in the Son.

Who mighteth tell of thy glory, thy might?
We hope for Heaven yet,
Yet the Heavens cannot contain thee.
Great art O ΩN,
And greatly to be praised.
Thou art awesome beyond all gods,
Who sayest,
Wound not my christs.
For the Son of God became the Son of Man,
That the sons of man might become the sons of God,
And the divine image,
The ancient and glorious foundation,
And radix of mankind,
Be transfigured,
Into the likeness of Christ,
And shine with uncreated Light,
The glory of God shining through his sons.

Let our spiritual eye be ever transfixed upon thine eternal radiant glory,
Our hearts ever seeking thy luminous splendour,
Ever questing,

Ever sated,
Slaked by the greatest of draughts,
Which inflameth thirst.

Glorified art thou,
In all ages,
In every age,
Thy soft, gentle whisper,
Speaking life,
In every here and now,
And today.

Let us give our lives,
To thine all-surpassing greatness,
From this day,
From this hour,
Henceforth and forevermore.

Αμην,
So be it. Amen.

Escape

I want to write today something to do with happiness, something that is interwoven with my whole life story.

"You are too old, children," said Aslan, "and you must begin to come close to your own world now."

"It isn't Narnia, you know," added Lucy. "It's you. We shan't meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?"

"Are—are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund.

"I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."

These words, from the end of a book by C.S. Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia* were for me a big spiritual turnoff for as long as I can remember. (They went over my head when my father read *The Chronicles of Narnia* to my brother and me as little boys.)

When I read those words, they could not but grate because I wanted to continue to live vicariously in Narnia, not our world which seemed so drab and dull, and I was more interested in Aslan than a real Christ. And here I wish to touch on something.

The term "occult" has a few senses and meanings; it can mean supernatural power not given by God; or it can mean something that may or may not be supernatural but is very obscure and known to few. One classic study of occult memory techniques in

Renaissance times is occult in both senses. By contrast, a familiarity with the story of the twelve paladins as heroic literature may or may not be occult in its supernatural dimension but is occult in the sense of being obscure. Today, Harry Potter and the X-Men may glorify an imaginary occult world but they are not occult in the sense of being obscure by the standards of pop culture: both of them are backed by tremendous marketing muscle to be a global financial powerhouse, and one need not try to delve into obscure matters to start becoming interested in either.

At that point I remember being puzzled by a counselor showing something almost like a patriotism towards one of the colleges in Harry Potter; in one sense it may seem harmless enough but I would expect a psychologist to know enough about happiness not to build a proper patriotism for something not literally available. I remember in reading "How to Be a Hacker" that talked about "hackers" (software experts who are usually not focused on breaking computer security) as being "neophiles", meaning people who, like the "Athenians and strangers" of the Bible in Acts 17:21, "...spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." And though technologies change and develop and there is little end to which changes of some sort are available, one of the big things I read on reading propaganda for HTML5 is that the axe ground against its predecessor XHTML spoke of an appetite for change in excess of the admittedly significant technical changes HTML5 heralded. The amount of bad smell attributed to XHTML was reminiscent of New Age people grinding an axe against Newton, or perhaps today Einstein, as a primary authority figure. My involvement in physics, for instance, never really turned up figures grinding an axe against past paradigms by physicists. Newtonian physics may be considered to have been surpassed, but I was taught Newtonian physics before relativity, and engineers (and for that matter some physicists) routinely stick with Newtonian physics in a large number of cases where the discrepancy between Newtonian and relativistic physics (or quantum mechanics, or superstring theory) is dwarfed by much larger imprecision in other matters. And being a neophile is a downwind attribute of finding that things one already has are just boring and really not being happy with life as it is. I would expect a psychologist to know, not so much that enough involvement in literal occult activities is a recipe to lose your mind, but that placing what is rightly called patriotism in a mere fantasy setting is a recipe to find what one can literally have, to be quite dull in comparison. Perhaps a degree of curiosity towards new things is helpful in rapidly changing times, but boredom with tried and true technology is not an attribute of happiness, and patriotism for Hogwarts represents a problem in the first world that is not, as the idiom goes, a "first world problem." A true first world problem is something minor that is blown out of proportion. A spiritual condition that can let you be in circumstances coveted worldwide and not appreciate it is a matter of grave concern. In a world where many are hungry, many lack clothing or shelter, where many lack a safe place to stay, many people wish

for a lot that comes easily in the USA, and is taken for granted when one pines for Harry Potter and Hogwarts. A true "first world problem" is something like having a cracked phone screen or having to use cheaper and rougher toilet paper, for the lack of graver and more pressing concerns. Being an American white middle class professional is something that is coveted around the world. (Being an American white middle class professional who thinks her lot is dull, and pines for a bit of spice in patriotism for Hogwarts, is a significant missed spiritual opportunity.)

I harp on escapism because even though I have resisted some of its manifestations, it is something I know well, and it is not innocent or harmless. I imitated the staring in one place that opened a portal to a magical world in *The Last of the Really Great Whang-Doodles*; in a French language novel by a friend, there was no question about whether escape was to be found, only of how it might be ferreted out. There is also in fiction the possibility of intense concentration or some other intense psychological state breaking through; though it is not exactly a delivery of escape by which the curse is broken at the end of *Ella Enchanted*, the ace card that trumps magic nothing else could ever break illustrates another portal by which escape is provided in literature. In my own experience, reading or dipping into games can be a way to imbibe tainted spiritual realities as well.

My own attempted interest in Arthurian legends (in *The Sign of the Grail*, I omitted entirely one part of the rhythm of Arthurians where two knights hacked each other to death's door and were both well a few weeks later (contrast history where a sword duel was usually eventually fatal to *both* duelists), is relatively unique in that I don't see the fountainhead as being Sir Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, but studied the medieval flourishing that escaped Celtic folklore into mainstream European popularity in the 12th century "Brut", and was finally transformed into a 1000 page synopsis by Mallory as the end of a flourish. (And I tried hard to convince myself that reading an arbitrarily long sample of Arthurian legend is fascinating. Most of the time I was fighting uphill to convince myself that what I was reading was interesting, when I knew it was deadly dull.)

These Arthurian legends, told and retold and formed and reformed from about the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, concern a time frame of allegedly the sixth century. The times in which the stories were told were separated from the time they occurred in by about as many centuries as the reteller's timeframe is distant to us historically, before history and period awareness were really discovered in Western culture.

For just a slice of what changed between the sixth century and the centuries of these retellings, such things as knights who fought on horseback and jousts simply were not available in sixth century England. Historically knights were mounted shock troops who fought from on horseback, and that depends on the stirrup, a technology not available in sixth century England. Without stirrups, horses can be useful but they can

only take you to a battle scene faster where you can fight on foot. A knight riding on horseback in a battle, or in a joust, simply was not available in the sixth century any more in the sixth century any more than people in the twelfth through fifteenth centuries would have been able to coordinate their combat by using modern radios, walkie-talkies, and cellphones in a world where news really couldn't travel faster than people.

They are the medieval equivalent of our fantasy TV shows having Robin Hood's merry band go through a haunted house, and have Maid Marian confronted with a magical apparition the other side of a mirror and saying, "I am having... a biochemical... reaction!" or otherwise show scriptwriters who know how fantasy storytelling works today, but do not share Lewis's and Tolkien's writing of medieval fantasy out of a profound knowledge of medieval literature and history. And in the days when these Arthurian legends were rampant, it really is not academic peskiness to suggest that chivalry was the real religion of the nobles, or to observe that Western Europeans traveling to the Byzantine empire participated in the dangerous sport of jousting that was practiced one place and the other sometime around the thirteenth century. "People now don't really love," to quote a repeated didactic comment about courtly love by a troubador, are the kind of signal that tells the historian that the milieu of medieval mania for Arthurian legend embodies courtly love as never before.

(And something of the same sensitivity gives me hope when Orthodox say that too little of the greatness of ancient monasticism is alive now, because it may signal a flourishing quite independent of our needing to re-create the conditions of the Egyptian deserts met by the followers of St. Anthony the Great. The *Philokalia* is very widely read among the faithful today, and that in and of itself is exciting.)

My mother showed consternation in relating a report that children surveyed would "rather be rich and unhappy than be poor and happy," but the consternation played out in circumstances in my life. Many people today would rather be escapist and ungrateful and unhappy with the here and now than be happy and grateful with the here and now.

I had the privilege of studying at the University of Cambridge in England, and in a very real sense that was an escape into a golden other world for me. A real Narnia to me, if you will. And it did not make me happy; I very much preferred being in Europe when the opportunity was open even if I was unhappy there. It was not until after I had returned to the U.S. that I learned how to be happy in the here and now. Years after that I traveled to Mount Athos, and I was expecting to feel better, but I was just happy, if the word "just" is appropriately used in such a case. The voyage was one of tremendous

blessing to me, but I did not feel better for a transition to the Holy Mountain's medieval settings.

When I was at Cambridge I was received into the Orthodox Church, and I bristled when I read Vladyka KALLISTOS's comment in *The Orthodox Church* that Orthodoxy "is not something Oriental or exotic," because that is precisely what I wanted Orthodoxy to be for me. I also bristled when the priest who received me said, "Orthodoxy is slog!" Now, years and a decade later, I find that Orthodoxy transforms slog.

My "escape from escape" essentially unfolded as follows. When I had been leaning enough on, for instance, subtle mind tricks, one priest commented to me that monks in the desert were perennially warned about escape, with pastoral advice of praying through the temptation until it was gone. And I finally came to a point where I bleakly let go of escape, when all of my desire on one level was to escape the bleak here and now, and in an instant my eyes were opened and I no longer found the here and now to be bleak. Nowadays, the temptation comes back from time to time and I need to keep on intensely praying through the temptation the Fathers called "the demon of noonday," but even if the activity of prayer is initially bleaker, I know where victory comes from. When I pray through the temptation, sooner or later it leaves, and I find that the here and now bears some of the marks of Paradise.

"The road less traveled" is today the embrace of the here and now instead of trying to find happiness via escapism, and leaving the broad highway of escapism for the narrow and straight road less traveled, by all means, makes all the difference.

Exotic Golden Ages and Restoring Harmony with Nature: Anatomy of a Passion

It's exotic, right?

The website for the Ubuntu Linux distribution announced that Ubuntu is "an ancient African word" meaning humanity to others. It announced how it carried forward the torch of a Linux distribution that's designed for regular people to use. And this promotion of "an ancient African word" has bothered a few people: one South African blogger tried to explain several things: for instance, he mentioned that "ubuntu" had been a quite ordinary Xhosa/Zulu word meaning "humanity," mentioned that it had been made into a political rallying cry in the 20th century, and drew an analogy: saying, "'Ubuntu' is an ancient African word meaning 'humanity'" is as silly as saying, in reverential tones, "'People' is an ancient European word meaning, 'more than one person.'" There is an alternative definition provided in the forums of Gentoo, a technical aficionado's Linux distribution: "Ubuntu. An African word meaning, 'Gentoo is too hard for me.'"

The blogger raised questions of gaffe in the name of the distribution; he did not raise questions about the Linux distribution itself, nor would I. Ubuntu is an excellent Linux distribution for nontechnical users, it gets some things very much right, and I prefer it to most other forms of Linux I've seen—including Gentoo. I wouldn't bash the

distribution, nor would I think of bashing what people mean by making "ubuntu" a rallying-cry in pursuing, in their words, "Linux for human beings."

The offense lay in something else, and it is something that, in American culture at least, runs deep: it was a crass invocation of an Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom. It is considered an impressive beginning to a speech to open by recounting an Archetypal Exotic Culture's Awesome Nugget of Profound Wisdom: whether one is advertising a Linux distribution, a neighbor giving advice over a fence in Home Improvement, or a politician delivering a speech, it is taken as a mark of sophistication and depth to build upon the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom.

At times I've had a sneaking suspicion that the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Awesome Nugget of Profound Wisdom is the mouthpiece for whatever is fashionable in the West at the time. Let me give one illustration, if one that veers a bit close to the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom:

One American friend of mine, when in Kenya, gave a saying that was not from any of the people groups she was interacting with, but was from a relatively close neighboring people group: "When you are carrying a child in your womb, he only belongs to you. When he is born, he belongs to everyone." The proverb speaks out of an assumption that not only parents but parents' friends, neighbors, elders, shopkeepers, and ultimately all adults, stand in parentis loco. All adults are ultimately responsible for all children and are responsible for exercising a personal and parental care to help children grow into mature adulthood. As best I understand, this is probably what a particular community in Africa might mean in saying, "It takes a village to raise a child."

What is a little strange is that, if these words correspond to anything in the U.S., they are conservative, and speak to a conservative desire to believe that not only parents but neighbors, churches, civic and local organizations, businesses and the like, all owe something to the moral upbringing of children: that is to say, there are a great many forces outside the government that owe something to local children. And this is quite the opposite of saying that we need more government programs because it takes a full complement of government initiatives and programs to raise a child well—because, presumably, more and more bureaucratic initiatives are what the (presumably generic) African sages had in mind when they gave the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom and said, "It takes a village to raise a child." There is some degree of irony in making "It takes a village" a rallying-cry in pushing society *further away* from what, "It takes a village to raise a child," *could* have originally meant—looking for advice on how to build a statist Western-style cohort of bureaucratic government programs would be as inconceivable in many traditional African cultures as looking for instructions on how to build a computer in the New Testament.

My point in mentioning this is not *primarily* sensitivity to people who don't like hearing people spout about a supposedly "ancient African word" such as, "Ubuntu." Nor is my point really about how, whenever a saying is introduced as an ancient aboriginal proverb, the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom ends up shanghied into being an eloquent statement of whatever fads are blowing around in the West today. My deepest concern is that the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom hinges on something that is bad for us spiritually.

The Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom is tied to what the Orthodox Church refers to as a "passion," which means something very different from either being passionately in love, or being passionate about a cause or a hobby, or even religious understandings of the passion of Christ. The concept of a passion is a religious concept of a spiritual disease that one feeds by thoughts and actions that are out of step with reality. There is something like the concept of a passion in the idea of an addiction, a bad habit, or in other Christians whose idea of sin is mostly about spiritual state rather than mere actions. A passion is a spiritual disease that we feed by our sins, and the concern I raise about the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom is one way—out of many ways we have—that we feed one specific passion.

The Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom is occult, and we cannot give the same authority to any source that is here and now. If we listen to the wise voices of elders, it is only elders from faroff lands who can give such deeply relevant words: I have never heard such a revered Nugget of Wisdom come from the older generation of our own people, or any of the elders we meet day to day.

By "occult" I mean something more than an Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom that might note that the word "occult" etymologically signifies "hidden"—and still does, in technical medical usage—and that the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom has been dug up from someplace obscure and hidden. Nor is it really my point that the Nugget may be dug up from an occult source—as when I heard an old man, speaking with a majesterial voice, give a homily for the (Christmas) Festival of Lessons and Carols that begun by building on a point from a famous medieval Kabbalist. These are at best tangentially related. What I mean by calling the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom occult is that the Archetypal Exotic Culture's Nugget of Profound Wisdom is the fruit of the same tree as explicitly occult practices—and they are tributaries feeding the same river.

Occult sin is born out of a sense that the way things are in the here and now that God has placed us in are not enough: Gnosticism has been said to hinge, not so much on a doctrine, but something like a mood, a mood of despair. (You might say a passion of despair.) Gnostic Scripture is a sort of spiritual porn that offers a dazzling escape from the present—a temptation whose power is much stronger on people yearning for such escape than for people who have learned the virtuous inoculation of contentment.

It takes virtue to enjoy even vice, and that includes contentment. As a recovering alcoholic will tell you, being drunk all the time is misery, and, ultimately, you have to be at least somewhat sober even to enjoy getting drunk. It takes humility to enjoy even pride, and chastity to enjoy even lust. Contentment does not help us escape—it helps us find joy where we were not looking for it, precisely in what we were trying to escape. We do not find a way out of the world—what we find is really and truly a way into where God has placed us.

One can almost imagine a dialogue between God and Adam:

Adam: I'm not content.

God: What do you want me to do?

Adam: I want you to make me contented.

God: Ok, how do you want me to do that?

Adam: First of all, I don't want to have to engage in ardent, strenuous labor like most people. I don't want to do that kind of work at all.

God: Ok.

Adam: And that's not all. I want to have enough bread to feel full.

God: Ok.

Adam: Scratch that. I want as much *meat* as I want.

God: Ok, as much meat as you want.

Adam: And sweet stuff like ice cream.

God: Ok, I'll give you Splenda ice cream so it won't show up on your waistline.

Adam: And I don't like to be subject to the weather and the elements you made. I want a home which will be cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

God: Sure. And I'll give you hot and cold running water, too!

Adam: Speaking of that, I don't like how my body smells—could we do something to hide that?

God: I'll let you bathe. Each day. In as much water as you want. And I'll give you deodorant to boot!

Adam: Oh, and by the way, I want to make my own surroundings—not just a home. I want electronics to put me in another world.

[*Now we're getting nowhere in a hurry!*]

This may be a questionable portrayal of God, but it is an accurate portrayal of the Adam who decided that being an immortal in paradise wasn't good enough for him.

Have all these things made us content?

Or have we used them to feed a passion?

We have a lot of ways of wishing that God had placed us someplace else, someplace different. One of the most interesting books I've glanced through, but not read, was covered in pink rosy foliage, and said that it was dealing with the #1 cause of unhappiness in women's relationships. And that #1 cause was a surprise: romantic fantasies. The point was that dreaming up a romantic fantasy and then trying to make it real is a recipe, not for fulfillment, but for heartbreaking disappointment in circumstances where you could be truly happy. (When you have your heart set on a fantasy of just how the perfect man will fulfill all your desires and transform your world, no real man can seem anything but a disappointing shadow next to your fantasy.)

This is not just a point about fantasies in romance. It is also a point that has something to do with technological wonders, secret societies, fascination with the paranormal, Star Trek, World of Warcraft, television, Dungeons and Dragons, sacramental shopping, SecondLife, conspiracy theories, smartphones, daydreams, Halloween, Harry Potter, Wicked, Wicca, The Golden Compass, special effects movies, alienated feminism, radical conservatism, Utopian dreams, political plans to transform the world, and every other way that we tell God, "Sorry, what you have given me is not good enough"—or what is much the same, wish God had given us something quite different.

Why, in my life, is _____ so difficult to me about _____? (I don't know; why has she forgiven every single one of the astonishingly stupid things I've done over the years?) Why can't I lose a couple of pounds when I want to? (I don't know; why do I have enough food that I wish I could lose pounds?) Why am I struggling with my debts? (I don't know; why do I have enough for now?) Why did I have to fight cancer? (I don't know; why am I alive and strong now?) Why does I stand to lose so much of what I've taken for granted? (I don't know. Why did I take them all for granted? And why did I

have so many privileges growing up?) Why _____? (Why not? Why am I ungrateful and discontent with so many blessings?)

Contentment is a choice, and it has been made by people in much bleaker circumstances than mine.

I write this, not as one who has mightily fought this temptation to sin and remained pure, but as one who has embraced the sin wholeheartedly. I know the passion from the inside, and I know it well. Most of my cherished works on this site were written to be "interesting", and more specifically "interesting" as some sort of escape from a dreary here and now.

There is enough of this sin that, when I began to repent, I wondered if repenting would leave anything left in my writing. And after I had let go of that, I found that there was still something left to write. C.S. Lewis, in *The Great Divorce*, alluded to the Sermon on the Mount (where Christ said that if our right hand or our right eye causes us to sin, we should rip it out and enter Heaven maimed rather than let our whole body be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur): Lewis said that the journey to Heaven may cost us our right hand and our right eye—but when we arrive in Heaven, we will find that what we have left behind is precisely nothing. Continuing to repent has meant changes for me, and it will (I hope) mean further changes. But I let go of writing only to find that I still had things to write. I gave up on trying to be "interesting" and make my own interesting private world and found, by the way, that God and his world are really quite interesting.

When we are repenting, or trying to, or trying not to, repentance is the ultimate terror. It seems unconditional surrender—and it is. But when we do repent, we realize, "I was holding on to a piece of Hell," and we realize that repentance is also a waking up, a coming to our senses, and a coming to joy.

What we don't want to hear

I would like to say a word on the politically incorrect term of "unnatural vice." Today there is an effort on some Christians to not distinguish that sharply between homosexuality and straight sexual sins. And it is always good practice to focus on one's own sins and their gravity, but there are very specific reasons to be concerned about unnatural vice. Let me draw an analogy.

It is a blinding flash of the obvious that a well-intentioned miscommunication can cause a conflict that is painful to all involved. And if miscommunications are not necessarily a sin, they can be painful enough, and not the sort of thing one wants to celebrate. However, there is a depth of difference between an innocent, if excruciatingly painful, miscommunication on the one hand, and the kind of conflict when someone deliberately gives betrayal under the guise of friendship. The Church Fathers had a place for a holy kiss as a salute among Christians, but in their mind the opposite of a holy kiss was not a kiss that was what we would understand "inappropriate," but when Judas

said, "Master," saluted the Lord with a kiss, and by so doing betrayed him to be tortured to death. A painful miscommunication is bad enough, but a betrayal delivered under the guise of friendship is a problem with a higher pay grade.

Lust benefits no one, and it is not just the married who benefit from beating back roving desire, but the unmarried as well. But when Scripture and the Fathers speak of unnatural vice, they know something we've chosen to forget. And part of what we have forgotten is that "unnatural vice" is not just something that the gay rights movement advocates for. "Unnatural vice" includes several sins with higher pay grades, and one of them is witchcraft.

To people who have heard all the debates about whether, for instance, same-sex relationships might be unnatural for straight people but natural for gays, it may be a bit of culture shock to hear anything besides gay sex called "unnatural vice." But the term is there in the Fathers, and it can mean other things. It might include contraception. And it definitely includes what we think of as a way to return to nature in witchcraft.

Adam reigned as an immortal king and lord over the whole world. He had a wife like nothing else in all Creation, paradise for a home, and harmony with nature such as we could not dream of. *And, he was like a little boy with a whole room full of toys who is miserable because he wants another toy and his parents said "No."* And lest we look down on Adam, we should remember that I am Adam, and you are Adam.

We have not lost all his glory, but we are crippled by his passion.

Adam wanted something beyond what he was given, something beyond his ken. An Orthodox hymn says, "Wanting to be a god, Adam failed to be god." More on that later. Adam experienced the desire that draws people to magic—even if the magic's apparent promise is a restored harmony with nature. This vice shattered the original harmony with nature, and brought a curse on not only Adam but nature itself. It corrupted nature. It introduced death. It means that many animals are terrified of us. It means that even the saints, the holiest of people, are the most aware of how much evil is in them—most of us are disfigured enough that we can think we don't have any real problem. There is tremendous good in the human person, too; that should be remembered. But even the saints are great sinners. All of this came through Adam's sin. How much more unnatural of a vice do you ask for than that?

Trying to restore past glory, and how it further estranges us from the past

When I was visiting a museum promising an exhibit on the Age of Reason, I was jarred to see ancient Greek/Roman/... items laid out in exhibits; what was being shown about the Enlightenment was the beginning of museums as we have them today. I was expecting to see coverage of a progressive age, and what I saw was a pioneering effort to reclaim past glory. Out of that jarring I realized something that historians might

consider a blinding flash of the obvious. Let me explain the insight nonetheless, before tying it in with harmony with nature.

When people have tried to recover past glory, through the Western means of antiquarian reconstruction, the result severs continuity with the recent past and ultimately made a deeper schism from the more remote past as well.

The Renaissance was an attempt to recover the glory of classical antiquity, but the effect was not only to more or less end what there was in the Middle Ages, but help the West move away from some things that were common to the Middle Ages and antiquity alike. The Reformation might have accomplished many good things, but it did not succeed in its goal in resurrecting the ancient Church; it created a new way of being Christian. The Protestants I know are moral giants compared to much of what was going on in Rome in Luther's day, and they know Scripture far better, but Protestant Christianity is a decisive break from something that began in the Early Church and remained unbroken even in corrupt 16th century Rome. And it is not an accident that the Reformers dropped the traditional clerical clothing and wore instead the scholar's robes. (Understanding the Scripture was much less approached through reading the saints, much more by antiquarian scholarship.) The Enlightenment tried again to recover classical glory, and it was simultaneously a time, not of breaking with unbroken ways of being Christian, but of breaking with being Christian itself. Romanticism could add the Middle Ages to the list of past glorious ages, and it may well be that without the Romantics, we would not have great medievalists like C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. But it was also something new. Every single time that I'm aware of that the West has tried to recover the glory of a bygone age, the effect has been a deeper rift with the past, both recent and ultimately ancient, leaving people much further alienated from the past than if they had continued without the reconstruction. I remember being astonished, not just to learn that two Vatican II watchwords were *ressourcement* (going back to ancient sources to restore past glory) and *aggiornamento* (bringing things up-to-date, which in practice meant bringing Rome in line with 1960's fads), nor that the two seemed to be two sides of the same coin, but that this was celebrated without anybody seeming to find something of a disturbing clue in this. The celebrations of these two watchwords seemed like a celebration of going to a hospital to have a doctor heal an old wound and inflict a new wound that is more fashionable.

The lesson would seem to be, "If you see a new way to connect with the past and recover past glory, be very careful. Consider it like you might consider a skilled opponent, in a game of chess, leaving a major piece vulnerable. It looks spiritually enticing, but it might be the bait for a spiritual trap, and if so, the consequences of springing for the bait might be a deeper rift with the past and its glory."

Not quite as shallow an approach to translate the past into the present...

Here is what you might do one day to live a bit more like prehistoric Grecians, or ancient Celts, or medieval Gallic peasants, or whatever. Keep in mind that this is at best half-way to its goal, not a full-fledged return to living like an ancient in harmony with nature to a day, but making a rough equivalent by using what is closest from our world:

1. However exotic the setting may seem to you, remember that it is a fundamental confusion to imagine that the setting was exotic to those inside the experience. We not only meet new people frequently; we see new technologies invented frequently. In The Historic Setting, people most likely were born, lived, and died within twenty miles, and even meeting another person who was not part of your village was rare. A new invention, or a new idea, would be difficult to imagine, let alone point to. So, for one day, whatever you're doing, if it feels exotic, avoid it like the plague. Stop it immediately. Don't read anything new; turn off your iPod; don't touch Wikipedia. Don't seek excitement; if anything, persevere in things you find boring.
2. Remembering that there was a lot of heavy manual labor, and stuff that was shared, spend your nice Saturday helping a friend move her stuff into her new apartment. Remember that while stairs were rare in antiquity, it would be an anachronism to take the elevator. Be a good manual laborer and do without the anachronism.
3. Remembering how the Sermon on the Mount betrays an assumption that most people were poor enough that houses would only have one room, spend your time at home, as much as possible, in one room of your house.
4. Remembering that the ancient world had no sense of "Jim's trying to lose weight and is on an old-fashioned low-fat diet, Mary's a vegan, Al's low carb...", but rather there was one diet that everybody day ate, go to McDonald's, order a meal with McDonald's McFries McSoaked in McGrease, and a sugary-sweet, corn-syrup-powered shake. If you just said to yourself, "He didn't say what size; I'll order the smallest I can," order the biggest meal you can.
5. Remembering that in the ancient world the company you kept were not your eclectic pick, spend time with the people around you. Go to your neighbor Ralph who bales bad '80s rock because he thinks it's the best thing in the world, and like a good guest don't criticize what your host has provided—including his

music. Spend some time playing board games with your annoying kid sister, and then go over to visit your uncle Wally and pretend to tolerate his sexist jokes.

6. Lastly, when you head home do have a good night's sleep, remember that a bed with sheets covering a smooth mattress was only slightly more common than a Frank Lloyd Wright home is today, go to sleep on a straw pallet in your virtual one room house. (You can use organic straw if you can find any.)

This may seem, to put it politely, a way you would never have thought to live like an age in harmony with nature. But let me ask a perfectly serious question:

What *did* you expect? Did you imagine dressing up as a bard, dancing on hilltops, and reciting poetry about the endless knot while quaffing heather ale?

G.K. Chesterton said that there is more simplicity in eating caviar on impulse than eating grape-nuts on principle. In a similar fashion, there is more harmony with nature in instinctively pigging out at McDonald's than making a high and lonely spiritual practice out of knowing all the herbs in a meadow.

The vignette of harmony with nature as dancing on hilltops is an image of a scene where harmony with nature means fulfilling what we desire for ourselves. The image of hauling boxes to help a friend is a scene where harmony with nature means *transcending* mere selfish desire. There is a common thread of faithfulness to unadvertised historical realities running through the six steps listed above. But there is another common thread:

Humility.

It chafes against a passion that people in ages past knew they needed to beat back.

Living according to nature in the past did not work without humility, and living in harmony with nature today did not work with humility.

There is a great deal of difference between getting help in living for yourself, and getting help in living for something more for yourself, and living for something more than yourself—such as people needed to survive in ancient communities close to nature—is the real treasure. It is spirituality with an ugly pair of work gloves, and it is a much bigger part of those communities that have been in harmony with nature than the superficially obvious candidates like spending more time outside and knowing when to plant different crops. If you clarify, "Actually, I was really more interested in the spirituality of a bygone age and its harmony with nature," you are missing something. Every one of those humbling activities is pregnant with spirituality—and is spiritual in a much deeper way than merely feeling the beauty of a ritual.

Perhaps we would be wise to remember the words of the Delphic Oracle, "Know thyself," which does not say what we might imagine today. Those words might have been paraphrased, "Know thy place, O overreaching mortal!"

And, in terms of humility, that has much more to give us than trying to reach down inside and make a sandcastle of an identity, and hope it won't be another sandcastle.

Should I really be patting myself on the back?

I try to follow a diet that is closer to many traditional diets, has less processing and organic ingredients when possible, and I believe for several reasons that I am right in doing so: medical, animal welfare, and environmental. But before I pat myself on the back too hard for showing the spirit of Orthodoxy in harmony with nature, I would be well advised to remember that there is far more precedent in the Fathers and in the saint's lives for choosing to live on a cup of raw lentils a week or a diet of rancid fish.

Saints may have followed something of a special diet, but that is because they believed and acted out of the conviction that they were unworthy of the good things of the world, including the common fare what most people ate. My diet, like other diets in fashion, is a diet that tells me that the common fare eaten by most people is simply unworthy of *me*. This may well enough be true—I have doubts about how much of today's industrially produced diet is fit for human consumption at all—and I may well enough answer, "But *of course* the Quarter Pounder with 'Cheese' eaten by an inner-city teen is unworthy of me—it's just as unworthy, if not more unworthy, of the inner-city teens who simply accept it as normal to eat." Even so, I have put myself in a difficult position. The saints thought they were unworthy of common fare. I believe that common fare is unworthy of me, and trying to believe that without deadly pride is trying to smoke, but not inhale.

In the Book of James, the Lord's brother says that the poor should exult because of their high position while the rich should be humble because of their low position. The same wisdom might see that the person who eats anything that tastes good is the one in the high position, and the person who avoids most normal food out of a special diet's discrimination is in a position that is both low and precarious.

The glory of the Eucharist unfurls in a common meal around a table, and this "common" meal is common because it is shared. To pull back from "common" food is to lose something very Eucharistic about the meal, and following one more discriminating diet like mine is a way to heal one breach of harmony with nature by opening up what may be a deeper rift.

If evil is necessary, does it stop being evil?

Orthodoxy in the West inherits something like counterculture, and there is something amiss when Orthodox carry over unquestioned endeavors to build a counterculture or worldview or other such Western fads. If Orthodoxy *in the West* is

countercultural, that doesn't mean that counterculture is something to seek out: if Orthodoxy is countercultural, that is a cost it pays. Civil disobedience *can* be the highest expression of a citizen's respect for law. Amputation *can* be the greatest expression of a physician's concern for a patient's life. However, these things are not basically good, and there is fundamental confusion in seeking out occasions to show such measures.

Another basis to try and learn from the past

To someone in the West, Orthodoxy may have a mighty antiquarian appeal. Orthodox saints, for the most part, speak from long ago and far away. However, this isn't the point; it's a side effect of a Church whose family of saints has been growing for millennia. Compare this, for instance, to a listing of great computer scientists—who will all be recent, not because computer science in an opposite fashion needs to be new, but because computer science hasn't been around nearly long enough for there to be a fourth century von Neumann or Knuth.

Some people wanting very hard knife blades—this may horrify an antiquarian—acquire nineteenth century metal files and grind them into knife blades. The reason for this is that metallurgists today simply do not know how to make steel as hard as the hardest Victorian-era metal files. The know-how is lost. And the hobbyists who seek a hard metal file as the starting point for their knife blades do not choose old metalwork because it is old; they choose old metal files because they are the hardest they can get. And there is something like this in the Orthodox Church. The point of a saint's life is not how exotic a time and place the saint is from; the point of a saint's life is holiness, a holiness that is something like a nineteenth century adamantite-hard metal file.

If there are problems in turning back the clock, the Orthodox Church has some very good news. This good news is not exactly a special way to turn back the clock; it is rather the good news that the clock can be lifted up.

There is a crucial difference between trying to restore the past, and hoping that it will lift you into Heaven, and being lifted up into Heaven and finding that a healthy connection with the past comes with it. The Divine Liturgy is a lifting up of the people and their lives up to Heaven: a life that begins here and now.

The hymn quoted earlier, "Adam, trying to be a god, failed to be god," continues, "Christ became man that he might make Adam god." The saying has rumbled down through the ages, "God (the Son of God) became a Man (the Son of Man) that men (the sons of men) might become gods (the Sons of God)." The bad news, if it is bad news, is that we cannot escape a present into the beauty of Eden. The good news is that the present can itself be lifted up, that the doors to Eden remain open.

In some ways our search for happiness is like that of a grandfather who cannot find his glasses no matter how many places he looks—because they are right on his nose.

Men are not from Mars!

I was once able to visit a Mars Society conference—a conference from an organization whose purpose is to send human colonists to Mars.

To many of the people there, the question of whether we are "a spacefaring race" is much weightier than the question of whether medical research can find a cure for cancer. It's not just that a human colony on Mars would represent a first-class triumph of science and humanity; it is rather that the human race is beyond being a race of complete, unspeakable, and obscene *losers* if we don't come to our senses and colonize Mars so the human race is not just living on this earth and living the kind of life we live now. The question of whether we colonize Mars is, in an ersatz sense, the religious question of whether we as a race have salvation. The John 3:16 of this movement is, "Earth is the cradle of mankind, but one does not remain in a cradle forever."

The Mars Society holds an essay contest to come up with essays about why we should colonize Mars; the title of the contest, and perhaps of the essays, is, "Why Mars?" And, though I never got around to writing it, there was something I wanted to write.

This piece, having a fictional setting, would be written from the perspective of a sixteen year old girl who was the first person to be raised on Mars, and would provide another comparison of life on Mars to life on earth. And the essay would be snarky, sarcastic, angry, and bitter, because of something that people looking with starry eyes at a desired Mars colony miss completely.

What does the Mars Society not get about what they hope for?

When I was a student at Wheaton College, one of my friends told of a first heavy snowfall where students from warmer climates, some of whom had never experienced such a snowfall personally, were outside and had a delightful snowball fight. And they asked my friend, "How can you *not* be out here playing?" My friend's answer: "Just wait four months. You'll see."

One's first snowball fight is quite the pleasant experience, and presumably one's first time putting on a spacesuit is much better. But what my unattractively cynical friend didn't like about Wheaton's winter weather is a piece of cake compared to needing to put on a spacesuit and go through an airlock on a planet where the sum total of places one can go without a bulky, heavy, clumsy, uncomfortable, and hermetically sealed spacesuit, is dwarfed by a small rural village of a thousand people, and dwarfed by a medium sized jail. If you are the first person to grow up on Mars, the earth will seem a living Eden which almost everyone alive *but* you is privileged to live in. And the title of the snarky, sarcastic, and bitterly miserable essay I wished I could write from the perspective of the first human raised on Mars was, "Why Earth?"

I'm used to seeing people wish they could escape the here and now, but the Mars Society took this to a whole new level—so much so that I was thinking, "This is not a job for science and engineering; this is a job for counseling!" People were alienated from the

here and now they had on earth, and the oomph of the drive to go to Mars seemed to be because of something else entirely from the (admittedly very interesting) scientific and engineering issues. Having the human race not even try to live on Mars was so completely unacceptable to them because of their woundedness.

If you don't know how to be happy where God has placed you, escape will not solve the problem. In the case of Mars, the interesting issue is not so much whether colonization is possible, but whether it is desirable. Escape may take you out of the frying pan and into the thermite. (What? You didn't know that astronauts do not feel free, but like tightly wedged "spam in a can," with land control micromanaging you more than you would fear in a totalitarian regime, down to every bite of food you take in? Tough; a real opportunity to colonize Mars won't feel like being in an episode of *Star Trek* or *Firefly*.)

This is the playing out of a passion, and what the Mars Society seeks will not make them permanently happy. Success in their goals will not cure such misery any more than enough fuel will soothe a fire.

Confucius said, "When I see a virtuous man, I try to be like him. When I see an evil man, I reflect on my own behavior." Assuming you're not from the Mars Society (and perhaps offended), do you see anything of yourself in the Mars Society?

I do.

A more satisfying kind of drink

I talked with a friend about a cookbook, *Nourishing Traditions*, which I like for the most part but where there was a bit of a burr: the author ground an axe against alcoholic beverages fermented by yeast. The stated position of the book is a report of a certain type of traditional nutrition, and the author overrode that when it came to traditions that used rum and such.

My friend said that what I said was accurate: certain more alcoholic drinks were traditional, and the principles of *Nourishing Traditions* did not support all the ways the author was grinding an axe against yeast-fermented alcohol, just as I thought. However, my friend suggested, the author was right about this. Lacto-fermented beverages, fermented by another ancient process that gives us cheese, sourdough, sauerkraut, corned beef, and the like, which *Nourishing Traditions* did promote, satisfy in a way that yeast-fermented beverages do not. People, it seems, use beer, wine, and liquor because they remind them of the satisfaction of the more ancient method of fermentation.

I'm not looking at giving up the occasional drink, but something of that rings true—and parallels a spiritual matter. People turn to a quest for the exotic, and that is illicit. But the Orthodox experience is that if you stay put, in the here and now, and grow spiritually, every year or so something exotic happens that is like falling off a cliff, when

you repent. And that may be what people are connecting with in the wrong way in the pursuit of the exotic. If you give up on following the exotic, something beyond exotic may follow you.

The idiot

There was another piece that I was thinking of writing, but did not come together. The title I was thinking of was, *The Idiot*—no connection to Dostoevsky's work of the same name, nor to what we would usually think of as a lack of intelligence.

I was imagining a Socratic dialogue, along the same lines as "Plato: The Allegory of the... *Flickering Screen?*" in which it unfolds that the person who doesn't get it is someone who has great success in constructing his own private world through technology, introspection, and everything else. Etymologically, the word "idiot" signifies someone who's off on his own—someone who does not participate in the life of civilization—and our civilization offers excellent resources to dodge civilization and create your own private world. And that is a loss.

And being an idiot in this sense is *not* a matter of low IQ. It is not the mentally retarded I have known who need to repent most, if at all. Usually it is the most brilliant I have known who best use their gifts and resources to be, in the classical sense, idiots.

Some adamantine-hard metal files that may hone us

At the risk of irony after opening by a complaint about words of wisdom from other lands selected for being exotic...

My mother recounted how a friend of hers was visiting one of her friends, a poor woman in Guatemala. She looked around her host's kitchen, and said, "You don't have any food around." Her hostess said, "No, I don't, but I will," and then paused a moment longer, and said, "And if I had the food now, what would I need God for?" That woman is wise. Those of us who live in the West pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," and probably have a 401(k) plan. Which is to say that "Give us today our daily bread" is almost an ornament to us. A very pious ornament, but it is still an ornament.

If we are entering hard times today, is that an end to divine providence?

St. Peter of Damaskos wrote, in *The Philokalia vol. 3*,

We ought all of us always to thank God for both the universal and the particular gifts of soul and body that He bestows on us. The universal gifts consist of the four elements and all that comes into being through them, as well as all the marvelous works of God mentioned in the divine Scriptures. The particular gifts consist of all that God has given to each individual. These include:

"The Good Parts"

- Wealth, so that one can perform acts of charity.
- Poverty, so that one can endure it with patience and gratitude.
- Authority, so that one can exercise righteous judgment and establish virtue.
- Obedience and service, so that one can more readily attain salvation of soul.
- Health, so that one can assist those in need and undertake work worthy of God.
- Sickness, so that one may earn the crown of patience.
- Spiritual knowledge and strength, so that one may acquire virtue.
- Weakness and ignorance, so that, turning one's back on worldly things, one may be under obedience in stillness and humility.
- Unsought loss of goods and possessions, so that one may deliberately seek to be saved and may even be helped when incapable of shedding all one's possessions or even of giving alms.
- Ease and prosperity, so that one may voluntarily struggle and suffer to attain the virtues and thus become dispassionate and fit to save other souls.
- Trials and hardship, so that those who cannot eradicate their own will may be saved in spite of themselves, and those capable of joyful endurance may attain perfection.

All these things, even if they are opposed to each other, are nevertheless good when used correctly; but when misused, they are not good, but are harmful for both soul and body.

The story is probably apocryphal, but I heard of an African pastor (sorry, I don't know his nationality) who visited the U.S. and said, "It's absolutely amazing what you can do without the Holy Spirit!" That is, perhaps, not what we want to hear as a

compliment. But here in the U.S., if we need God, it's been easy to lose sight of the fact. Homeless people usually know where their next meal is coming from, or at least it's been that way, and homeless people have been getting much more appetizing meals than bread alone. Those of us who are not homeless have even more power than that.

An English friend of mine talked about how she was living in a very poor country, and one of her hosts said, "I envy you!" My friend didn't know exactly what was coming next—she thought it might be something that offered no defense, and her hosts said, "You have everything, and you still rely on God. We have *nothing*; we have no real alternative. So we rely on God. But you have *everything*, and you still rely on God!" The point was not about wealth, but faith. The friend's awe was not of a rich woman's treasures on earth, but a rich woman's treasures in Heaven. The camel really *can* go through the eye of the needle, and we may add to the list of examples by St. Peter of Damaskos, that we may thank God for first world wealth, because it gives us an opportunity to *choose* to rely on God.

Maybe we can add to St. Peter's list. But we would do well to listen to his wisdom before adding to his list. We have been given many blessings in first world economic conditions, and if our economy is in decline—perhaps it will bounce back in a year, perhaps longer, perhaps never—we no less should find where our current condition is on the list above.

To have the words "Give us this day our daily bread" unfortunately be an ornament is rare, and perhaps it is not the most natural condition for us to be in. Whatever golden age you may like, centuries or millennia ago, there was no widespread wealth like we experience. Our natural condition is, in part, to be under economic constraint, to have limits that keep us from doing things, and in some sense the level of wealth we have had is not the most natural condition, like having a sedentary enough job that you only exercise when you choose to, is not the most natural condition. Now I don't like being constrained any more than I have to, and I would not celebrate people losing their homes. However, if we have to be more mindful of what they spend, and don't always get what we want, that may be a very big blessing in disguise.

Dorothy Sayers, speaking of World War II in "The Other Six Deadly Sins" (found in *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World* and other essay collections), discussed what life was like when the economy was enormously productive but as much productivity as possible was being wasted by the war effort. What she pointed out was that when people got used to rationing and scarcity, they found that this didn't really mean that they couldn't enjoy life—far from it. People could enjoy life when most of their economy's productivity was being wasted by war instead of wasted by buying things that people didn't need. She argued that England didn't have a choice about learning to live frugally—but England could choose to apply this lesson once the war got out. England didn't, and neither did the U.S., but the lesson is still good.

A recent news story discussed how adult children moved in with their parents as a measure of frugality, where the family was being frugal to the point of planning meals a month in advance and grinding their own flour. And what they found was that living simply was something of an adventure.

An unlikely cue from science fiction?

Mary Midgley, in *Science as Salvation: A Modern Myth and Its Meaning*, says of science fiction and science fiction writers,

But the best of them have understood, as Wells and Stapleton did, that their main aim was imaginative. They were using 'the future' as a screen on which to project timeless truths for their own age. They were *prophets* primarily in the sense in which serious poets are so — spiritual guides, people with insight about the present and the universal, rather than literal predictors. For this purpose, it no more matters whether these supposedly future events will actually happen than it does for *Hamlet* and *MacBeth* whether what they show us actually happened in the past. The point of *The Time Machine* is not that the machine would work, nor that there might be Morlocks [a powerful, privileged technological elite] somewhere, some day. It is that there are Morlocks here now.

Note the last words. C.S. Lewis may quite directly and literally believe in a literal Heaven and a literal Hell, but Lewis understands Midgley's closing point well, even if he wrote *The Great Divorce* decades before. He offers an introduction that ends with, "The last thing I wish is to arouse curiosity about the details of the after-world." He may have no pretensions of knowing the details of the next life, but the reason he writes so compellingly about Heaven and Hell is not that someday, somewhere, we will experience Heaven or Hell. (Even if that is true.) He is able to write with such depth because Heaven and Hell are in us, here and now. And one of the cardinal spiritual factors in *The Great Divorce* is a cardinal spiritual factor here now. It is called repentance.

In *The Sign of the Grail*, Fr. Elijah brings George, a Christian, into the communion of the Orthodox Church. Orthodox speak of this as a conversion, but this means something beyond merely straightening out George's worldview. Fr. Elijah may share wisdom with George, but he is interested in something fundamentally beyond getting George to accept a worldview. He is trying, in all of his various ways, to get George to wake up. It is the same as the blessed spirits in *The Great Divorce* who are in Heaven and keep saying to visitors from Hell, "Wake up! Wake up!" They do often discuss ideas with their visitors, but their goal is never merely to straighten out a

tormented worldview; it is to open their visitors' spiritual eyes so they will wake up to the reality of Heaven.

In *The Great Divorce*, visitors come from Hell, visit Heaven, keep receiving invitations to wake up and live in Heaven, and mostly keep on choosing Hell. If it is put that way, it sounds like a very strange story, but it is believable not primarily because of C.S. Lewis's rhetorical powers, but because of the spiritual realities Lewis knows to write about. I have only heard one person claim to want to go to Hell, and then on the misunderstanding that you could enjoy the company of others in Hell. However, people miss something big about Hell if they think everybody will choose Heaven.

God does not send people to Hell, but the fires of Hell are nothing other than the light of Heaven experienced through the rejection of Christ. Hell appeared as a seed in the misery when, as I wrote earlier:

Adam reigned as an immortal king and lord over the whole world. He had a wife like nothing else in all Creation, paradise for a home, and harmony with nature such as we could not dream of. And, he was like a little boy with a whole room full of toys who is miserable because he wants another toy and his parents said "No."

The Sermon on the Mount says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." But *everyone* will see God. God is love; his love is absolute and will flow absolutely. Because of that love, everybody will see God. And the saved will know this as blessing and as bliss beyond description. But to those who reject Christ, the light of Heaven, the light of seeing God, will be experienced as Hellfire. Hell is Heaven experienced through the rejection of the only ultimate joy that exists: Christ.

Repentance is recognizing that you are in a little Hell and choosing to leave by the one way you do not wish to leave. Elsewhere from the quotation from St. Peter, *the Philokalia* says, "People hold on to sin because they think it adorns them." The woman addicted to alcohol may be in misery, but she has alcohol to seemingly anaesthetize the pain, and it is incredibly painful to give up the illusion that if you try hard enough and get just a bit of a solace, things will be OK. That's a mighty hard thing to repent of: it's easier to rationalize, decide to give it up by sheer willpower (perhaps tomorrow), or make a bargain to cut back to a more reasonable level—anything but wake up and stop trying to ignore that you're standing barefoot in something really gross, and admit that what you need is not a bigger fan to drive away the stench while you stay where you are, but to step out in a cleaning operation that lasts a lifetime and cuts to your soul.

An alcoholic walking this path craves just a little bit of solace, just for now, and it is only much later that two things happen. First, the cravings are still hard, but they are no longer *quite* so overpowering. Second, she had forgotten what it felt like to be clean—

really and truly *clean*—and she had forgotten what it was like to be doing something else with her life than trying to hide in a bottle. She had forgotten what freedom was like. And long after she gave up on her way of escaping life, she found she had forgotten what it was like to experience life, not as something to escape, but as something with joy even in its pain.

The gates of Hell are bolted and barred from the *inside*. This much is true of passion: we think our sins adorn us, and we try to flee from the only place joy is to be found. Fleshly lust disenchant the entire universe; first everything else becomes dull and uninteresting, and ultimately stronger doses of lust lose even the semblance of being interesting. Spiritual lust, the passion that seeks escape from where God has placed us is, if anything, a sin with a higher pay grade than the fleshly lust that is bad enough, but spiritual lust too is the disenchantment of reality, a set of blinders that deflates all the beauty we are given in nature. Spiritual lust is the big brother of merely fleshly lust. Spiritual lust is something really, really, *really* gross that we need to step out of and get *clean*. We need to realize that the passion does not adorn us, that the sparkle of an exotic escape from a miserable here and now is, on a spiritual plane, spin doctoring for experiencing the here and now with despair. We do not see that we need not an escape from what God has given us, but gratitude and contentment.

But what if the here and now is not the best here and now? What if it's with an Uncle Wally who tells sexist jokes no matter how you ask him to stop? What if the people you are with have *real* warts? There are a couple of responses. You might also think of what your uncle has done that you might be grateful for. You know, like when he helped you find and buy your first car. Or you could learn the power of choosing to be joyful when others act unpleasantly. Or you might read C.S. Lewis, "The Trouble with X," and then look at how you might stand to profit from praying, with the Orthodox Church, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Once, when things went from hard times to easy times, one saint complained, saying that easy times rob the Church of her martyrs and her glory. If we are entering hard times, that does not place us outside of God's reach nor Christ's promise in the Sermon on the Mount: "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

I glorify Thee,
 Who hast cast Adam out of Paradise,
 That we might learn by the sweat of our brow
 The joy and the life that Adam scorned
 As King of Paradise.
 Glory be to the Father

And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost
Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

Glory forever.

And glory be to Thee,
Thou who blessest us
For better or for worse,
In sickness and in health,
In the Eternal Light and Love
Who illuminest marriage.

Glory forever.

Glory be to thee whose blessings are here,
Not in an escape,
But in the place wherein Thou hast placed us.

Glory forever.

Glory be to Thee,
Who offerest Eden,
To us men who forever dodge our salvation.

Glory forever.

Glory be to the Father

And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost
Both here and now, and in Eternal Life that beckons us
The Son of God became a man in his here and now in Bethlehem.

In your forever honored place,
From this very moment,
Become a Son of God.

Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near,
Heaven awaits with open arms,
Step out of Hell.

Grieve for your sins,

That grief that holds more in her heart,
Than discovering that the scintillating escape from Hell
Scintillates only as a mirage.

And the repentance you fear,
So constricted it seems from outside,
Holds inside a treasure larger than the universe,
Older than time,
And more alive than life.

Glory beyond glory,

Life beyond life,
Light beyond life,
The Bread from Heaven,
The infinite Living Wine,
Who alone canst slake our infinite thirst,
Glory forever.

Glory be to God on high.
Glory forever.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,
Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages,
Amen:
Glory forever.
Alleluia!

Farewell to Gandhi: The Saint and the Activist

Saying farewell to heroes

C.S. Lewis was one of my youth heroes, and after much quoting of him I have said farewell to him, in "A Pilgrimage from Narnia."

The oldest written work on this site, "Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Real Peace Through Real Strength," is one that I owe to Gandhi. It is an apology for the Christian pacifist position, and I as a Christian held tight to the The Sermon on the Mount and nonviolence as best I could. And I was positive Mohondas K. Gandhi had openly pulled from Christianity in his nonviolence, and part of my debt to him is expressed in that in "Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Real Peace Through Real Strength" I took as my model a chapter called "Ahimse or the Way of Nonviolence" in *All Men Are Brothers: Life and Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi as Told In His Own Words*. And in fact Gandhi did borrow from Christianity; he says that the three men he holds as his heroes are Jesus, Daniel, and Socrates, all of whom held their lives as nothing next to their souls. Elsewhere he said that Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, a perfect act. Gandhi in fact wanted to become a Christian, and was soured to Christianity when a missionary turned him away because of the color of his skin. Absolutely disgusting.

Yet I am taking leave of Gandhi as the same Orthodox who took leave of C.S. Lewis. I take leave of Gandhi even as it unravels the style of nonviolence I found as a best interpretation of the The Sermon on the Mount. I find in the end not that I was too

fixated on the The Sermon on the Mount and took too much from it, but that I took too little. The Indian style of nonviolence has much to commend it, and I am impressed that Indian nationalism identifies with nonviolence instead of glorified violence that affects nationalism in so many other places. India and others have not let Gandhi be the last of a particular nonviolent alternative to violence. But there is a little bit of a burr under my saddle here. The Sermon on the Mount does not, in the main, offer an alternative answer to the questions addressed by just war and violence, not even the alternative answer of voluntary suffering that brought India's freedom. It answers another question altogether.

How else could it be?

The rather obvious question to be raised, by just war Christian and by pacifist as well, is "How else could it be?" How does a Sermon on the Mount that says, "Do not resist evil" not call for nonviolent resistance if it is not taken as a hyperbolic statement that for more ordinary mortals means something like, "Be restrained when you must resist evil, and grieve when you must do so."? And on this point I would place my own earlier position, and Blessed are the Peacemakers, in the same category as just war theory. It is an answer to what is the most effective legitimate means to address certain dark situations.

And the answer I would give is that the The Sermon on the Mount does not say, "Do not resist evil." Or at least it does not stop there. It says in full,

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy

door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

When Christ preached these words, the crowds were astounded.

What is at the heart of this is a Life, a life like the birds of the air and the grass of the field, the Divine life, that is as naked as Adam. One of the greatest idols and transgressions against the The Sermon on the Mount. One particularly illumining footnote in *The Orthodox Study Bible* reads:

Luke 12:16-21:

Then [Jesus] spoke a parable to them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many good things

laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night [angels shall require] your soul of you; then whose things be which you have provided?'

"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God."

The comment reads:

"Whose will those things be by which you have provided?" is the key to understanding the saving up of material goods. St. John Chrysostom writes that the only barns we need we already have: "the stomachs of the poor." St. Basil the Great taught that the bread in our cupboard belongs to the hungry man; the coat hanging unused belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in our closet belong to the one who has no shoes, and money we hoard belongs to the poor. St. Ambrose teaches, "The things which we cannot take with us are not ours. Only virtue will be our companion when we die." Even when Joseph stored up grain in Egypt (Gn 41), it was for the benefit of the whole nation.

Sandwiched between "Do not store up treasure on earth" and "No man can serve two masters" is the strange-sounding, sandwiched "The eye is the lamp of the body." But this is of a piece with the text that surrounds it. Is our eye fixed on providing for ourselves through earthly means, or looking up to God in the trust that he will provide and the realization that he knows our needs better than we do and loves us better than we know how to love? If we are confused here then our eye is not "single", but poisoned. Those of us who are not monastics are permitted some possessions, but better not to create an endowment that provides the illusion that we are not at the hands of the severe mercy of a providing God. And when we begin to loosen our grip on money, God's providence is written in stronger, starker strokes.

And the point of this is not to fetter us, but to free us from what seems necessary and recognize the shackles we were bound to. On this point I am talking about money; but I might as well speak of a gun and self-defense lessons. The Sermon on the Mount's motto is not a Boy Scout's *Be prepared*, but a carefree, *Don't be prepared. Be as naked as Adam*.

The Divine Liturgy and its associated readings speak of "He who of old stripped you both naked," meaning "The Devil who of old stripped you, Adam and Eve, both naked." It wasn't just that their flesh in its pure form raised no question of lust. Neither fire nor water nor the elements could touch Adam or Eve until they abdicated, and there are stories of a saint who threw down the gauntlet to a sorcerer, walked into a fire and said "I'm unharmed," and when the sorcerer was thrown into the flame with him and was burned, healed him and sent him out unharmed. On a more mortal level, monks and nuns can dress almost or exactly the same in terms of layers of clothing between

summer and winter, and that includes an American Midwest summer and winter. Paradise is where the saints are; the door may have been closed to Adam and Eve but it is open to the saints.

And all of this is an invitation to freedom, free and absolute, unencumbered and unchained freedom. It is not legalism that bids us, "If someone conscript you to go with him one mile, go with him two;" it is utter freedom even from selfishly stopping with what was asked. Christ the Lily of the Valley is the flower that leaves a fragrant scent on the heel that crushes it: but what we may find is that those things we expect to crush us, are just the removal of a shackle. And at the end saintly peacemakers are of a piece with the merciful, the pure in heart, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are persecuted for righteousness's sake: there is a unity of the beatitudes and they are rightly sung as a shorthand for the entire Sermon on the Mount in every Orthodox Liturgy. There is freedom to trust in the Lord's providence, freedom to every kind of generosity, freedom from lust, freedom from anger, every freedom that counts.

Q: So what's the difference?

A: The Saint and the Activist.

Some readers may wonder where really I have departed from Gandhi. If he were alive, quite possibly he could say he agreed with most or all of it, not out of diplomatically seeking common ground, but out of a direct candour. But I assert there is a difference.

Military action and nonviolent resistance are two answers to the same question. Between the two, military action has much to commend it, and in fact Gandhi had great respect for soldiers: in *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*, I wrote:

Once the men of a village came, running, and told Gandhi that they had run away while the police were raping and pillaging. When they told him that this was because of his instruction to be nonviolent, he hung his head in shame. He would not have been angry with them if they had defended their families by the power of a sword. He would have approved had they stood in harm's way, calling all injury to themselves without seeking to strike or to harm, to the point of death. But to run away like that and passively leave those who could not run was an act of great and terrible cowardice, the darkest possible answer to the problem.

From speaking with and listening to soldiers, I recognize military training and life as the cross of St. George, an ascetical framework that is much more disciplined than most life outside the military. Hard work and dedication are good things, and there is much to be praised about the cross of St. George. Nonviolent activism such as Gandhi

offered, the practice of satyagraha which I refer to as 'peacemaking', perhaps questionably, has more to commend it. It is also disciplined, and it does not resist force with force. None the same, it is an alternative in the same orbit as military action. It does not stain its hands with others' blood, but it is a tool you can use to achieve the same kind of end as military resources. India's independence was won with nonviolent resistance. But it is the sort of goal that could have been achieved by warfare, and in fact it stands in stark contrast to other nations as "achieving without bearing the sword what elsewhere has not been gained except by bearing the sword." And this falls infinitely short of resting in the hands of providence, naked as Adam.

I have written elsewhere of the Saint and the Activist: in "The Luddite's Guide to Technology," in "The Most Politically Incorrect Sermon in History: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount," and principally in "An Open Letter to Catholics on Orthodoxy and Ecumenism." If I may put it in a table:

Question	The Activist	The Saint
<i>What is the chief end of mankind?</i>	To change the world.	To glorify God and enjoy him forever.
<i>What is that in a word?</i>	Change.	Contemplation.
<i>By what means do you pursue that end?</i>	By means an atheist and a religious person could equally recognize as effective.	Seek first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. This means that you work sometimes in ways an atheist would see as foolish.
<i>What is the place of nonviolence?</i>	It is a tool for political influence.	It is a flower of spiritual growth.
<i>What is the place of discipline?</i>	If you are disciplined, you are more effective at getting things done.	Protestants have said, "Mission exists because worship does not:" no one, without exception, exists for the sake of missions. All mankind, without exception, exists for the sake of worshipping God. Some people, however, are deprived of the purpose for which they are created, and therefore some people are missionaries so that more people may enjoy the purpose for which they are made. In like fashion, spiritual discipline exists because contemplation does not. It is a corrective when

Question	The Activist	The Saint
<i>What do you live to become?</i>	A catalyst for a better world.	we have lost touch with the life of contemplation. To become by grace what Christ is by nature.
<i>What is the Bible for?</i>	To push moral authority behind the causes we further.	Part of God's work to shape us to grow in faith.
<i>What is justice?</i>	Equitable redistribution of resources, as conceived by assuming that political reforms included in this goal will do nothing to hinder the economy's ability to do all that is asked of it.	One of the four cardinal virtues of classical antiquity, that is at times interchangeable with spiritual righteousness.
<i>What is the government's role?</i>	The more important a task is, the more essential it is that it is channeled through the government. Success usually includes bringing about governmental reforms.	Government has a place, but that place is not the place of a messiah. Success is not usually connected to governmental reforms.
<i>Can human nature be improved on?</i>	Yes; we can bring it about in others through political programs.	Yes; if we let God work with us we will be improved in the work.
<i>What attitude brings real success?</i>	Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.	Be it unto me according to thy word.
<i>What is wrong with the world?</i>	A number of issues, most importantly the issues I am fighting and giving the most	<i>Me.</i>

Question**The Activist****The Saint**

advocacy for.

Where does Gandhi stand in all of this?

There was one document forwarded that listed a bunch of statements like, "If you disapprove of sport utility vehicles and private jets and own a sport utility vehicle and private jet, you might be a liberal." And on that count, Gandhi cannot be called an unadorned Activist. He didn't just say, "The world has enough for everyone's needs, but not everyone's wants;" his gaunt frame attests to the fact that he was attending to the beam in his own eye rather than the speck in his brother's eye. His writing is devout; "God" is not, as with many of today's Activists, a word not to be used in polite company. Gandhi cannot be completely understood except with reference to Saints, and what I would call the centerpiece of his Activism is drawn out of from Saint terrain. Gandhi's particular genius is to take nonviolent resistance as one of many particular eddies in the flow of holiness in the plane of the Saint, and transform it to be a keystone in the plane of the Activist. That places Gandhi away from being at least a pure saint to being substantially an Activist. It makes him, in fact, more of an Activist than if he had merely used existing Activist tools; he was Activist enough to profoundly contribute to the bedrock of Activism.

Furthermore, I am concerned about the wake that he has left. Not that this is a unique concern about Mr. Gandhi; I have raised concerns about the wake left by Fr. Seraphim (Rose). I have seen one Gandhi quote in the wild that alludes to the Sermon on the Mount, "An eye for an eye only ends by making the whole world blind." But this is an Activist argument; an atheist Activist and a Saint could equally agree that the basic argument is sound or unsound. And that's it for religious quotes. In *All Men Are Brothers*, Gandhi unashamedly, frequently, and freely refers to God. But I have never seen a Gandhi quote in the wild that uses the G-word. And when Gandhi's style of nonviolent resistance is imitated today, it is used in a way that is completely detached from the Saint's freedom, that is more removed from the Saint than not protesting.

Rivers of living water

By contrast, I would tell the story of St. Photini, the Woman at the Well, or part of it. It was shameful for the Woman at the Well to come alone to draw water; women would come together to draw water in groups. No other woman would be caught dead with a woman of her reputation, and when she evasively answered Jesus's "Go and call your husband," she was dodging her shame. Earlier she had sought to enlist Christ's help in running from her shame; her words, "Give me this water," were not so that she could dodge the manual labor of drawing water, but so that she could run from the

shame of having to draw water alone. And Christ did not give her what she wanted; instead, in answering her evasive "I have no husband" with, "You have truly said, 'I have no husband', for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband," pulled her through her shame and opened her eyes to higher things. The story builds up to her running, free from shame, telling people, "Come and see a man who told me every thing I ever did!" She sought Christ's help in covering up her shame; instead he made her unashamed as Adam. And it is in this unashamed woman that the story unfolded of a Great Martyr and Equal to the Apostles.

This is what it means to be naked as Adam. It is not a license for indecency; when she gave Christ an evasive answer, he called a spade a spade. But she did become like the Adam whom fire and water could not harm. The point of this is not that her story goes on to her being tortured and her whole company drinking poison and being unharmed by it, but that everything at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount was alive in her. In her later story much is told of miracles, but perhaps we should make less of the fact that she went to tortures and was miraculously delivered, and more of the fact that she went to tortures and was faithful. She did, in the spirit of giving more than was asked, when Nero decided to bring her to trial, she went ahead and tried to convert him. She didn't succeed at that, but she did seem to convert practically everyone else she came in contact with. But what is significant is not just the results that she brought about. What is significant is that she was faithful, with the overflowing freedom that soars as the birds of the air. Perhaps we are not Saints on the level of St. Photini; perhaps it is not within our reach to be called Equal to the Apostles. But what is in our reach is to be a little more a Saint, a little less of an Activist.

Now, a word on being naked as Adam. St. Photini wore clothes and so should we. It is true that there are some saints who labored without clothing: the pre-eminent example is St. Mary of Egypt, and there have been male Desert Fathers who were naked. But we should wear normal clothes even as St. Photini did. What is forbidden to those who would be naked as Adam is not literal clothing but metaphorical armor. What is forbidden is not trusting in God's Providence but trying, in addition to the Lord's Providence, or instead of it (if these are really two different things) to straighten things out for ourselves. The opposite of this is someone like St. Photini who, instead of waiting to be captured, went on her own initiative to Caesar Nero. She trusted in God's Providence in a way that could be seen as blackmailing God. But there is something very like Gandhi's nonviolent resistance, not in how the Saint deals with evil in the world, but how the Saint works with God. If a Saint were told, "You are making no provision to take yourself but it's like you're blackmailing God by your actions," one Saint might respond, giving more than was asked, "Yes, I'm emotionally blackmailing God, and you should emotionally blackmail him too!"

Deep in our bones

Activism runs deep in our bones today; I surprised one professor who discussed disability and an "autism and advocacy" conference, that the natural way to seek the best interests of the autistic community is by political advocacy. And I tried, perhaps in vain, to show her that of the two assigned articles she gave on dealing with autism and disability, one offered a clear activist agenda for autism and disability, and the other was not political, at least not in an overly narrow understanding of politics, but was the father of an autistic child speaking of limitless love. My professor couldn't see what would benefit the autistic besides rolling out one more theme in political activism.

And so, with activism deep in our bones, if we look for a saint, the kind of figure that so naturally comes to mind is Gandhi, or Martin Luther King if we insist on a Christian. Both admired and sought to imitate Christ; both led nonviolent resistance against laws that were legislated evil. Both sought a response to evils out of the Sermon on the Mount. And both contributed to the Activist outlook that is now non-negotiable in the academy. Not necessarily that Gandhi's style of nonviolence is non-negotiable; Gandhi respected his enemies, while it is perfectly socially acceptable in some queer circles to break in to Catholic churches and vandalize them, and spray paint swastikas to identify Romans with Hitler. But the question in so much of the academy is not, "Are you a Saint or an Activist," but, "On to the real question. What *kind* of Activist are you?" (If they have enough distance to recognize that that is the only *real* question in their eyes.)

Conclusion: Saints forever!

The Activism we see in the Academy may be the damned backwing of Gandhi's nonviolent Activist precedent. That much will not be investigated here. What I will say is much the same thing I would say to C.S. Lewis, that I in fact did imply to him in "A Pilgrimage from Narnia:"

You helped me reach where I am now, and I would be much poorer had our conversation been deleted from my past. I have sat at your feet. But now even what I have taken from you summons me to bid you farewell. *If your right eye or your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away.* Holding on to your ecumenism, Mr. Lewis, or—it is a deeper cut—your nonviolence, Mr. Gandhi, is to lose everything you sought for. The journey in faith involves many times when we cut off a right hand or take out a right eye. Perhaps we lose nothing, or only a piece of Hell, when we do so. But God created man to glorify him and become him forever, and I cannot be an Activist: I can only strive to be a Saint.

Thus I bid farewell to heroes of my youth.

Fire in the Hole

The professor continued in his reading.

In *The Divine Names* I have shown the sense in which God is described as good, existent, life, wisdom, power, and whatever other things pertain to the conceptual names for God. In my *Symbolic Theology* I have discussed analogies of God drawn from what we perceive. I have spoken of the images we have of him, of the forms, figures, and instruments proper to him, of the places in which he lives and the ornaments which he wears. I have spoken of his anger, grief, and rage, of how he is said to be drunk and hungover, of his oaths and curses, of his sleeping and waking, and indeed of all those images we have of him, images shaped by the workings of the representations of God. And I feel sure that you have noticed how these latter come much more abundantly than what went before, since *The Theological Representations* and a discussion of the names appropriate to God are inevitably briefer than what can be said in *The Symbolic Theology*. The fact is that the more we take flight upward, the more find ourselves not simply running short of words but actually speechless and unknowing. In the earlier books my argument this downward path from the most exalted to the humblest categories, taking in on this downward path an ever-increasing number of ideas which multiplied what is below up to the transcendent, and the more it climbs, the more language falters, and when it has passed up and

beyond the ascent, it will turn silent completely, since it will finally be at one with him who is indescribable.

Now you may wonder why it is that, after starting out from the highest category when our method involves assertions, we begin now from the lowest category involves a denial. The reason is this. When we assert what is beyond every assertion, we must then proceed from what is most akin to it, and as we do so we make the affirmation on which everything else depends. But when we deny that which is beyond every denial, we have to start by denying those qualities which differ most from the goal we hope to attain. Is it not closer to truth to say that God is life and goodness rather than that he is air or stone? Is it not more accurate to deny that drunkenness and rage can be attributed to him than to deny that we can apply to him the terms of speech and thought?

So this is what we say. The Cause of all is above all and is not in-existent, lifeless, speechless, mindless. It is not a material body, and hence has neither shape nor form, quality, quantity, or weight. It is not in any place and can be neither seen nor touched. It is neither perceived nor is it perceptible. It suffers neither disorder nor disturbance and is overwhelmed by no earthly passion. It is not powerless and subject to the disturbances caused by sense perception. It endures no deprivation of light. It passes through no change, decay, division, loss, no ebb and flow, nothing of which the senses may be aware. None of this can either be identified with it nor attributed.

Again, as we climb higher we say this. It is not soul or mind, nor does it possess imagination, conviction, speech, or understanding. Nor is it speech per se, understanding per se. It cannot be spoken of and it cannot be grasped by understanding. It is not number or order, greatness or smallness, equality or inequality, similarity or dissimilarity. It is not immovable, moving, or at rest. It has no power, it is not power, nor is it light. It does not live nor is it light. It does not live nor is it life. It is not a substance, nor is it eternity or time. It cannot be grasped by the understanding since it is neither knowledge nor truth. It is not kingship. It is not wisdom. It is neither one nor oneness, divinity nor goodness. Nor is it a spirit, in the sense in which we understand the term. It is not sonship or fatherhood and it is nothing known to us or any other being. Existing beings do not know it as it actually is and it does not know them as they are. There is no speaking of it, nor name or knowledge of it. Darkness and light, error and truth—it is none of these. It is beyond assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its preeminently simple and absolute

nature, free of every limitation, beyond every limitation, it is also beyond every denial.

Prof. Sarovsky slowly and reverently closed the book.

"St. Dionysius says elsewhere that God is known by every name and no name, and that everything that is is a name of God. And in fact in discussing symbols which have some truth but are necessarily inadequate to reality, crude symbols are to be preferred to those which appear elevated, since even their 'crassness' is a 'goad' spurring us to reach higher."

"So now I'd like to have an exercise. Could somebody please name something at random, and I can tell how it tells the glory of God?"

A young man from the back called out, "Porn."

Prof. Sarovsky said, "Ha ha, hysterical. Could I have another suggestion?"

Another young man called out, "Porn."

Prof. Sarovsky said, "I'm serious. Porn, when you start using it, seems to be a unique spice. But the more you use it, the more it actually drains spice from everything else, and eventually drains itself, and when pornography can only go so far, you find yourself not only jailed but charged with *rape*. Lustfulness is in the beginning as sweet as honey and in the end as bitter as gall and as sharp as a double-edged sword. And much as I disagree with feminists on important points, I agree with a feminist dictionary: 'Pornography is the theory; rape is the practice.' Could I have a *serious* suggestion?"

A couple of cellphones started playing, "Internet is for porn."

Prof. Sarovsky called on the class's most vocal feminist. "Delilah! Would you pick a topic?"

Delilah grinned wickedly and said, "I'm with the boys on this one. *Porn*."

Prof. Sarovsky paused briefly and says, "Very well, then, porn it is. The famous essay 'I, Pencil' takes the humble pencil up and just starts to dig and dig at the economic family tree of just what resources and endeavors make up the humble lead pencil. So it talks about logging, and all the work in transporting the wood, and the mining involved in the graphite, and the exquisite resources that go just to make the blue strip on the metal band, and so on and so forth, and the 'rubber' eraser and whatnot. The conclusion is that millions of dollars' resources (he does not calculate a figure) went into making a humble wooden pencil, and he pushes further: only God knows how to make a pencil. And if only God knows how to make a pencil, *a fortiori* only God knows how to make a porn site...

"And, I suppose, a pencil must be a phallic symbol."

Then he paused, and said, "Just kidding!"

The room was silent.

Prof. Sarovsky bowed deeply and grinned: "I'll see you and raise you."
And this is what he said.

I, Porn, want to tell you about myself. There are options that eclipse me, but I can make my point more strongly if I speak for myself, Porn, who represent myriads of wonders.

It is not my point in particular that only God knows how to make a Porn site. The point has been well enough made that only God knows how to make a pencil, and is a less interesting adjustment to acknowledge that only God knows how to make a Porn site.

Nor do I suggest that the straight-laced print off a Porn image and frame and hang it on the wall. Though if they understood my lineage, the question would then become whether they were worthy to do so.

I have a magnificent and vaster lineage than "I, Pencil" begins to draw out. A brilliance in economics, the author simply underscores a great interdependent web of economic resources in the humble pencil's family tree. Equipment, mining, logging, transportation: the economic underpinnings of a humble pencil amount to millions of dollars, and the details mentioned only scratch the surface even of the economics involved.

I have a vaster lineage, including such things as war in Heaven. Now the war in Heaven is over, and was over when the Archangel Michael only said his name, which in the Hebrew tongue says, "Who is like God?" and with that, the devils were cast down, sore losers afflicting the Royal Race one and all. And even then, it was only angelic spirits that could come anywhere close to their war against God. Even then, they are limited. They are on a leash. Perhaps someday I will tell you of why you are summoned to a holy and blinding arrogance towards that whole camp.

What is the Royal Race? I get ahead of myself.

I, Porn, don't merely share a universe with the divine virtues. In my production there is the cutting off of self-will, long suffering, and as little lust as might be found in a monastery. Dostoevsky offers the image of the chaste harlot; I can add only that if Christ were walking today, Porn models would be among the first he would associate with.

The core impulse I, Porn, draw on, is good. It is a testament to the human spirit that nine months after a natural disaster, there is a wave of babies born. The core impulse is the impulse for the preservation of the species, the possibility by which a community of mortals has itself no automatic end.

It is closer to my point to say that God is not just good and divine; he has created a world that in every way reflects his grandeur. There are no small parts: only actors who

are not really small. Every superstring vibration in the cosmos is grander and vaster than all the pagan gods of all worlds put together.

Or as G.K. Chesterton said, "Once I planned to write a book of poems entirely about the things in my pocket. But I found it would be too long; and the age of the great epics is past."

It is still closer to my majesty to observe Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who suffered in the Gulag that Hitler sent observers for inspiration for Nazi concentration camps, "Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, not between political parties either — but right through every heart — and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains . . . an unuprooted small corner of evil."

The Heavens declare the glory of God—and so do I, Porn.

Perhaps the most beautiful doctrine in Origen that Orthodox must condemn is the final and ultimate salvation of all Creation: that the Devil himself will be a last prodigal son returning to home in Heaven. But the Orthodox teaching is more beautiful: a teaching that every spiritual being, every man, every fallen or unfallen angel, is given an eternal choice between Heaven and Hell and not one of these will God rape, however much he desires their salvation. To quote *The Dark Tower*: "A man can't be taken to hell, or sent to hell: you can only get there on your own steam." God has made a rock he could not move, and that rock is man and angel.

The rising crescendo that practically seals C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," is:

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.

Which brings us to the messy circumstances of your lives.

George Bernard Shaw said, "There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it." We can see it, perhaps in a fantasy setting, in a passage from C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, has Lucy tiptoe to a room with a spellbook and see a singular spell:

Then she came to a page which was such a blaze of pictures that one hardly noticed the writing. Hardly—but she did notice the first words. They were, An infallible spell to make beautiful she that uttereth it beyond the lot of mortals. Lucy peered at the pictures with her face close to the page, and though they had seemed crowded and muddlesome before, she found she could now see them quite clearly. The first was a picture of a girl standing at a reading-desk reading in a huge book. And the girl was dressed up exactly like Lucy. In the next picture Lucy (for the girl in her picture was Lucy herself) was standing up with her mouth open and a rather terrible expression on her face, chanting or reciting something. In the third picture the beauty beyond the lot of mortals had come to her. It was strange, considering how small the pictures had looked at first, that the Lucy in the picture now seemed quite as big as the real Lucy; and they looked into each other's eyes and the real Lucy was dazzled by the beauty of the other Lucy; though she could still see a sort of likeness to herself in that beautiful face. And now the pictures came crowding on her thick and fast. She saw herself throned on high at a great tournament in Calormen and all the Kings of the world fought because of her beauty. After that it turned from tournaments to real wars, and all Narnia and Archenland, Telmar and Calormen, Galma and Terebithinia, were laid waste with the fury of the kings and dukes and great lords who fought for her favor. Then it changed and Lucy, still beautiful beyond the lot of mortals, was back in England. And Susan (who had always been the beauty of the family) came home from America. The Susan in the picture looked exactly like the real Susan only plainer and with a nasty expression. And Susan was was jealous of the dazzling beauty of Lucy, but that didn't matter a bit because no one cared anything about Susan now.

The temptation, patterned after real temptation of the real world, is to want a horror. It is because Lucy is bewitched that she even wants what the spell promises. The destruction of kingdoms when lords vie for her beauty? Women may want to feel like the most beautiful woman in the world, but the count in stacking dead bodies like cordwood is no true metric for beauty. As a faithfully portrayed temptation by C.S. Lewis, what is being desired is not something Heavenly. It is a vision of Hell, pure and simple. While in the grips of temptation, she could not be happy without casting that

spell until she let go of it from a strong warning from Aslan. But even if she succeeded, she would be even more unhappy. Her success would rival world wars or nuclear wars in its destruction of beautiful worlds, and if it didn't bring her death, she would live on in a wrecked world, knowing for the rest of her life that it was her petty self-absorption that obliterated the majesty of worlds.

Even if we scale from back from undisguised fantasy, we can look at what is a practical possibility for some people in the real world. Cameron Russell's "Looks Aren't Everything. Believe me, I'm a model." The TED talk eloquently explains that being a supermodel is not all sunshine and not the solution to all life's problems. For that matter it isn't even the solution to *body image* problems, and the final point she shares is that as a model she has to be *more*, not less, insecure about her body, no matter how lovely she may appear to others. It turns out that supermodels are intimidated by... other supermodels. Being a model is not a way to be exempt from body image struggles.

And this is in no way a solely a phenomenon about body image. There is one man where professional opinion is that he is smarter than most geniuses, and that the average Harvard PhD has never met someone so talented. And his work history, given that he's tried to give his best? Here's something really odd. One job assistant said, "You don't want your boss figuring out you're smarter than him." When he hands in his first piece of work, only some bosses respond kindly to work that is beyond the boss's wildest dreams. Most of them find themselves in unfamiliar social territory, and strike out or retaliate. He's been terminated a dozen times and is now retired on disability, the best financial arrangement he has had yet. It may be true, up to a point, that there's something likable about being smart. That doesn't mean in any sense that the smarter you get, the more people like you, or that your life is easy.

There is a portal that far excels entering another world, entering Narnia, Hogwarts, or Middle Earth. And this portal is much harder to see or look for than Narnia. It is entering the here and now you have been placing.

Spiritual masters have said to want what you have, not what you don't have, and want things to be for you just the way they are. Now there is such a thing as legitimately seeking to solve, lessen, or improve a problem, and wishing you had a better-paying job, a car, or a nicer house. Wishing never runs out, and if you get the Apple Watch you want, wishing will just wish for newer or different things. Buy something you don't need but will make you enchanted for a month. *I dare you.*

Oh, and by the way, I, Porn, know all about wishing. I know *everything* about it, and I know everything it *can't* do.

When you let go of escape, soon you may let go of relating the here and now as the sort of thing one should flee, and some thick, sticky grey film will slowly melt away from your eyes and they will open on beauty all around you, and you will have crossed a threshold no fantasy portal even comes close. And you will have every treasure that you

have. And perhaps, in and through ancient religion or postmodern positive psychology, cultivate a deep and abiding gratefulness for all the blessings you have.

In the Way of Things, there are two basic options one can pursue. One is the Sexual Way, and the other is the Hyper-Sexual Way. Let me explain.

Study after study has been launched to investigate which group of mavericks has the best sex, and they have been repeatedly been dismayed to find that the overlooked Sexual Way has the most pleasure. The overlooked Sexual Way is that of a contest of love, for life, between one lord and one wife, chaste before the wedding and faithful after, grateful for children, and knowing that the best sex *ever* is when you are trying to make a baby. After the first year or two some outward signs get quiet and subdued, but the marriage succeeds because the honeymoon has failed. It deepens year after year and decade after a decade, and a widowed senior can say, "You don't know what love is when you're a kid." And here, like no other place, *beauty is forged in the eye of the beholder*. Here, unlike fashion magazines, sweaty fitness regimens, and dieting, and weighing, and accursed "bodysculpting," a woman can and should be made to feel like she is the most beautiful woman in the world, to a husband to whom she really is the most beautiful woman in the world, as naturally as the Church on Sunday. As Homer and Marge humbly and quietly sing to each other, "You are so *beautiful* to me!"

If the sexual impulse is spent wisely in the Sexual Way, it is invested at exorbitant interest on the Hyper-Sexual Way. Wonder what all that curious monastic modesty about? It compounds an essential sexual condition, by which a monastic, man or woman, becomes a transgendered god and his sexual desire is entirely fixed on God. Does this seem strange? Let us listen to St. Herman of Alaska:

Further on Yanovsky writes, "Once the Elder was invited aboard a frigate which came from Saint Petersburg. The Captain of the frigate was a highly educated man, who had been sent to America by order of the Emperor to make an inspection of all the colonies. There were more than twenty-five officers with the Captain, and they also were educated men. In the company of this group sat a monk of a hermitage, small in stature and wearing very old clothes. All these educated conversationalists were placed in such a position by his wise talks that they did not know how to answer him. The Captain himself used to say, "We were lost for an answer before him."

"Father Herman gave them all one general question: "Gentlemen, What do you love above all, and what will each of you wish for your happiness?" Various answers were offered ... Some desired wealth, others glory, some a beautiful wife, and still others a beautiful ship he would captain; and so forth in the same vein. "It is not true," Father Herman said to them concerning this, "that all your various wishes can bring us to one conclusion—that each

of you desires that which in his own understanding he considers the best, and which is most worthy of his love?" They all answered, "Yes, that is so!" He then continued, "Would you not say, Is not that which is best, above all, and surpassing all, and that which by preference is most worthy of love, the Very Lord, our Jesus Christ, who created us, adorned us with such ideals, gave life to all, sustains everything, nurtures and loves all, who is Himself Love and most beautiful of all men? Should we not then love God above every thing, desire Him more than anything, and search Him out?"

"All said, "Why, yes! That's self-evident!" Then the Elder asked, "But do you love God?" They all answered, "Certainly, we love God. How can we not love God?" "And I a sinner have been trying for more than forty years to love God, I cannot say that I love Him completely," Father Herman protested to them. He then began to demonstrate to them the way in which we should love God. "If we love someone," he said, "we always remember them; we try to please them. Day and night our heart is concerned with the subject. Is that the way you gentlemen love God? Do you turn to Him often? Do you always remember Him? Do you always pray to Him and fulfill His holy commandments?" They had to admit that they had not! "For our own good, and for our own fortune," concluded the Elder, "let us at least promise ourselves that from this very minute we will try to love God more than anything and to fulfill His Holy Will!" Without any doubt this conversation was imprinted in the hearts of the listeners for the rest of their lives."

Fr. Herman had something better than pixels on a screen. *Much* better.

Perhaps the most controversial argument in the history of philosophy is by Anselm of Canterbury, who said, "If God exists, nothing greater than him could exist. Now God either exists in reality and also in our minds, or only as a concept in our minds. But to exist in reality as well as our minds is greater than to exist only in our minds. Therefore, God must have the higher excellence of existing in reality as well as our minds."

I am not specifically interested in bringing agreement or disagreement to this argument. First, most people first meeting this argument feel that something has been slipped past them, but they can't put a finger on where the error is. However, I did not exactly include this argument to discuss what it asserts, but what it assumes: if God is greater than anything else that can be thought, then we have something that pierces deeply into the Christian God.

The joke is told that four rabbis would get together to discuss Torah, and one specific rabbi was the odd man out, every single time. And they said, "Three against one." Finally, the exasperated odd rabbi out knelt down, prayed, "Gd, I've worked very

hard, and they never listen. Please send them a sign that I'm right." It was a warm day out, but a sudden chilly wind blew by, and some clouds appeared in the sky. The other three rabbis said, "That's odd, but it's still three against one." Then the rabbi knelt down, prayed, "Please make a clearer sign," and the wind grew more bitter and it began sleeting. The rabbi said, "Well?" The other rabbis said, "This is quite a coincidence, but it's still three against one." Then before the rabbi could begin to pray, bolts of lightning splintered a nearby tree, there was an earthquake, the earth opened, and a deep voice thundered, "HE'S RIGHT!" The rabbi said, "Well?" Quick as a flash, another rabbi said, "Well? It's still three against two!"

The humor element in this element extends beyond, "If God has spoken, the discussion is over." The humor element hinges on the fact that counting does not go from "one, two, three, four" to "one, two, three, four, *Five*": there is infinite confusion in adding one God to four men. As written in "Doxology:"

Thou who art One,
 Eternally beyond time,
 So wholly One,
 That thou mayest be called infinite,
 Timeless beyond time thou art,
 The One who is greater than infinity art thou.
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 The Three who are One,
 No more bound by numbers than by word,
 And yet the Son is called Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ,
 The Word,
 Divine ordering Reason,
 Eternal Light and Cosmic Word,
 Way pre-eminent of all things,
 Beyond all, and infinitesimally close,
 Thou transcendest transcendence itself,
 The Creator entered into his Creation,
 Sharing with us humble glory,
 Lowered by love,
 Raised to the highest,
 The Suffering Servant known,
 The King of Glory,
 Ο ΩΝ....

Wert thou a lesser god,
 Numerically one as a creature is one,
 Only one by an accident,
 Naught more,
 Then thou couldst not deify thine own creation,
 Whilst remaining the only one god.

But thou art beyond all thought,
 All word, all being,
 We may say that thou existest,
 But then we must say,
 Thou art, I am not.
 And if we say that we exist,
 It is inadequate to say that thou existest,
 For thou art the source of all being,
 And beyond our being;
 Thou art the source of all mind, wisdom, and reason,
 Yet it is a fundamental error to imagine thee,
 To think and reason in the mode of mankind.
 Thou art not one god because there happeneth not more,
 Thou art The One God because there mighteth not be another beside thee.
 Thus thou spakest to Moses,
 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
 Which is to say,
 Thou shalt admit no other gods to my presence.

And there can be no other god beside thee,
 So deep and full is this truth,
 That thy Trinity mighteth take naught from thine Oneness,
 Nor could it be another alongside thy divine Oneness,
 If this God became man,
 That man become god.

The Trinity does not represent a weaker or less consistent monotheism than Islam. The Trinity represents a stronger and more consistent monotheism than Islam, and that is why it can afford things that are unthinkable to a Muslim.

A Hindu once asked a Christian, "I can accept the truth of the incarnation, but why only one?" And in that conversation, where the Christian defended only one

incarnation, both were wrong. Or rather, the Christian was *wrong*; the Hindu was merely *mistaken*.

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to BECOME him forever.

One theology professor tried to explain to a Muslim that the Trinity is how Christians get to the absolute Oneness of God. The men who first articulated the doctrine looked with some horror on the concept of using the word "Trinity" as a handle for the doctrine.

Regarding the Hindu mentioned, I would say that there have been many, many true incarnations of God, and they still continue. Now the Hindu concept of an Avatar can be what Christianity rejected as docetistic, with Christ not recognized to have real flesh. However, what I would rather have been said is this: No one besides Christ enters the world with part or all of God as part of them. However, the reason for the coming of the Son of God is to destroy the devil's work. An ancient hymn states, "Trying to be god, Adam failed to be God. Christ became man, to make Adam god." And the vast company of Saints that God keeps on giving are in fact the gift of a company of Avatars; we just have a different understanding of how one reaches a very similar goal.

The Philokalia says, "Blessed is the monk who regards each man as God after God."

St. John Chrysostom comments on the Scripture: "We beheld," he says, "His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father."

Having declared that we were made "sons of God," and having shown in what manner namely, by the "Word" having been "made Flesh," he again mentions another advantage which we gain from this same circumstance. What is it? "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father"; which we could not have beheld, had it not been shown to us, by means of a body like to our own. For if the men of old time could not even bear to look upon the glorified countenance of Moses, who partook of the same nature with us, if that just man needed a veil which might shade over the purity⁷ of his glory, and show to them have face of their prophet mild and gentle; how could we creatures of clay and earth have endured the unveiled Godhead, which is unapproachable even by the powers above? Wherefore He tabernacled among us, that we might be able with much fearlessness to approach Him, speak to, and converse with Him.

But what means "the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father"? Since many of the Prophets too were glorified, as this Moses himself, Elijah,

and Elisha, the one encircled by the fiery chariot (2 Kings vi. 17), the other taken up by it; and after them, Daniel and the Three Children, and the many others who showed forth wonders; and angels who have appeared among men, and partly disclosed to beholders the flashing light of their proper nature; and since not angels only, but even the Cherubim were seen by the Prophet in great glory, and the Seraphim also: the Evangelist leading us away from all these, and removing our thoughts from created things, and from the brightness of our fellow-servants, sets us at the very summit of good. For, "not of prophet," says he, "nor angel, nor archangel, nor of the higher power, nor of any other created nature," if other there be, but of the Master Himself, the King Himself, the true Only-Begotten Son Himself, of the Very Lord of all, did we "behold the glory."

For the expression "as," does not in this place belong to similarity or comparison, but to confirmation and unquestionable definition; as though he said, "We beheld glory, such as it was becoming, and likely that He should possess, who is the Only-Begotten and true Son of God, the King of all." The habit (of so speaking) is general, for I shall not refuse to strengthen my argument even from common custom, since it is not now my object to speak with any reference to beauty of words, or elegance of composition, but only for your advantage; and therefore there is nothing to prevent my establishing my argument by the instance of a common practice. What then is the habit of most persons? Often when any have seen a king richly decked, and glittering on all sides with precious stones, and are afterwards describing to others the beauty, the ornaments, the splendor, they enumerate as much as they can, the glowing tint of the purple robe, the size of the jewels, the whiteness of the mules, the gold about the yoke, the soft and shining couch. But when after enumerating these things, and other things besides these, they cannot, say what they will, give a full idea of the splendor, they immediately bring in: "But why say much about it; once for all, he was like a king;" not desiring by the expression "like," to show that he, of whom they say this, resembles a king, but that he is a real king. Just so now the Evangelist has put the word As, desiring to represent the transcendent nature and incomparable excellence of His glory.

Elsewhere we are asked to consider what things would be like if a King were to take up residence in one of the houses of a city. Would not the entire city, and each house in it, be forever honored? And the Son of God is now one of our homeboys. He ascended into Heaven and brought us with him, enthroned in Heaven with him.

We are the Royal Race. We are made in the image of God, and made to reach unimaginable glory.

And there may be named three laws that are the Constitution of the Royal Race, three laws which are one and the same.

The first law is the Law of the Canoe, as C.S. Lewis summarized his friend Charles Williams:

It is Virgil himself who died without reaching the *patria*, who saw 'Italy' only from a wave before he was engulfed forever. It is Virgil himself who stretches out his hands among the ghosts *ripae ulterioris amore*, longing to pass a river that he cannot pass. This poet from whose work so many Christians have drawn spiritual nourishment was not himself a Christian—did not himself know the full meaning of his own poetry, for (in Keble's fine words) 'thoughts beyond their thought to those high bards were given'. This is exquisite cruelty; he made honey not for himself; he helped to save others, himself he could not save.

...The Atonement was a Substitution, just as Anselm said. But that Substitution, far from being a mere legal fiction irrelevant to the normal workings of the universe, was simply the supreme instance of a universal law. 'He saved others, himself he cannot save' is a *definition* of the Kingdom. All salvation, everywhere and at all times, in great things or in little, is vicarious. The courtesy of the Emperor has absolutely decreed that no man can paddle his own canoe and every man can paddle his fellow's, so that the shy offering and modest acceptance of indispensable aid shall be the very form of the celestial etiquette. [emphasis original]

The second law is the Law of the Long Spoon. As one telling goes from a liberal enough source:

One day a man said to God, "God, I would like to know what Heaven and Hell are like."

God showed the man two doors. Inside the first one, in the middle of the room, was a large round table with a large pot of stew. It smelled delicious and made the man's mouth water, but the people sitting around the table were thin and sickly. They appeared to be famished. They were holding spoons with very long handles and each found it possible to reach into the pot of stew and take a spoonful, but because the handle was longer than their arms, they could not get the spoons back into their mouths.

The man shuddered at the sight of their misery and suffering. God said, "You have seen Hell."

Behind the second door, the room appeared exactly the same. There was the large round table with the large pot of wonderful stew that made the man's mouth water. The people had the same long-handled spoons, but they were well nourished and plump, laughing and talking.

The man said, "I don't understand."

God smiled. "It is simple," he said, "These people share and feed one another. While the greedy only think of themselves..."

The last law is the Law of Narcissus's Mirror. It states that the Royal Race are absolutely *forbidden* to stand and gaze at themselves in Narcissus's Mirror, entranced at their own beauty, and *commanded* to gaze at other members of the Royal Race, entranced at *their* beauty.

These three laws are one and the same. One joke, about "communio" theologians who hold the Trinity to mean that God himself is a community, ran:

Q: How many communio theologians does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Only one, but he thinks he is a community.

But we are not communities. We are *part* of a community, and the full grandeur of being a member of the Royal Race is that you are no *island*, but a connected and beautiful part of a *continent*.

And furthermore, God has ordered Heaven and Earth for the benefit of us as the Royal Race.

Though this may be more subtle in the Sexual Way than in the Hyper-Sexual Way, but the behavior enjoined on the Hyper-Sexual Way is that of a spiritual miser, who constantly thinks his Heavenly wealth is too little and he must spare no effort to get more, and no matter how much treasure in Heaven he acquires, he never rests on his laurels, but keeps on storing up more and more and more.

Men each have one interest, one real interest, and only one interest: a good answer before the Dread Judgment-Throne of Christ. This life is inestimably precious, and in treasures such as "Repentance, Heaven's Best-kept Secret," we can only store up these treasures before this fleeting life is over. Now the Church Triumphant is no terrible place to be, but there are profound goods that are only open to us, the living, for as long as we live. And the various strange prescriptions of the *Philokalia* and the Orthodox Way, about believing oneself to be the worst of sinners, about giving oneself no credit for any good actions, about believing "All the world will be saved and I will be damned," about repenting as if one will die tomorrow but treating your body as if it will

last for many years, are in fact braces to support being one hoarding spiritual miser for the rest of one's life, and crossing the finish line, in triumph, and with treasure after treasure after treasure in your hoard. It is explained that God conceals from us the day of our death, because if we knew we would not die for some decades, we would put off repentance and be incorrigible. Not that God is absolutely unwilling to reveal to people the day of their death: it is in fact considered a mark of holiness to know that, because a person is in a good enough state for the secret not to need to be hidden. But the *Philokalia's* discussion, perhaps here most clearly of all, explains that things are ordered this way because God has stacked the deck, in *our* favor. And as regards the Sexual Way, the path is said not to be an environment for children to grow up, but an environment for parents to grow up.

C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, fields an objection which was apparently on people's minds but I have not heard brought up live in my lifetime. However, the answer says everything to a world in disintegrating economy, COVID, Jihad, and more:

I'd like to deal with a difficulty some people find about the whole idea of prayer. Somebody put it to me by saying: "I can believe in God alright, but what I can't swallow is this idea of Him listening to several hundred million human beings who are all addressing Him at the same moment." And I find quite a lot of people feel that difficulty. Well, the first thing to notice is that the whole sting of it comes in the words "at the same moment." Most of us can imagine a God attending to any number of claimants if only they come one by one and He has an endless time to do it in. So what's really at the back of the difficulty is this idea of God having to fit too many things into one moment of time. Well that, of course, is what happens to us. Our life comes to us moment by moment. One moment disappears before the next comes along, and there's room for precious little in each. That's what Time is like. And, of course, you and I tend to take it for granted that this Time series — this arrangement of past, present and future — isn't simply the way life comes to us but is the way all things really exist. We tend to assume that the whole universe and God Himself are always moving on from a past to a future just as we are. But many learned men don't agree with that. I think it was the Theologians who first started the idea that some things are not in Time at all. Later, the Philosophers took it over. And now some of the scientists are doing the same. Almost certainly God is not in Time. His life doesn't consist of moments following one another. If a million people are praying to Him at ten-thirty tonight, He hasn't got to listen to them all in that one little snippet which we call "ten-thirty." Ten-thirty, and every other moment from the beginning to the end of the world, is always the Present for Him. If you like to

put it that way, He has infinity in which to listen to the split second of prayer put up by a pilot as his plane crashes in flames. That's difficult, I know. Can I try to give something, not the same, but a bit like it. Suppose I'm writing a novel. I write "Mary laid down her book; next moment came a knock at the door." For Mary, who's got to live in the imaginary time of the story, there's no interval between putting down the book and hearing the knock. But I, her creator, between writing the first part of that sentence and the second, may have gone out for an hour's walk and spent the whole hour thinking about Mary. I know that's not a perfect example, but it may just give a glimpse of what I mean. The point I want to drive home is that God has infinite attention, infinite leisure to spare for each one of us. He doesn't have to take us in the line. You're as much alone with Him as if you were the only thing He'd ever created. When Christ died, He died for you individually just as much as if you'd been the only man in the world.

And God's Providence is not just Providence in great things. It is Providence in the small. It is not just Providence in a career, or entering the Sexual Way. It is also Providence when you are stuck in traffic and the light seems never to be turning green and that still, small voice urges you to grow just a little as a person so you can be as happy in your car as in a lounge chair at home. And it is the mighty arm of Providence all the more powerfully revealed when we are persecuted, or lose money, or any number of other things. And it is a Providence that gives you the here and now, a here and now chosen for you from all eternity, and will, if you cooperate, help you appreciate the gift.

And if you are one of the many who believe that I, Porn, am the only interesting spice in a fatally dull world, I, Porn, can only say this:

Watch me when I am Transfigured.

To quote your own age's little reflection of *The Divine Comedy*:

I saw coming towards us a Ghost who carried something on his shoulder. Like all the Ghosts, he was unsubstantial, but they differed from one another as smokes differ. Some had been whitish; this one was dark and oily. What sat on his shoulder was a little red lizard, and it was twitching its tail like a whip and whispering things in his ear. As we caught sight of him he turned his head to the reptile with a snarl of impatience. 'Shut up, I tell you!' he said. It wagged its tail and continued to whisper to him. He ceased snarling, and presently began to smile. Then he turned and started to limp westward, away from the mountains.

'Off so soon?' said a voice.

The speaker was more or less human in shape but larger than a man, and so bright that I could hardly look at him. His presence smote on my eyes and on my body too (for there was heat coming from him as well as light) like the morning sun at the beginning of a tyrannous summer day.

'Yes. I'm off,' said the Ghost. 'Thanks for all your hospitality. But it's no good, you see. I told this little chap' (here he indicated the Lizard) that he'd have to be quiet if he came—which he insisted on doing. Of course his stuff won't do here: I realise that. But he won't stop. I shall just have to go home.'

'Would you like me to make him quiet?' said the flaming Spirit—an angel, as I now understood.

'Of course I would,' said the Ghost.

'Then I will kill him,' said the Angel, taking a step forward.

'Oh—ah—look out! You're burning me. Keep away,' said the Ghost, retreating.

'Don't you want him killed?'

'You didn't say anything about killing at first. I hardly meant to bother you with anything so drastic as that.'

'It's the only way,' said the Angel, whose burning hands were now very close to the Lizard. 'Shall I kill it?'

'Well, that's a further question. I'm quite open to consider it, but it's a new point, isn't? I mean, for the moment I was only thinking about silencing it because up here—well, it's so damned embarrassing.'

'May I kill it?'

'Well, there's time to discuss that later.'

'There is no time. May I kill it?'

'Please, I never meant to be such a nuisance. Please—really—don't bother. Look! It's gone to sleep of its own accord. I'm sure it'll be all right now. Thanks ever so much.'

'May I kill it?'

'Honestly, I don't think there's the slightest necessity for that. I'm sure I shall be able to keep it in order now. I think the gradual process would be far better than killing it.'

'The gradual process is of no use at all.'

'Don't you think so? Well, I'll think over what you've said very carefully. I honestly will. In fact I'd let you kill it now, but as a matter of fact I'm not feeling frightfully well today. It would be most silly to do it now. I'd need to be in good health for the operation. Some other day, perhaps.'

'There is no other day. All days are present now.'

'Get back! You're burning me. How can I tell you to kill it? You'd kill me if you did.'

'It is not so.'

'Why, you're hurting me now.'

'I never said it wouldn't hurt you. I said it wouldn't kill you.'

'Oh, I know. You think I'm a coward. But isn't that. Really it isn't. I say! Let me run back by to-night's bus and get an opinion from my own doctor. I'll come again the first moment I can.'

'This moment contains all moments.'

'Why are you torturing me? You are jeering at me. How can I let you tear me in pieces? If you wanted to help me, why didn't you kill the damned thing without asking me—before I knew? It would be all over by now if you had.'

'I cannot kill it against your will. It is impossible. Have I your permission?'

The Angel's hands were almost closed on the Lizard, but not quite. Then the Lizard began chattering to the Ghost so loud that even I could hear what it was saying.

'Be careful,' it said. 'He can do what he says. He can kill me. One fatal word from you and he *will!* Then you'll be without me for ever and ever. How could you live? You'd be only a sort of ghost, not a real man as you are now. He doesn't understand. He's only a cold, bloodless abstract thing. It may be natural for him, but it isn't for us. Yes, yess. I know there are no real pleasures now, only dreams. But aren't they better than nothing? And I'll be so good. I admit I've sometimes gone too far in the past, but I promise I won't do it again. I'll give you nothing but really nice dreams—all sweet and fresh and almost innocent. You might say, quite innocent . . .'

'Have your permission?' said the Angel to the Ghost.

'I know it will kill me.'

'It won't. But supposing it did?'

'You're right. It would be better to be dead than to live with this creature.'

'Then I may?'

'Damn and blast you! Go on, can't you? Get it over. Do what you like,' bellowed the Ghost; but ended, whimpering, 'God help me. God help me.'

Next moment the Ghost gave a scream of agony such as I never heard on Earth. The Burning One closed crimson grip on the reptile: twisted it, while it bit and writhed, and then flung it, broken-backed, on the turf.

'Ow! That's done for me,' gasped the Ghost, reeling backwards.

For a moment I could make out nothing distinctly. Then I saw, between me and the nearest bush, unmistakably solid but growing every moment solider, the upper arm and the shoulder of a man. Then, brighter still, the legs and hands. The neck and golden head materialized while I watched, and if my attention had not wavered I should have seen the actual completing of a man—an immense man, naked, not much smaller than the Angel. What distracted me was the fact that the something seemed to be happening to the Lizard. At first I thought the operation had failed. So far from dying, the creature was still struggling and even growing bigger as it struggled. And as it grew it changed. Its hinder parts grew rounder. The tail, still flickering, became a tail of hair that flickered between huge and glossy buttocks. Suddenly I started back, rubbing my eyes. What stood before me was the greatest stallion I have ever seen, silvery white but with mane and tail of gold. It was smooth and shining, rippled with swells of flesh and muscle, whinneying and stamping with its hoofs. At each stamp the land shook and the trees dindled.

The new-made man turned and clapped the new horse's neck. It nosed his bright body. Horse and master breathed into each other's nostrils. The man turned from it, flung himself at the feet of the Burning One, and embraced them. When he rose I thought his face shone with tears, but may have only been the liquid love and brightness (one cannot distinguish them in that country) which flowed from him. I had not long to think about it. In joyous haste the young man leaped upon the horse's back. Turning in his seats he waved a farewell, then nudged the stallion with his heels. They were off before I knew well what was happening. There was riding if you like! I came out as quickly as I could from among the bushes to follow them with my eyes; but already they were only like a shooting star far off on the green plain, and soon among the foothills of the mountains. Then, still like a star, I saw them winding up, scaling what seemed impossible steeps, and quicker every moment, till near the dim brow of the landscape, so high that I must strain my neck to see them, they vanished, bright themselves, into the rose-brightness of that everlasting morning.

An Orthodox would realize in the Burning Angel a clearest reference to the fiery Seraphim, the highest of the nine angel choirs, and the one for whom St. Seraphim of Sarov came, the most beloved Orthodox saint in centuries, the St. Seraphim whose extraordinary conversation with the pilgrim Motovilov reveals the purpose of human life.

We live in interesting times. There is a singularity, or rather has been but keeps growing exponentially, and this singularity may turn in to the end of the world: a

strange Ragnarok where the forces of Good resound with apocalyptic triumph. And I, Porn, am part of the singularity, an important part.

Did you know that I, Porn, am not the only thing in life?

Remember: "Every man who visits a Porn site is looking for God."

Delilah's friend turned back. "Yep, dear, he does that sort of thing in practically every class."

Game Review: Meatspace

Game: Meatspace

Score: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (7 out of 5 possible!)

Category: First Person Immersive / Puzzle / Real Life Adventure

meatspace: /meet'spays/, n.

The physical world, where the meat lives -- as opposed to *cyberspace*. Hackers are actually more willing to use this term than 'cyberspace', because it's not speculative -- we already have a running meatspace implementation (the universe).

Compare *RL*.

The New Hacker's Dictionary, "meatspace"

I am faced with the daunting task of reviewing Meatspace. The temptation is to say, "This is stunning! It makes [insert name of classic] look like a bad Pong clone! I want to play it again and again!" It's a temptation, not because the game doesn't live up to that praise, but because discerning readers read reviews like that and their defenses go up against a reviewer who is, to put it delicately, getting slightly carried away.

So I'll let go of the obvious temptation, and talk about how Meatspace handles physics. There's another game we all know where player slang for a smoke grenade is "lag bomb", because the physics of the smoke is so taxing that it slows the other player's computer to a crawl: a smoke grenade, aka lag bomb, is a cheap way to half-paralyze other players. Maybe that's an extreme example, but haven't we all dealt with games where things get choppy (maybe just a little) when there's a lot going on?

That doesn't happen in Meatspace. End of discussion. Period. For one example, one of a million little effects done perfectly is a squirrel running across your path. It's a throwaway effect, really: the game would appear quite convincing without it, but every single detail, from how the furry little body changes shape as it moves to the artificial intelligence controlling its motion to every single perfectly rendered hair, is flawless. Trying to find something that works as a lag bomb simply doesn't work. Move over, physics engines that have a reasonably convincing rag doll effect. Move over, for that matter, the supercomputers I used at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications. The physics is absolutely stunning.

But to say that and stop there is to paint a deceptive picture. Very deceptive. The physics and the graphics are the best I've seen, but there is more to the game than the physics. Many players don't give the physics a second thought. However well done the physics may be, and however stunningly advanced, the physics is one piece among a million. A beautiful piece, admittedly, but not even one of the biggest. At least to most players; there are some players who play only for the sight and sound aspect, but you can play the game well without those things even being much of a consideration. As impressive as the physics are, and as impressive as every sensory effect is, it would be deceptive at best to say that the game is driven by sight and sound.

In *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (the book, but unfortunately not the movie), Zaphod Beeblebrox is drawn towards the Total Perspective Vortex, which we learn is a horrifying death, before learning *why* it is a horrifying death. The Total Perspective Vortex shows a person's absolute (in)significance within the universe as an insignificant and forgettable item in a universe that is vast beyond measure. And that is such a horrifying experience that people die from the trauma. Except that Zaphod walks into the Total Perspective Vortex and walks out not only not dead, but contented, happy, proud, and even more full of himself than usual.

What has been happening is that Zaphod has been in an alternate universe, and more specifically an alternate universe that completely revolves around him. *He* is the most important feature of the universe, and the universe knows it. Had he been thrown into the *real* universe's Total Perspective Vortex, he would have been destroyed by it.

And in fact with the other computer games I've played and written, the player is the center of the universe. And that's not the end of it. The universe revolves around the player, and in fact nothing is put into the game but things that are for the player. In a room in a first person shooter, there are millions and in fact billions of ways to see the room. But, if there is a player in the room, only one of those perspectives or angles is calculated: the player's. Everything else is simply ignored. If there isn't a player in the room, the room might as well not be visible. And the rooms themselves exist for the player. The player is a good deal more than the center of the universe: if it's not there for the player, it's not there.

Maybe I've been the center of the universe in other games I've played. In Meatspace, I am not the center of the universe. Meatspace has such an immense, fathomless universe that you or I could never be its center.

In Meatspace, if I am in a room and I can see, the light goes just as well where I can't see it as where I can see it. If I leave the light on and walk out of the room, the room is visible--the physics calculations go on--just as well as I am in the room. There are places I could get to, and places I could never get to, and both are developed in full detail--even though there are many more places I couldn't get to than places I could (conceivably) travel to. When I play the game--or, to be more exact, when I join the game--there are billions of others in the game, the vast, vast majority of whom have no idea that I am there. If I'm the center of a game's universe, the universe is miserably small. In Meatspace, there is a universe with so many stars that no one inside the game knows exactly how many, and one planet on one of those stars is a rich enough world that no matter how long you played you could never see more than a tiny slice of its treasures.

And AI in the game... To talk about artificial intelligence, I need to draw an analogy with anime. When people watch anime, they are not so imperceptive that they think that the pictures look exactly like people, or cars, or whatever. What they do is cooperate with pictures that most people would never confuse with the real thing, and make believe with some not-very-realistic cartoons, and in their minds give something that isn't really there. The pictures certainly *suggest* people, or whatever else they are supposed to represent. But people watching it cooperate and overlook some rather vast differences between the pictures and what people pretend the pictures are.

In games, the artificial intelligence is like this. You can pretend that you're really having a conversation, or even that the non-player characters move around in a natural way. You can cooperate with the artificial intelligence the way anime enthusiasts cooperate with the cartoon. But you're being generous.

I didn't have to pretend the Meatspace people were intelligent. They *were* intelligent, without my pretending. The game was much more interesting than if the universe, and everybody's life, revolved around me. People had an infinite wealth of experiences, stories, goals, projects, desires, habits, and I may have been part of the picture, but the picture was far bigger than me. When I talked with people, I was not pretending they were intelligent. There was no need. I was stepping into a larger world. In a fantasy world, characters talk about selling magic items, rumors, joining a party, and other things that revolve around a cramped player. I can't list all the things people talk about in Meatspace (my hard drive only has 30 gigabytes of free space), but talking with another person is an encounter with a larger world that includes more than your priorities. The way other people appear in Meatspace is something I've never seen in

another game: an opportunity to step into something deeper and vaster than "Me! Me! Me!"

And this is deceptive, because it generally describes something in a game where nothing is generic--everything is always specific. I'd like to give a slice of specifically what I encountered.

I went through a meandering course that took me through shops with sundry wares, ended up purchasing a few square feet of something very much like leather, and settled down at a place where I could get a food ration. Except "food ration" is a generic and therefore inappropriate term; they did not sell me a "food ration", but (in this case) a delightfully spiced beef curry with vegetables and rice.

As I was waiting for them to make my food, there were pictures around. There was one picture of a beautiful Asian woman sitting on a low stone wall in front of a French formal garden and chateau, one picture of a beautiful Asian woman sitting on a camel in front of an Egyptian pyramid, and one picture of a beautiful Asian woman sitting against a powerful red sports car. There were other pictures obscured by stacked boxes of soda. The women, as well as being beautiful and wearing flattering Western clothes, had the general build and almost the complexion of a Western ideal of beauty.

I had seen this kind of artwork in previous levels of Meatspace--in one large area, there was simply no other kind of picture you could buy on a calendar--but I'd always been puzzled by it. This time, there was something else I could see. They were almost like religious icons. This is not to say that people specifically believed religious doctrines about them, or that there was some failure of perceivedly due reverence in stacking boxes of soda in front of them, or some other things like that, but it is to say that they aren't just pictures of what they show. What they show is not only exotic but the emblem of something transcendent that's shining through. And I can be saddened by some things about them--those pictures can easily slide into the pornographic--but there is something I was saddened by that I am no longer bothered by.

The image of beauty and transcendence is Western much for some of the same reasons that (for a tongue in cheek example) we have a Great White Ninja played by Chris Farley in Beverly Hills Ninja. The West is exotic to the East, and the East is exotic to the West. The pictures are misunderstood if they are not seen as a sort of stained glass window that people look at because they see something shining through it.

There's probably a lot more to be said. If I spent several more years of play just to investigate the question, I might also be able to tell you why the shops allowed me to purchase about a square yard of an artificial surrogate for leather, and a few yards of cord, for less money than I would earn in an hour. For now, my game play has included little research into how communities can produce or fail to produce wealth. I just know enough to know that a detail like that, like the kind of system where there are poor people who eat meat with every meal, is a balancing act that has never before been

managed in two and a half million years of human community, and quite probably a balancing act that will not survive longer than its civilization, any more than a tree can keep growing once its river runs dry.

There is something about the Meatspace levels we find ourselves in that makes it harder to see the gems around us. The medieval and the Arthurian looks a certain way to us after they no longer exist. What do things look like if we look at our placement in Meatspace as it might appear when our technological society is but a memory?

My avatar (but one could take a long time explaining how it is more than an avatar) was just in a place with Gothic lettering on a sign on the ground, saying, "Spaccarelli Meditation Garden." A pale, almost luminous statue of the Virgin overlooks a waterfall, rocks, plants, and a bench. The garden is small, but in its enclosed space one can be drawn into the quiet of the waterfall's song, forget about the outside world, even the nearby Gothic buildings--Gothic buildings that did not exist in the Middle Ages but do exist on a level that didn't exist in the Middle Ages. I have since moved to a building that combines the Gothic with the modern: I can see stonework that evokes the Gothic, and I see it through a glass wall which would have been extremely unlikely at a time when glass cost as much as a precious metal.

Some players entered the game wishing they were set in the future instead of the past--anything but where they are now. What would my life have been like if I were born in the Middle Ages? That's simple enough. I would have died in infancy, and my mother with me. Usually when I imagine myself in the Middle Ages, I take any number of things for granted.

The Middle Ages--the knights in armor of Arthurian legend, a picture which becomes even more interesting when it is deepened with scholarly resources to include a different way of perceiving time and space, the shadow of Plato, minstrels singing love songs, precursors to scientific method which become all the more interesting if one looks not at what they became but what they came from--all of this makes for a lost world that is all the more haunting because it can only be entered as a memory.

The character I play is studying theology at a university. "University" means a tradition that began in the Middle Ages, and it means living in community with other students and scholars, free to use technology but always connecting face-to-face and meeting as flesh and blood. As well as the older kind of university, the technology in Meatspace has allowed another kind of education which is a new enough possibility that many players remember when it would have been impossible. In the new model, a student may never meet any of his teachers; there is no sense of living together in community and no real sense that a path or way which has defined teaching since before the ancients is necessary. Not everyone in the ancient model understood or even would accepted the idea that a university should be an embodied community. But the only alternative, the older kind of correspondence school, never enjoyed the same prestige.

Now there is another model, not so much another kind of community as a way to substitute for community and embodied presence, and it is gaining a massive ground in a short time. It is a real threat to the older university.

Given the rapid ascent of the "bodiless university", it seems to me quite possible that by the end of my game, I will have seen the old order of a university as an embodied community as it has been since its medieval birth, will have vanished as the horse-drawn carriage vanished after Henry Ford introduced what seemed to simply be another option (besides riding a horse). Perhaps this will never happen, but if you consider how much could vanish, and how much is easy to take for granted, the scholarly community has something as hauntingly beautiful as the knight in shining armor, or perhaps more beautiful, and this is not only because the university is a medieval institution and some universities have Gothic architecture. The roots run much deeper than that. And that is only one slice of the game--a rather small slice, all things considered.

Technology in this area of the game is interesting, and more importantly than just the technology, the cultural forces surrounding technology are interesting. They hold a tragic beauty, in its own way as tragic and as beautiful as the tale of Arthur's death: two armies stood across from each other, and each had been ordered not to attack unless the other side drew a sword. Then one soldier saw a snake in the grass, drew his sword to protect himself. Then the battle began, and King Arthur was mortally wounded. On the side of technology, the community had achieved technology that opened up possibilities that never existed before partly because it had oriented itself toward technology as no such community had done before. That made for a sorcerer's bargain that made it difficult to perceive other kinds of beauty in other cultures--or for that matter, their own. The full cultural story--were it possible to fully understand--is even deeper in its tragic beauty than the bittersweet hypothesis of a disembodied university opening up something new while hurting the older tradition. One cannot seriously examine technology without seeing its power--and even its beauty--yet in this society, it is a minority at best who know what it means, and what the beauty would consist of, for a society ordered around other principles like contemplation.

Yet to say that is silly. It's like reviewing a chess program by describing the art history behind the pictures representing the pawns. Interesting, perhaps, and perhaps impressive, but it falls short of the mark, as does any serious attempt to review Meatspace. I haven't discussed 99% of an expanse of pavement stretching as far as the eye can see and then further, nor a room that lets me look out over trees and buildings as if I were suspended in the sky, nor a melting pot which combines the wealth of Africa, indigenous Americans, Europe, and Asia and which is believed to be the birthplace of hip hop, nor indeed what it means to be in an outer borough in the "capital of the world," nor why some dismiss the Bronx as being not a very nice place to live. I believe I have deeply failed to capture the global spirit of Meatspace because I gave too little

attention to the unique local character of my level--and you cannot play Meatspace without encountering such a unique local character. To play Meatspace is to enter a world rich with apples and appearances, books and buttercups, children and cats, drivel and daydreams, electronics and excellence, fables and fairy tales, grandeur and giggles, horses (yes, they still exist!) and houses, igloos and imagination, jumping and justice, kites and katana, languages and laughter, microscopes and megaphones, noses and noise, operas and obverses, porpoises and porcupines, quiet and quickness, roaches and Russia, Swiss Army Knives and spirit, transportation and tummies, understanding and understatements, vowels and vices, water and wisdom, xanthan gum and xylophones, yule logs and youth, zebras and zits. It is far beyond my power to describe them.

God the Game Changer

Some people wince at terms like "game changer" today the same way they winced in earlier years when they heard, "paradigm shift".

But the terms overuse suggests there might be something that triggered the buzz. When Apple introduced the Macintosh, they changed the scene, not only by causing a few Macintoshes to be sold, but by pushing a permanent shift for mainstream computers to be sold with Macintosh-style Windows, not the older command line MS-DOS. Apple may never have sold the same number of units as Microsoft, and they survived due to a Microsoft bailout, but once Apple introduced the Macintosh, Microsoft considered it non-negotiable to release Windows to compete with the Macintosh environment (even if Vista was a painful enough imitation MacOS to earn the scorn of Microsoft's usual fans). It may be in the end that Apple's biggest gift to the world of desktop computing is Windows: Apple's gift to desktop computing today is that you can now buy, as a mainstream choice, Windows 7 instead of something more like MS-DOS.

It is no longer a provocative statement that Apple's introduction of the iPhone may be a more profound game changer than the Macintosh. It may turn out, in the end, that Apple's gift to mobile computing may be the Droid and Google-based smartphones —Verizon's "Before you choose a phone, choose a map", and, "iDon't"/"Droid does" marketing campaigns certainly reflect a realization on Verizon's part that shooing Apple away when Apple wanted Verizon to be the iPhone's exclusive carrier was perhaps not Verizon's best decision. But the iPhone changed the game profoundly enough that it was

the gold standard everyone was trying to beat, and at least before the Droid, no "iPhone killer" even came close.

In both of these cases, Apple didn't offer their own brand of the existing options: while it was not the first graphical user interface, the Macintosh did not offer an attempt to improve on MS-DOS; it showed what a graphical user interface done right for desktop computing could look like. Likewise, the iPhone did not offer a miniaturized standard desktop environment like Windows Mobile, but it showed what mobile computing done right could look like. While the iPhone may no longer be the only phone that does mobile computing right, the Droid underscores that if you're going to beat Apple now, you need to beat it by the same game as Apple is playing in the iPhone. In neither of these cases did Apple try to beat Microsoft at its own game by providing a better MS-DOS, or a better Windows Mobile. Instead, *they changed the game*.

In our lives, we want God to help us struggle better at the games we are playing. What God wants to do is something different: to change the game.

God the Game Changer at work: A story

Every Lent, Orthodox remember a great saint with a great story. There was a very accomplished priest and monk who was troubled by the idea that no one had gotten as far as him in ascesis (spiritual work). And he was sent to a monastery by the Jordan, where as the custom was, every Lent monks would go out into the desert. And after a while, he saw a person, and chased this person; after a time he asked for the other person to stop fleeing; the other person called him by name and asked for his cloak, since her clothes were long since gone. He was terrified.

She asked why a great ascetic like him could want to speak with a sinful woman like her. They bowed down and asked each other for a blessing; then she told him that he was a priest and he should bless her, terrifying him even more by knowing that he was a priest. Then they spoke, and the woman called herself a sinner without any single virtue, and asked him to pray. So they began to pray, and a long time the priest looked up and saw her above the ground, levitating. He fell to the ground, weeping in prayer. Then he asked her story.

The woman asked his prayers for her shamelessness; in modern terms, she was a sorority girl who majored in men, money, and margaritas, except worse. Much worse. She went to a religious festival, got to church, and a force kept her from going in. She tried to go around it, then prayed before an icon of Mary the Mother of God asking to be let in and then saying she would do whatever she was told. Then she was able to enter in; she worshipped, and returned to the icon and asked to be told what to do. Then a voice from on high said, "If you cross the Jordan, you will find glorious rest."

She was given some money and purchased three loaves of bread as she left, and then went, and struggled and struggled and struggled in what seemed like endless

temptations and struggles. She had given free reign to her vices for seventeen years, and for seventeen years in the desert she wanted men, wanted wine and lewd songs, wanted meat, and just kept on struggling. After a time—a long, long time—things got easier. And she had been living for almost half a century in the desert, eating desert plants and at the mercies of the elements. It came up in the conversation that she quoted from the Bible with understanding. The monk asked her if she had read them. She said she had never seen another person since making the journey, had no one to read holy books to her, and like most people then, she didn't know how to read. Then she alluded to Scripture and suggested that Christ the Word may teach by himself.

She told him he wouldn't be able to come the next year, but to come the year after and give her communion. The next year illness pinned him down, and the year after he went, then saw her on the other side of the river. She crossed herself and walked over the water. They met again like the first, and she asked him to come again in a year.

He returned in a year to find her dead, kissed her feet and washed them with his tears, and found written next to her her last request and her name, Mary. He didn't see how he would bury her, as per her request, but when he took a piece of wood and began to dig, an enormous lion approached, and at his command dug her grave. Then he and the lion went their separate ways, and per an earlier request, the monk addressed numerous things that needed correction. Somewhere along the way, he asked in perfectly good faith if she would return to the city. Her answer was that no, she would be returning to temptation and ruin all her work. Old woman as she was, she still couldn't handle the temptation of having all those young men around.

What can we learn from all this? In the Parable of the Talents, a master calls his servants and entrusts one with five "talents" (70 pound silver bars), one with two, and one with one talent. He returns and calls an account. The master commends the servant who was given five talents because he has earned five more, and likewise commends the servant given two talents who has earned two more. Then the we hear a different tune (Matthew 25:24-27):

He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

But his master answered him, "You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest..."

This is a bit of a hard passage. The master represents God quite clearly, and this parable not only has the servant say that his master is (to use different words) cruel, but he harvests where he did not plant seeds and gathers where he has not scattered. Worse than that, the master, i.e. God, seems to endorse the portrayal. What are we to make of this?

One thought is that this is rhetorically abstaining from pressing a point. In other words, we could paraphrase the master's reply, "You wicked and slothful servant! Let's say for the sake of argument that I harvest where I did not plant seeds and gather where I have not scattered. Shouldn't you at least have invested it so I could have it back with interest?"

But in fact a deeper understanding is available, and it hinges on a question. What has God not sown? He created Heaven and earth, all things that can be seen and all things that cannot be seen. The demons themselves were created by God; everything from the highest of the angels to the lowest grain of sand, from the greatest saint to the Devil is a creation of God. What then could there be that God hath not sown?

The answer is that God has not sown sin, nor suffering, nor evil, nor pain, nor sickness, nor death. He created the Devil, but not the rebellion of angels once created pure. God has not sown this; he has not scattered us out of the glory he intended for us. And he has not planted sin, nor suffering, nor evil, nor pain, nor sickness, nor death, but he harvests them.

The servant's accusation, which the master repeats, is that God is so intent on harvest that he harvests whether or not he has sown. The priest, monk, and saint Zosima is among the greatest of saints, and he lived a life of spiritual work and spiritually sober living before God. His life was full of seeds that God sowed, and probably from childhood. And God harvested Saint Zosima's good works. But Saint Zosima needed something. He needed to be knocked completely flat on his back.

But to stop here is to miss the glory of God the Game Changer. The woman in the desert did a great many things that God would never sow. She was a worse sinner than a prostitute. But God harvested her and her sins too, and when Zosima had reached a point where he did not know if there was his equal on earth, God showed Saint Zosima, "Here is someone who leaves you completely in the dust."

Saint Mary wondered how many souls she ensnared. The answer is certainly, "Many," and this is tragic. But God harvested her sins, many as they were, and out of her person, her story, and her intercession God has helped innumerrably more people reach salvation. She is one of the greatest saints the Orthodox Church knows. And something is really destroyed in the story if you omit her numerous sins of sexual self-violation.

And in all this, God changed the game. He did not tear up the fabric of time, but he harvested what was planted in her even more than what was planted in Saint Zosima.

God harvests where he has sown, and God the Game Change also harvests where he has never sown. And when he does, he pushes the game to another level entirely.

A present-day example of God's game-changing, this time not with sin but with injury, is in the life of Joni Erickson. At a young age, Erickson dove the wrong way into shallow water and broke her neck, instantly paralyzing her in all four limbs. And she assuredly prayed what everybody who has such an accident prays if prayer is even considered: "Lord, heal me." And some people are healed, miraculously. But an entirely different, in a way deeper, miracle occurred with her. She adjusted to her loss and is a woman who has not only discovered that her life is still worth living, but has become a vibrant and well-known ambassador for the claim, "Even after a tragedy like mine, life is still worth living." None of this would have happened if she had not suffered an injury that cost her the use of all four limbs. For that matter, none of this would have happened if God answered her prayers by giving her the supernatural healing she wanted. Instead, God changed the game. He answered her prayers, not by giving what she asked for, but by moving the game to the next level. God did not plant her injury, but he has harvested where he did not plant and gathered in where he never scattered.

More than a game change

The Gospel is the story of God changing the game. It was much more than Pharisees who did not recognize Christ; his own disciples seemed to have their eyes equally wide shut.

Christ's people looked for a military Messiah who would deliver the Jews from Roman domination. Christ changed the game; he did not offer salvation as military deliverance, but salvation from sin. He didn't give people what they were looking for; he pushed the game to the next level.

Darkness reigned in the crucifixion of Christ. Something like a quarter to a third of the Gospels are devoted to Christ's passion. The message appears to be very clear: "But this is your hour—when darkness reigns" (Luke 22:53 NIV). Game over. All hope is lost.

Yet this profound evil is precisely what God harvested treasure beyond all beauty. In I Corinthians 15 Saint Paul writes,

But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies;

but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

And Saint Paul knew a game change in his own life. English translations seem to put this point much more delicately, but Saint Paul, earlier in this chapter, compares himself to a miscarried child, as the least of the Apostles. He almost seems to be saying, "If there's hope for me, there's hope for anybody." And yet God harvested from what was sown in this persecutor of the Church.

The Resurrection is the ultimate game-changing move. Saint John Chrysostom's famous resurrection homily proclaims:

Let no one bewail his poverty,
 For the universal Kingdom has been revealed.
 Let no one weep for his iniquities,
 For pardon has shown forth from the grave.
 Let no one fear death,
 For the Saviour's death has set us free.
 He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it.

By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive.
He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh.
And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry:
Hell, said he, was embittered
When it encountered Thee in the lower regions.

It was embittered, for it was abolished.
It was embittered, for it was mocked.
It was embittered, for it was slain.
It was embittered, for it was overthrown.
It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains.
It took a body, and met God face to face.
It took earth, and encountered Heaven.
It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is thy sting?
O Hell, where is thy victory?

Christ is risen, and thou art overthrown!
Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen!
Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice!
Christ is risen, and life reigns!
Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave.
For Christ, being risen from the dead,
Is become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

To Him be glory and dominion
Unto ages of ages.

Amen.

We would do well to remember the scene a short distance after the funereal scene of joy turned to weeping at the death of King Caspian in *Prince Caspian*:

"Look here! I say," he stammered. "It's all very well. But aren't you—? I mean didn't you—"

"Oh, don't be such an ass," said [King] Caspian.

"But," said Eustace, looking at Aslan. "Hasn't he—er—died?"

"Yes," said the Lion in a very quiet voice, almost (Jill thought) as if he were laughing. "He has died. Most people have, you know. Even I have. There are very few who haven't."

Earlier in the Gospel, in Luke chapter 7, there is a scene where a widow's only son is carried out on a bier, and Christ says something truly strange: before doing anything else, he tells her not to weep. He is speaking to a woman who has been twice bereaved, and with her last bereavement went her source of support. And he tells her, "Weep not!" He then goes on to raise her son from the dead. That isn't what is happening in Christ's resurrection.

Christ, the firstborn of the dead, opened death as one opening the womb. And he himself was sown a natural body and is raised a spiritual body. And God did more than simply flip the switch and make Christ's body like it was before death. The marks of crucifixion remain imprinted on his body as Joni Eareckson Tada remains quadriplegic. But Christ moved forward in triumph. He remains forever imprinted with the marks of death suffered for our sakes, and he bears them as his trophy. His victory as God the Game Changer takes us, harvesting what he has sown in our good deeds and our repentance, and what he has not sown in our sins and in evils that happen to us, and alike transforms us as trophies in his wake. Christ God is victor over both sin and death, and this victory is not just something that could be ours at Judgment Day; it is the central reality of day to day life. Saint Seraphim would greet people with the Paschal greeting year round: "Christ is risen, my joy!" While that is not the usual Orthodox custom, that he did so is entirely fitting and not in any sense an exaggeration of the Resurrection's importance. The Resurrection, the greatest act yet of God the Game Changer, is what God will do on a smaller scale in our lives. God sometimes gives us victory in the game we are playing, and sometimes changes the game and pushes us to the next level. It may be a painful and difficult process; it may involve loss and any amount of bewilderment. But when we seem to have lost, it may just be God the Game Changer's power at work.

Christ is risen, His joy!

God the Spiritual Father

I believe in one God, the Father, Almighty...
The Nicene Creed

All of us do the will of God. The question is not whether we do God's will or not, but whether we do God's will as instruments, as Satan and Judas did, or as sons, as Peter and John did. In the end Satan may be nothing more than a hammer in the hand of God.

C.S. Lewis, paraphrased

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

Proverbs

My precious, precious child, I love you and will never leave you. When you see one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.

Footprints, paraphrased

Look to every situation as if you were going to bargain at the market, always looking to make a spiritual profit.

The Philokalia, paraphrased

For it was fitting that God, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make Christ the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Hebrews

There are a lot of concerns on people's minds. For those of us in the U.S., we've been facing an economic disaster. Is "the decade from Hell" over and done? Or has the economic depression just begun? Has the *real* nightmare just *begun*? People have faced unemployment, and some are worried about hyper-inflation. And the big question on almost everyone's mind is, "Can I survive this? And if so, how?" And these quotes have something to say to the billion dollar question on almost everyone's mind.

Let's turn the clock back a bit, to 1755. There was a catastrophic earthquake in Lisbonne in Portugal, and its untold misery shook people's faith in the goodness of the world we live in. In the questioning that came afterwards, Voltaire wrote *Candide* in which the rather ludicrous teacher Pangloss is always explaining that we live in "the best of all possible worlds:" no matter what misfortune or disaster befell them, the unshakable Pangloss would always find a way to explain that we still lived in the best of all possible worlds. And Voltaire's point is to rip that preposterous idea apart, giving a dose of reality and showing what the misery in Lisbonne made painfully clear: we do not live in the best of all possible worlds. Far from it. But there is another shoe to drop.

We do not live in the best of all possible worlds. Far from it. But we live under the care of the best of all possible Gods, and it is a more profound truth, a more vibrant truth, a truth that goes much deeper into the heart of root of all things to say that we may not live in the best of all possible worlds, but *we live under the care of the best of all possible Gods*.

Once we have truly grasped that God the Spiritual Father is the best of all possible Gods, it becomes a mistake to focus on how, in fact, we simply do not live in the best of all possible worlds. Perhaps we all need to repent and recognize that we ourselves are far from being the best of all possible people. But we need to raise our eyes higher: raise our eyes and see that our lives and our world are under the love of the best of all possible Gods: God the Spiritual Father.

The Orthodox Church has understood this since ancient times. Let's read some longer quotes:

We ought all of us always to thank God for both the universal and the particular gifts of soul and body that He bestows on us. The universal gifts consist of the four elements and all that comes into being through them, as well as all the marvelous works of God mentioned in the divine Scriptures.

The particular gifts consist of all that God has given to each individual. These include:

- Wealth, so that one can perform acts of charity.
- Poverty, so that one can endure it with patience and gratitude.
- Authority, so that one can exercise righteous judgment and establish virtue.
- Obedience and service, so that one can more readily attain salvation of soul.
- Health, so that one can assist those in need and undertake work worthy of God.
- Sickness, so that one may earn the crown of patience.
- Spiritual knowledge and strength, so that one may acquire virtue.
- Weakness and ignorance, so that, turning one's back on worldly things, one may be under obedience in stillness and humility.
- Unsought loss of goods and possessions, so that one may deliberately seek to be saved and may even be helped when incapable of shedding all one's possessions or even of giving alms.
- Ease and prosperity, so that one may voluntarily struggle and suffer to attain the virtues and thus become dispassionate and fit to save other souls.
- Trials and hardship, so that those who cannot eradicate their own will may be saved in spite of themselves, and those capable of joyful endurance may attain perfection.

All these things, even if they are opposed to each other, are nevertheless good when used correctly; but when misused, they are not good, but are harmful for both soul and body.

The Philokalia

He who wants to be an imitator of Christ, so that he too may be called a son of God, born of the Spirit, must above all bear courageously and patiently the afflictions he encounters, whether these be bodily illnesses, slander and vilification from men, or attacks from the unseen spirits. God in His providence allows souls to be tested by various afflictions of this kind, so that it may be revealed which of them truly loves Him. All the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs from the beginning of time traversed none other than this narrow road of trial and affliction, and it was by doing this that they fulfilled God's will. 'My son,' says Scripture, 'if you come to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for trial, set your heart straight, and patiently endure' (Ecclus. 2 : 1-2). And elsewhere it is said: 'Accept everything that comes as good, knowing that nothing occurs without God willing it.' Thus the soul that wishes to do God's will must strive above all to acquire patient endurance and hope. For one of the tricks of the devil is to make us listless at times of affliction, so that we give up our hope in the Lord. God never allows a soul that hopes in Him to be so oppressed by trials that it is put to utter confusion. As St Paul writes: 'God is to be trusted not to let us be tried beyond our strength, but with the trial He will provide a way out, so that we are able to bear it (I Cor. 10 : 13). The devil harasses the soul not as much as he wants but as much as God allows him to. Men know what burden may be placed on a mule, what on a donkey, and what on a camel, and load each beast accordingly; and the potter knows how long he must leave pots in the fire, so that they are not cracked by staying in it too long or rendered useless by being taken out of it before they are properly fired. If human understanding extends this far, must not God be much more aware, infinitely more aware, of the degree of trial it is right to impose on each soul, so that it becomes tried and true, fit for the kingdom of heaven?

Hemp, unless it is well beaten, cannot be worked into fine yarn, while the more it is beaten and carded the finer and more serviceable it becomes. And a freshly moulded pot that has not been fired is of no use to man. And a child not yet proficient in worldly skills cannot build, plant, sow seed or perform any other worldly task. In a similar manner it often happens through the Lord's goodness that souls, on account of their childlike innocence, participate in divine grace and are filled with the sweetness and repose of the Spirit; but because they have not yet been tested, and have not been tried by the various afflictions of the evil spirits, they are still immature and not yet fit for the kingdom of heaven. As the apostle says: 'If you have not been disciplined you are bastards and not sons' (Heb. 12 : 8). Thus trials and

afflictions are laid upon a man in the way that is best for him, so as to make his soul stronger and more mature; and if the soul endures them to the end with hope in the Lord it cannot fail to attain the promised reward of the Spirit and deliverance from the evil passions.

The Philokalia

All These Things Were From Me

(The new St. Seraphim, of Viritsa was born in 1866. He married and had three children. In 1920, at the age of 54, he and his wife quietly separated and each entered monastic life. Eventually he became the spiritual father of the St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St. Petersburg, where, as a clairvoyant staretz, he also confessed thousands of laity. He said, "I am the storage room where people's afflictions gather." In imitation of his patron saint, he prayed for a thousand nights on a rock before an icon of St. Seraphim of Sarov. He reposed in the Lord in 1949 and the Church of Russia glorified him in August of 2000.)

The following is (slightly abridged) from a letter sent by St. Seraphim to a spiritual child of his, a hierarch who was at that time in a Soviet prison. It is in the form of consolation given by God to a troubled man's soul.

St. Seraphim of Viritsa

—

Have you ever thought that everything that concerns you, concerns Me, also? You are precious in my eyes and I love you; for his reason, it is a special joy for Me to train you. When temptations and the opponent [the Evil One] come upon you like a river, I want you to know that This was from Me.

I want you to know that your weakness has need of My strength, and your safety lies in allowing Me to protect you. I want you to know that when you are in difficult conditions, among people who do not understand you, and cast you away, This was from Me.

I am your God, the circumstances of your life are in My hands; you did not end up in your position by chance; this is precisely the position I have appointed for you. Weren't you asking Me to teach you humility? And there - I placed you precisely in the "school" where they teach this lesson. Your environment, and those who are around you, are performing My will. Do you have financial difficulties and can just barely survive? Know that This was from Me.

I want you to know that I dispose of your money, so take refuge in Me and depend upon Me. I want you to know that My storehouses are inexhaustible, and I am faithful in My promises. Let it never happen that they

tell you in your need, "Do not believe in your Lord and God." Have you ever spent the night in suffering? Are you separated from your relatives, from those you love? I allowed this that you would turn to Me, and in Me find consolation and comfort. Did your friend or someone to whom you opened your heart, deceive you? This was from Me.

I allowed this frustration to touch you so that you would learn that your best friend is the Lord. I want you to bring everything to Me and tell Me everything. Did someone slander you? Leave it to Me; be attached to Me so that you can hide from the "contradiction of the nations." I will make your righteousness shine like light and your life like midday noon. Your plans were destroyed? Your soul yielded and you are exhausted? This was from Me.

You made plans and have your own goals; you brought them to Me to bless them. But I want you to leave it all to Me, to direct and guide the circumstances of your life by My hand, because you are the orphan, not the protagonist. Unexpected failures found you and despair overcame your heart, but know That this was from Me.

With tiredness and anxiety I am testing how strong your faith is in My promises and your boldness in prayer for your relatives. Why is it not you who entrusted their cares to My providential love? You must leave them to the protection of My All Pure Mother. Serious illness found you, which may be healed or may be incurable, and has nailed you to your bed. This was from Me.

Because I want you to know Me more deeply, through physical ailment, do not murmur against this trial I have sent you. And do not try to understand My plans for the salvation of people's souls, but uncomplainingly and humbly bow your head before My goodness. You were dreaming about doing something special for Me and, instead of doing it, you fell into a bed of pain. This was from Me.

Because then you were sunk in your own works and plans and I wouldn't have been able to draw your thoughts to Me. But I want to teach you the most deep thoughts and My lessons, so that you may serve Me. I want to teach you that you are nothing without Me. Some of my best children are those who, cut off from an active life, learn to use the weapon of ceaseless prayer. You were called unexpectedly to undertake a difficult and responsible position, supported by Me. I have given you these difficulties and as the Lord God I will bless all your works, in all your paths. In everything I, your Lord, will be your guide and teacher. Remember always that every difficulty you come across, every offensive word, every slander and criticism, every obstacle

to your works, which could cause frustration and disappointment, This is from Me.

Know and remember always, no matter where you are, That whatsoever hurts will be dulled as soon as you learn In all things, to look at Me.

Everything has been sent to you by Me, for the perfection of your soul.

All these things were from Me.

St. Seraphim of Viritsa

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes,

who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans

We may be entering an economic depression. We live in hard times, and things may get much harder. It is becoming more and more clear that this is no mere recession: it looks more and more like a depression. We see people asking, "Where is God when it hurts?" And there is something important about the answer to "Where is God when it hurts?": something very important, something profoundly important.

I believe in one God, the *Spiritual* Father Almighty.

I'm not sure how to explain this without saying something about Orthodox monasticism, but the Orthodox concept of a *spiritual father* is of someone one owes obedience in everything, and who normally assigns some things that are very difficult to do, unpleasant, and painful. And this seems a strange thing to be getting into. But there is method to what may seem mad: we do not reach our greatest good, we do not flourish, we do not reach our highest heights, if we are the spiritual equivalent of spoiled children. And the entire point of this duty of obedience is to arrange things for the good of the person who obeys in this situation. *The entire point of obedience in what the spiritual father arranges is for the spiritual father as a spiritual physician to give health and freedom through the disciple's obedience.*

In that sense, only monks and nuns are expected to have spiritual fathers to shape them. The rest of us have God as our Spiritual Father, and we can kick against the goads, but God the Spiritual Father is at work in every person we meet. *God the Spiritual Father is God the Great Physician, working everything for our health and freedom if we will cooperate.* People and situations he sends us may be part of his will for us as instruments, or they may be part of his will for us as sons of God, but God's will unfolds in each person who acts in our lives: kind people and cruel, having excess and having lack, getting our way and having our will cut short as a spiritual father does to form a monk under his care, becomes part of the work of God the Spiritual Father. Even economic nightmares become part of "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose."

When God gives us our true good, *nothing* can take it away.

What exactly is our true good unfolds in the saints' lives, which are well worth reading: many of them lived in great hardship. Some were martyred; the beloved St. Nectarios lost his job repeatedly for reasons that were not just unfortunate, but completely and absolutely unfair. God was still at work in his life, and he is now crowned as a saint in Heaven. God allowed things to happen, terrible things to happen, but not one of them took him away from God giving him everything he needed and ultimately working in him the glory of one of the greatest saints in recent times.

The Sermon on the Mount says some harsh words about how we use money, but these words set the stage for a profound treasure that we can still have, even in an economic depression:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, [or, today, where economic havoc can ruin our financial planning] but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal [or, today, where your treasures cannot be taken away even by a complete economic meltdown].

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also...

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money.

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

For the godless seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have its own worries. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

The life of St. Philaret the Merciful speaks volumes:

Righteous Philaret the Merciful, son of George and Anna, was raised in piety and the fear of God. He lived during the eighth century in the village of Amneia in the Paphlagonian district of Asia Minor. His wife, Theoseba, was from a rich and illustrious family, and they had three children: a son John, and daughters Hypatia and Evanthia.

Philaret was a rich and illustrious dignitary, but he did not hoard his wealth. Knowing that many people suffered from poverty, he remembered the words of the Savior about the dread Last Judgment and about "these least ones" (Mt. 25:40); the the Apostle Paul's reminder that we will take nothing with us from this world (1 Tim 6:7); and the assertion of King David that the righteous would not be forsaken (Ps 36/37:25). Philaret, whose name means "lover of virtue," was famed for his love for the poor.

One day Ishmaelites [Arabs] attacked Paphlagonia, devastating the land and plundering the estate of Philaret. There remained only two oxen, a donkey, a cow with her calf, some beehives, and the house. But he also shared them with the poor. His wife reproached him for being heartless and unconcerned for his own family. Mildly, yet firmly he endured the reproaches of his wife and the jeers of his children. "I have hidden away riches and treasure," he told his family, "so much that it would be enough for you to feed and clothe yourselves, even if you lived a hundred years without working."

The saint's gifts always brought good to the recipient. Whoever received anything from him found that the gift would multiply, and that person would become rich. Knowing this, a certain man came to St Philaret asking for a calf so that he could start a herd. The cow missed its calf and began to bellow. Theoseba said to her husband, "You have no pity on us, you merciless man, but don't you feel sorry for the cow? You have separated her from her calf." The saint praised his wife, and agreed that it was not right to separate the cow and the calf. Therefore, he called the poor man to whom he had given the calf and told him to take the cow as well.

That year there was a famine, so St Philaret took the donkey and went to borrow six bushels of wheat from a friend of his. When he returned home, a poor man asked him for a little wheat, so he told his wife to give the man a bushel. Theoseba said, "First you must give a bushel to each of us in the family, then you can give away the rest as you choose." Philaretos then gave the man two bushels of wheat. Theoseba said sarcastically, "Give him half the load so you can share it." The saint measured out a third bushel and gave it to

the man. Then Theoseba said, "Why don't you give him the bag, too, so he can carry it?" He gave him the bag. The exasperated wife said, "Just to spite me, why not give him all the wheat." St Philaret did so.

Now the man was unable to lift the six bushels of wheat, so Theoseba told her husband to give him the donkey so he could carry the wheat home. Blessing his wife, Philaret gave the donkey to the man, who went home rejoicing. Theoseba and the children wept because they were hungry.

The Lord rewarded Philaret for his generosity: when the last measure of wheat was given away, a old friend sent him forty bushels. Theoseba kept most of the wheat for herself and the children, and the saint gave away his share to the poor and had nothing left. When his wife and children were eating, he would go to them and they gave him some food. Theoseba grumbled saying, "How long are you going to keep that treasure of yours hidden? Take it out so we can buy food with it."

During this time the Byzantine empress Irene (797-802) was seeking a bride for her son, the future emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos (780-797). Therefore, emissaries were sent throughout all the Empire to find a suitable girl, and the envoys came to Amneia.

When Philaret and Theoseba learned that these most illustrious guests were to visit their house, Philaret was very happy, but Theoseba was sad, for they did not have enough food. But Philaret told his wife to light the fire and to decorate their home. Their neighbors, knowing that imperial envoys were expected, brought everything required for a rich feast.

The envoys were impressed by the saint's daughters and granddaughters. Seeing their beauty, their deportment, their clothing, and their admirable qualities, the envoys agreed that Philaret's granddaughter, Maria was exactly what they were looking for. This Maria exceeded all her rivals in quality and modesty and indeed became Constantine's wife, and the emperor rewarded Philaret.

Thus fame and riches returned to Philaret. But just as before, this holy lover of the poor generously distributed alms and provided a feast for the poor. He and his family served them at the meal. Everyone was astonished at his humility and said: "This is a man of God, a true disciple of Christ."

He ordered a servant to take three bags and fill one with gold, one with silver, and one with copper coins. When a beggar approached, Philaret ordered his servant to bring forth one of the bags, whichever God's providence would ordain. Then he would reach into the bag and give to each person, as much as God willed.

St Philaret refused to wear fine clothes, nor would he accept any imperial rank. He said it was enough for him to be called the grandfather of the Empress. The saint reached ninety years of age and knew his end was approaching. He went to the Rodolpheia ("The Judgment") monastery in Constantinople. He gave some gold to the Abbess and asked her to allow him to be buried there, saying that he would depart this life in ten days.

He returned home and became ill. On the tenth day he summoned his family, he exhorted them to imitate his love for the poor if they desired salvation. Then he fell asleep in the Lord. He died in the year 792 and was buried in the Rodolpheia Judgment monastery in Constantinople.

The appearance of a miracle after his death confirmed the sainthood of Righteous Philaret. As they bore the body of the saint to the cemetery, a certain man, possessed by the devil, followed the funeral procession and tried to overturn the coffin. When they reached the grave, the devil threw the man down on the ground and went out of him. Many other miracles and healings also took place at the grave of the saint.

After the death of the righteous Philaret, his wife Theoseba worked at restoring monasteries and churches devastated during a barbarian invasion.

This merciful saint trusted God the Spiritual Father. He cashed in on the promise, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his perfect righteousness, and all these things shall be given to you as well."

In terms of how to survive an economic depression, the right question to ask is not, "Do I have enough treasures stored up on earth?" but "Do I have enough treasures in Heaven?" And the merciful St. Philaret lived a life out of abundant treasure in Heaven.

The biggest thing we need right now is to know the point of life, which is to live the life of Heaven, not starting at death, but starting here on earth. C.S. Lewis lectured to students on the eve of World War II when it looked like Western civilization was on the verge of permanent collapse. I won't try to repeat what he said beyond "Life has never been normal" and add that God's providence is for difficult circumstances every bit as much as when life seems normal. God's providence is how we can survive an economic depression. The Sermon on the Mount is no mere wish list only for when life that is perfect; it is meant for God's work with us even in circumstances we would not choose, especially in circumstances we would not choose, and speaks of the love of God the Spiritual Father who can and will work with us in an economic depression, if we will let him, and work with us no less than when life is easy.

(Some have said not only that God provides in rough times as well as easy times, but that God's providence is in fact clearer in rough times, such as an economic

depression, than when things go our way and we can forget that we need a bit of help from above.)

God the Spiritual Father wants to use everything for our good. Everything he allows, everything in our lives, is either a blessing or a temptation that has been allowed for our strengthening. His purpose even in allowing rough things to happen is to help us grow up spiritually, and to make us Heavenly. *The Great Divorce* imagines a busload of people come from Hell to visit Heaven, and what happens is something much like what happens in our lives: they are offered Heaven and they do not realize Heaven is better than the seeds Hell that they keep clinging to because they are afraid to let go. Heaven and Hell are both real, but God does not send people to Hell. C.S. Lewis quotes someone saying that there are two kinds of people in this world: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, "Thy will be done," respecting their choice to choose Hell after Heaven has been freely offered to them. The gates of Hell are bolted and barred from the inside. Hellfire is nothing other than the Light of Heaven as experienced by those who reject the only possibility for living joy there is. And neither the reality of Heaven nor the state of mind we call Hell begins after death; their seeds grow on us in this training ground we call life. We can become saints, heavenly people like St. Philaret, or we can care only about ourselves and our own survival. God the Spiritual Father wants to shape us to be part of the beauty of Heaven, and everything he sends us is intended for that purpose. But in freedom he will let us veto his blessings and choose to be in Hell.

Heaven is generous, and that generosity was something Heavenly that shone during the Great Depression. People who had very little shared. They shared money or food, if they had any. (And even if you have no money to share, you can share time; if you do not have a job, you can still volunteer.) St. Philaret shared because he knew something: "Knowing that many people suffered from poverty, he remembered the words of the Savior about the dread Last Judgment and about 'these least ones' (Mt. 25:40)..." In this part of the saint's life, the reference is to some of the most chilling words following The Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel:

When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked

and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?"

And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

Then he will say to those at his left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?"

Then he will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me."

And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

St. Philaret the Merciful will be greeted before Christ's awesome judgment seat and hear, "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I came to you and asked for a little wheat, and you gave me all six bushels you had, and your only donkey with them." God did provide, but the reward is not just that a friend gave him forty bushels of wheat. The ultimate reward is that Christ regards how St. Philaret treated other people as how he treated Christ himself, and because St. Philaret was merciful, there is a reward for him in Heaven, a reward so great that next to it, the forty bushels of wheat from his friend utterly pale in comparison.

Remember this next time you see a beggar. If you can't give a quarter, at least see if there is a kind word or a prayer you can give. This has everything to do with how to survive an economic depression.

We are at a time with terrible prospects for earthly comfort, but take heart. Let me again quote Lewis: "Heaven cannot give earthly comfort, and earth cannot give earthly comfort either. In the end, Heavenly comfort is the only comfort to be had. To quote from my own "Silence: Organic Food for the Soul:"

Do you worry? Is it terribly hard
to get all your ducks in a row,
to get yourself to a secure place

where you have prepared for what might happen?
Or does it look like you might lose your job,
if you still have one?
The Sermon on the Mount
urges people to pray,
"Give us this day our daily bread,"
in an economy
when unlike many homeless in the U.S. today,
it was not obvious to many
where they would get their next meal.
And yet it was this Sermon on the Mount
that tells us our Heavenly Father will provide for us,
and tells us not to worry:
what we miss
if we find this a bit puzzling,
we who may have bank accounts, insurance, investments
even if they are jeopardized right now,
is that we are like a child with some clay,
trying to satisfy ourselves by making a clay horse,
with clay that never cooperates, never looks right,
and obsessed with clay that is never good enough,
we ignore and maybe fear
the finger tapping us on our shoulder
until with great trepidation we turn,
and listen to the voice say,
"Stop trying so hard. Let it go,"
and follow our father
as he gives us a warhorse.

This life is an apprenticeship, and even now, when we may be in situations we do not like, God is asking us to be apprentices, learning to be knights riding the warhorse he gives us even in the situations we might not like. The life of Heaven begins on earth, even in an economic depression.

However much power world leaders may have, God the Spiritual Father is sovereign, and their summits pale in comparison for the work God the Spiritual Father is working even now.

Why do the nations conspire,
and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and his Christ, saying,
"Let us rip apart their religious restrictions,
and throw off their shackles."
He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the LORD has them in derision.

Psalms

For the conqueror says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I have removed the boundaries of peoples, and have plundered their treasures; like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones. My hand has found like a nest the wealth of the peoples; and as men gather eggs that have been forsaken so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing, or opened the mouth, or chirped."

Shall the axe vaunt itself over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!

Isaiah

World leaders may work his will as instruments or as sons, but they will always work his will. This is true in an economic depression as much as any other time. God the Spiritual Father rules the world as sovereign on a deeper level than we can imagine, and he works good out of everything to those who love him and are called according to his purpose to make them sons of God.

Some people really hope that if the right government programs are in place, we can get back on track to a better life. But even if governments have their place, "Put not your trust in princes," or rather, "Do not put your trust in governments," is not obsolete. Far from it: government initiatives cannot make everything better, even in the long haul, even with lots of time, sacrifices, and resources. But having given that bad news, I have good news too. Even if government initiatives fail to do what we want them to, we have God the Spiritual Father trying to give us the greatest good, and the time he offers us his will does not start sometime in the future: it is for here, and it is for now. He works his will alike through instruments like Satan and Judas, and sons like Peter and John, but in either case he works his will now, not sometime in the future when some human effort starts achieving results. Again, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will."

God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that man
might become god and the sons of God.

St. Maximus Confessor

There was one time when two theology professors were talking when the weather was very rough. One of them said, "This is the day that the Lord has made," and the other said, "Well, he's done better!" And the joke may be funny, but sun and rain, heat and cold, are all given by God. We miss something if we only think God is working with us if it is warm and sunny, if we find ourselves in a violent storm and assume God must have abandoned us, if it seems that God can't or won't help us because the weather is so bad.

And we are missing something if we look at the news and the world around us, and want to say, "This is the day that the Lord has made... he's done better!"

If we are in an economic depression, say, "This is the day that the Lord has made." You're missing something if you need to add, "Well, he's done better!"

A friend quoted to me when I was in a rough spot,

"Life's Tapestry"

Behind those golden clouds up there
the Great One sews a priceless embroidery
and since down below we walk
we see, my child, the reverse view.
And consequently it is natural for the mind to see mistakes
there where one must give thanks and glorify.

Wait as a Christian for that day to come
where your soul a-wing will rip through the air
and you shall see the embroidery of God
from the good side
and then... everything will seem to you to be a system and order.

And it is true. It is not just, as some have said, that God's address is at the end of your rope. That is where you meet God best. It may be easier, not harder, to find God and his providential care in an economic depression. God is working a plan of eternal glory. Westminster opens with the great question, "What is the chief end of man?" and answers, "To glorify God and enjoy him forever." But there is a deeper answer. The chief end of man is to become Christ. The chief end of man is to become by grace what Christ is by nature. God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that man and the

sons of man might become gods and the sons of God. The Son of God became a man that men might become the sons of God. The divine became human that the human might become divine. This saying has rumbled down through the ages: not only the entire point of being human, but the entire point of each and every circumstance God the Spiritual Father allows to come to us, as a blessing or as a temptation allowed for our strengthening, as God's will working through instruments or sons, is to make us share in Christ's divinity, and the saints' lives show few saints who met this purpose when everything went their way, and a great many where God worked in them precisely in rough and painful circumstances. If we watch the news and say, "This is the day the Lord has made. Well, he's done better," try to open your eyes to the possibility that "Well, he's done better" is what people want to say when, in the words of C.S. Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, "Aslan is on the move."

Christ's Incarnation is humble. It began humbly, in the scandalous pregnancy of an unwed teen mother, and it unfolds humbly in our lives. Its humble unfolding in our lives comes perhaps best when we have rough times and rough lives, in circumstances we would not choose, in an economic depression above all. You do not understand Christ's Incarnation unless you understand that it is an Incarnation in humility, humble times, and humble conditions. You do not understand Christ's humble Incarnation until you understand that it did not stop when the Mother of God's scandalous pregnancy began: Christ's humble Incarnation unfolds and unfurls in the Church, in the Saints, and Christ wishes to be Incarnate in every one of us. Christ wishes to be Incarnate in all of us, not in the circumstances we would choose for ourselves, but in the circumstances we are in, when God the Spiritual Father works everything to good for his sons.

Take heart if this sounds hard, like a tall order to live up to. It is hard for me too. It is hard, very hard, or at least it is for me. But it is worth trying to live up to. Even if we do not always succeed.

God became man that man might become God. In whatever circumstances God gives us to train us, as God the Spiritual Father, let us grow as sons of God.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The Grinch who Stole Christmas

My dear Wormwood;

I still do not have your report on the status of the yearly festivals. As you have not informed me of the circumstances for several years, I may unfortunately be forced to demonstrate drastic consequences in the case that you fail again to even tell what is happening.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

Dear uncle Screwtape;

It is about as well as could be expected. This is a time of festivities which we have very little difficulty turning the people away from; it is, also, one of the ones where there is joy and exuberance such that it is very difficult to introduce even a dead and ritualistic approach to ceremony. We have succeeded at least in enticing a handful of people to drunkenness and adultery on one hand, and on the others have slowly been building an interest in sorcery. I am currently contemplating the introduction of a number of grimoires to heighten the interest in spellcraft; unfortunately, this is the rare exception

rather than the rule, and we can make very little progress with the great many. I suppose that we should expect greater success at other times of year.

Your nephew,
Wormwood.

My dead Wormwood;

YOU IDIOT!

You speak of getting a handful of people interested in spellcraft as a great achievement. Were you here, you would see that your letter caused me to engage in something not unlike men's prestidigitation; I immediately raised my arm and extended my middle finger.

So, you have enticed a tiny handful. Whoop-de-doo. Nobody minds that you've chopped down a tree or two, but we are here to burn a forest.

It is evident that your abysmal lack of understanding of temptation has produced the silliest possible results. If you are going to tempt a man, TEMPT him. A large shipment of spellbooks to devout people is not productive. Have you no idea why you are trained to masquerade as an angel of light?

Use the right tool for the right job.

I want a full analysis of the situation, and a preview of any ideas, just to ensure that you do not do anything dumber.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

Dear uncle Screwtape;

It is the season when they celebrate the greatest gift they have ever received; namely, when the Enemy became one of them and died to create a way of escape from our trap of sin.

There are two basic intertwined ways in which they celebrate, and we have been able to do very little to stop either.

The first is by thanksgiving and enjoying what they have been given. They come to friends and family; they pray, sing songs, eat, drink, and be merry. A few we've managed

to get drunk on the wassail or abstain from it as if it were an evil thing, but that is a chink here and there; we have had trouble making it larger. There is a wholehearted attitude of thanksgiving and worship at all the gifts which they've received; the time when we've set famine to take away some of their food only seems to make them all the more grateful and all the more prayerful.

The second is by giving each other gifts. Whether the gifts are simple or costly, they are heartfelt; they celebrate the gift given them by giving gifts to each other. Even in the lands where an evil duke has imposed harsh taxes on the peasant, so that they have little to give, their little gifts are taken as seriously as more lavish gifts from people who do have enough to live on.

I have been trying to deter them from the celebration and the gift giving, but results have been frustrating to the extreme.

Your nephew,
Wormwood

My dear Wormwood;

Having taken some time to think, I should like to temper some of my previous remarks. Nor that your bungling incompetence does not warrant them, but I should like you to be better informed.

There is both an individual and a corporate side to sin. The individual side is of extreme importance. Our father below personally tempted Job, and it is not an understatement to say that every last person should be tempted as far as possible. By chipping at one tree at a time, it is possible to clear cut a forest. (The importance of the individual is so great that it may be an interesting temptation to make people appear to be nothing but individuals). When the temptations facing a society do not affect a person, it is perfectly acceptable to give some variation. Once in a while, even that can be worked into a good plan for even greater corporate sin. It is spectacular to have a few become prostitutes and a great many become Pharisees; a few become witches, and a great many become witch hunters.

As important as individual sin is, it is now your responsibility to see to corporate sin, and tempt the society as a whole.

There is something I should like to remind you about the nature of sin.

Man is created to embrace what is good. Even in his fallen state, even with the power that we hold over them, that man still somehow desires to embrace the good is so true that it dictates the nature of temptation. When we tempt, it is necessary to give a

candy coating to that sin with what is good. Sexual sin is only possible when we twist the tremendous goodness of human sexuality; idolatry can not exist except as an exploitation of the need of man to worship the Enemy.

There is a time and a place to use intimidation, terror, and force, but your attempts here to either tempt solid believers with sorcery, or make their celebrations impossible by physical hardship, are clumsy and inappropriate. Gold which is passed through fire only grows purer; that is why you see their devotion flowering. Instead, why don't you appear as an angel of light and lull them to sleep?

There is a note about patience... Though occasionally we manage the sudden and sharp, it is much better in most cases (including this one) to work ever so slowly. So slowly that there doesn't seem to be any real progress; so slowly that everything appears to them to be as they want it. If you suddenly hold a candle by a frog, it will jump away. If, instead, the frog is placed in a pot of cool water and the candle beneath the pot, it will never notice; nothing constrains it from jumping out, and yet you need only wait for the ever so slowly growing heat to destroy it. Be patient; wait for decades or centuries if need be.

Now stop wasting your energy on stupid spellbooks, droughts, and taxes. Take away these hardships; for now, I want you to only make things easier. Help their economic systems be productive; don't take away from the laughter at the feasts. If you find an opportunity to get someone drunk at a festival, then by all means take it, but don't worry about having things now. Just do as I have said, and wait.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

Dear uncle Screwtape;

It is ten years now, and I have done as you have said. I do not understand why; they enjoy the festivities as much as ever, giving and receiving gifts in a manner that enjoys each other; enjoying each other in a manner that loves and worships the Enemy. By all counts, things have only gotten worse. Am I to continue to wait?

Your nephew,
Wormwood

My dear Wormwood;

Patience, my dear. Patience. If you continue, you are making more progress than you think. Now, I still don't want you to do anything spectacular. Only give an idea to an inventor here, an economist there. Don't introduce anything nasty; just make the economic system more productive, and do nothing to impede their thoughts of giving generous gifts at this season.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

Dear uncle Screwtape;

It is twenty years since I last wrote you, and I still do not see the point. People have more money; they are giving it generously. The hungry are fed; the naked are clothed. The season is one of great festivity, and, as ever, they give generous gifts. Am I to continue?

Your nephew,
Wormwood

My dear Wormwood;

Still, you need patience. Now, I want you to do two things:

First of all, continue to increase the productivity of their economic system.

Second of all, without actively disparaging love for God or their neighbors, I want you to use the season to cause them to think about how good their material possessions are, and look forward to it.

Give it ten more years, and write back.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

Dear uncle Screwtape;

I have succeeded in making them think about the goodness of their material possessions (which I still do not fully understand; most of the time, you have had me delude people into thinking that the material is evil and an obstruction to spiritual growth; I am now emphasizing that truth in the matter as you say, and I don't see any real progress). It is ten years; what should I do now?

Your nephew,
Wormwood

My dear Wormwood;

Now, slowly, slightly, introduce seeds of greed. Not too much; just a little. And give them more money.

It is the time to twist, and everything you twist should be done, at least at first, in a slow and slight, imperceptible manner. Twist the good of the celebration and the presents just a little; that's all that it takes, for the moment. Just make the goodness of God and the gift the season celebrates seem less of an easy thing to think about than the goodness of all the material gifts.

Give it ten years or so, and write me back again.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

Dear uncle Screwtape;

Wow. Though it's been slow, this work has been beginning to show some real results. Though every gift given by one person is a gift received by another, people are thinking of this much less as a time to give gifts, and much more as a time to receive them. I've now made it a major part of their economy; people are beginning to look forward very much to all of the Christmas gifts they can receive.

Should I continue as I have been?

Your nephew,
Wormwood

My dear Wormwood;

There is something to be said about greed. Like most other sins, it produces satiety for the moment, but over time it yields only insatiety. Those who have enough and are content with what they have remain content; those who have much with greed grow more wealthy and less satisfied. More than that, many of those who have the most material possessions enjoy them the least; time to acquire possessions, and worry for them, becomes a consuming desire. A powerful chief executive officer who can buy anything he wants, will enjoy much less the leather seats of his Porsche, the view from his yacht, the beauty of his art collection, than many children of more modest means enjoy a chain of dandelions and a grape flavored lollipop.

Just continue, and put some serious thought into the trash that you teach them to prize. I could give more detail, but I think you're beginning to understand. Write me back in a few more years; tell me what happens.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

Dear uncle Screwtape;

Things have really been taking off.

The holiday celebration has become a tremendous commercial extravaganza, the best time of year when people look forward to getting glowing plastic dolls and combination pizza oven/clothes dryers. I have gone wild with the items which are produced. I've made one device so that much of the time people spend "together" is distant and mechanical, with no eye contact and no touch. They now have, and look forward to ever more advanced entertainment devices with blinking lights and spectacular sound effects, bright and shiny enough to distract people the emptiness within, and ever becoming more effective. (You might also be pleased to learn of the content; although the type of devices would facilitate excellent strategy games, I've made graphic violence seem more and more attractive; a wonderful entertainment. Now I don't even have to be slow and patient in making a more realistic sadism; all that needs to be done is put somewhere in the storyline that you're the hero and morally justified in

wading through blood. (I'm working on taking that away as well)) I'm making sure that the games are solitary by nature; you can't really play these games with your friends the way you can play cards, having a friendly chat as well as thinking about what to do as the next move. On a scale of glitz and convenience, they seem far more attractive than reading a book, holding a friend's hand, going for a walk, or having a relaxed meal together. I've been working on a faster, exciting, frantic pace for the entertainment, and people are "learning" that having fun means moving at a breakneck speed; leisure is beginning to be considered boring. There is a great air of celebration and festivity, and an air of gifts; the facade is tremendous.

I think that the festival is mostly under control. Should we make a shift in strategy?

Your nephew,
Wormwood

My dear Wormwood;

Congratulations! You have passed this portion of your training with flying colors. Although I have more experience in this matter and have enjoyed many times sitting back and watching the flames as a society crumbles under the weight of its own sin, you have celebrated trivia to an extent that even I find astounding. My hat is off to you.

For now, your responsibilities (which you have made much easier) have been shifted; as you have so masterfully learned your lessons in corporate sin, it is now time for you to learn the next lesson. Your next area of training will be in the area of heresy, a battleground to which we are shifting focus.

I look forward to seeing what will come of your apprenticeship there.

Your affectionate uncle,
Screwtape

Happiness in an Age of Crisis

Core Principles

I'd like to open by flatly contradicting something that is openly stated in Scripture. St. Paul in defending Christ's resurrection and our own (1 Cor 15:19, RSV), writes if there is no resurrection, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied."

Now I believe there is a resurrection, and furthermore that the significance of this life lies precisely in the fact that by our lives on earth we are making an eternal choice between Heaven and Hell. But I would like to submit something that may seem a straight-out opposite: suppose that there is no final resurrection, no judgment, no life or experience or existence after death, just nothingness, and the only life to be had is this life. That is all. In that case, what kind of life is to be desired? My answer is "Exactly the same as what Orthodox Christians try to live today."

In regard to future punishment and rewards, Martin Luther was right when he said, "If we knew what Christ came to save us *from*, we would die of *fear*. If we knew what Christ came to save us *for*, we would die of *joy*." And for that matter, C.S. Lewis was right when he portrayed Heaven as infinitely eclipsing Hell. And it is in regard to future reward that St. Maximus Confessor distinguished from three ranks among the Lord's disciples: *slaves*, who obey out of fear, *mercenaries*, who obey out of hope for future reward, and *sons*, who obey out of love.

Now all three of these have a place, and I have obeyed as a slave at times, knowing that suicide would be a direct door to Hell, and on that point I would recall

the *Philokalia* saying that strange as it may sound, we owe more to Hell than to Heaven, because more people have been saved through fear of Hell's torments than through hope of Heaven's joys. But mercenaries are more noble than slaves, and sons more noble than both. And in the end mercenaries are more insulated from Hell's torments than slaves, sons even more insulated than mercenaries, and sons are more handsomely rewarded than mercenaries in the next life.

But with this as a big picture I cannot rightly disown, I'd like to narrow things down and focus solely on mercenary concerns, and even more unusually focus on this life.

People have said that virtue is its own reward, enough so that Calvin and Hobbes, with a Spaceman Spiff wanting to teach aliens that virtue is its own reward, despite the fact that I have never seen in the entire Calvin and Hobbes history evidence of Calvin having any concept that virtue could be its own reward. But what does it mean? I am wary of assuming that the reader knows what this means, or whether the saying is understood in addition to being quoted mindlessly.

Ask a recovering alcoholic who's been dry for years which is better: being sober, or being drunk all the time. Now being drunk, or today toking, may bring great pleasure if you're basically sober. However, I believe that most recovering alcoholics would vehemently affirm that being sober is better than being a slave chained to a bottle more constricting than a genie's lamp. It has been said that alcoholism is suffering you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy! Or to quote Chesterton about another topic, "It takes humility to enjoy anything—even pride." Humility is a vaster thing than pride. And even within the limits of this life, on purely mercenary concerns, virtue is better today than vice.

There is an interesting point about how happiness is conceived in classical Greek, as represented by Plato and others, where the word, εὐδαιμονία or *eudaimonia*, literally means "good spirits" and describes the happiness that derives from one's spirit being in good condition. Thinking of happiness without particular regard to the health of one's spirit is a bit like thinking about the endocrine rush provided by a good exercise program without any real regard to the health of one's body: absurd, and how absurd it is is partly unpacked in the world's oldest, longest, least funny, and least intentional political joke: *The Republic*. As to how this is unpacked, I refer the reader to the classics; but the idea of achieving happiness without one's spirits being in good condition comes across as out of place, perhaps perhaps simply inconceivable, perhaps impossible, or perhaps just absurd and undesirable.

And this much may be said without touching any merits or joys that are specific to Christianity or Eastern Orthodoxy. But in fact living the life of Christ already starts on earth, acquisition of the Holy Spirit already starts on earth, and Heaven itself starts on earth, and if there is (I speak hypothetically) no Heaven awaiting the faithful after

death, I would rather live the beginning of Heaven on earth, and then stop existing or experiencing, than never touch Heaven at all.

And in terms of virtues and vices, I have something to say about the occult that may wound some of my dearest readers. It is unnatural vice.

The concept of unnatural vice in Orthodoxy is broader than sexual perversions including porn, and it may be hard to see why an informed person would call unnatural a nature religion like Wicca. My response is this: As far as standardized tests like the SAT go, there are some test preparation strategies that can legitimately raise scores. Kaplan, or its competitors, can raise scores. But there is another school that says that if you're not cheating you're not playing hard enough, and are strategies to cheat on tests. And the occult amounts to approaching cheating as how you raise your score, and is not satisfied with legitimate test preparation. It is an unnatural vice, and heavy nature theming and self-presentation as a route to harmony with nature do not change the fact that the empowerment Wicca claims is empowerment through nature-themed unnatural vice. Unnatural vice that works with plants is unnatural as artistic pornography in beautiful natural surroundings (eveandherfriends DOT tumblr DOT com) is an unnatural vice that disenchants the entire universe. Attempts to engage in an unnatural vice in a natural way do not remove the fact or the problem of a draining unnatural vice that destroys the possibility of joy. One acquaintance talked about how one person considered himself not to be an alcoholic, because he only drank *gourmet* wines!

I fear by saying this much, I may have already lost much of my audience by now. However, to help bring you to your senses, I would bring a poem (simply text with punctuation based on per cola et commata's lines):

Open

How shall I be open to thee,
 O Lord who is forever open to me?
 Incessantly I seek to clench with tight fist,
 Such joy as thou gavest mine open hand.
 Why do I consider thy providence,
 A light thing, and of light repute,
 Next to the grandeur I imagine?
 Why spurn I such grandeur as prayed,
 Not my will but thine be done,
 Such as taught us to pray,
 Hallowed be thy name,
 Thy kingdom come:
 Thy will be done?

Why be I so tight and constricted,
 Why must clay shy back,
 From the potter's hand,
 Who glorifieth clay better,
 Than clay knoweth glory to seek?
 Why am I such a small man?
 Why do I refuse the joy you give?
 Or, indeed, must I?
 And yet I know,
 Thou, the Mother of God, the saints,
 Forever welcome me with open hearts,
 And the oil of their gladness,
 Loosens my fist,
 Little by little.

God, why is my fist tightened on openness,
 When thou openest in me?

G.K. Chesterton said something relevant to much more than poets and logicians:

The general fact is simple. Poetry is sane because it floats easily in an infinite sea; reason seeks to cross the infinite sea, and so make it finite. The result is mental exhaustion, like the physical exhaustion of Mr. Holbein. To accept everything is an exercise, to understand everything a strain. The poet only desires exaltation and expansion, a world to stretch himself in. The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits.

The Blessed Augustine wrote that if a master sends two slaves by routes that will cross, their meeting is an accident from the slaves' perspective but by design from the master's perspective. What is lost in all this is, if I may take a cue from astrology, dancing the Great Dance, where the dance is led by a little girl with a tambourine. Sin constricts; occult sin seeks to draw Heaven down to fit your desires. What we need is not to reduce Heaven to fit us; we need to open ourselves to fit Heaven. And when we pray, odd but wonderful coincidences can happen, and God draws us out of the Hell of self.

Applications in Our Day

Yes, that is well and good for easier times, but what about today?

Let me return to an example I have used earlier. The Bible contains warnings against drunkenness in both the Old and New Testaments. In Bible times, wine

fermented to about 4% alcohol, which is a third of the alcohol in wine and slightly less than in a standard beer. In the Graeco-Roman world, that wine was mixed 1:2 with water, so we're bringing the alcohol content down to significantly less than lite beer. It takes (or at least it takes us—I unofficially suspect that major dietary differences influence how well you can hold your liquor) a fair amount of drinking to get drunk.

Since ancient warnings about using wine in moderation or not using it at all, we have developed not only strong beer but wine that used to be 12% alcohol (that number tends to steadily increasing), and eighty proof, and Everclear if you wish, and now cannibalis—er, cannabis—is legal, with stronger drugs illegal but still available in 50 States.

Q: Is sobriety still relevant?

A: Now more than ever.

It's harder to reach, but this sort of thing is if anything even more essential. (There is more on spiritual sobriety in *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, which I highly recommend.)

Do not worry

Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, said (Matthew 6:25-27, COB),

Do not worry for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Do you think you can add one single hour to your life by worrying? You might as well try to worry your way into being a foot taller!

I have found that trying to solve a life's problems on a day's resources is a sure road to despair. The Sermon on the Mount is very practical in an everyday here and now. Some people have gotten the impression that I am better at planning and orchestrating than they are. I categorically deny the charges.

When I was in high school, there was a game of sorts called "Wargames," that showed a world map and had a button to launch missiles. When you clicked on "Launch," you could see the missile trajectories as missiles launched from the God-blessed USA to the godless USSR—and from the godless USSR to the God-blessed USA, resulting in essentially total world annihilation. Then a preachy enough message appeared: "The only way to win this game is not to play at all." And so it is with worry: *The only way to win this game is not to play at all.*

Inner peace does not come when you have worried your ducks all into a row. Inner peace comes when you solve today's problems, or even the problems of part of today, on today's resources, and you let go.

Repulsive advice to heed

"In humility consider others better than yourself." (Philippians 2:3, RSV)

This has got to be near the top of things in the Bible that we want to drag our heels on, but let me ask almost a riddle:

Would you rather meet people you admire and are in awe of, or people you look down on and despise?

If you'd like to be in the presence of people you admire, admire other people by in humility considering others better than yourself.

It's that simple!

In the *Philokalia* we read St. Peter of Damascus's "A Treasury of Divine Knowledge":

...Thus through self-control he practices the other virtues as well. He looks on himself as in God's debt for everything, finding nothing whatsoever with which to repay to his Benefactor, and even thinking that his virtues simply increase his debt. For he receives and has nothing to give. He only asks that he may be allowed to offer thanks to God. Yet even the fact that God accepts his thanks puts him, so he thinks, into still greater debt. But he continues to give thanks, ever doing what is good and reckoning himself an ever greater debtor, in his humility considering himself lower than all men, delighting in God his Benefactor and trembling even as he rejoices (cf. Ps. 2: 1).

It is no accident that positive psychology tries to crank gratitude to the max. But there is ideally a feedback loop between gratitude and humility, and humility is deeper; it could almost be called the fourth Christian or theological virtue.

It is a wondrous experience to recognize that one is unworthy even to thank God for his many blessings, and thank him for his many blessings anyway.

So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord... (1 Peter 3:5-6)

This passage is not politically correct, but it is a hinge of joy and it respects the nature of women however much we try to grind it out of them. Snow White sang, "Some day, my prince will come," and it is the desire of every little girl to marry a prince. This is

true in all the older Disney cartoons except maybe Aladdin: a princess like Ariel and a commoner like Belle are both happy in being married to a lord. Out of this I have advice: if you want to be married to a lord then you might well see, and treat, your husband as your lord.

C.S. Lewis in *That Hideous Strength* says that obedience is "...also an erotic necessity."

Ok, more people probably lost there. Despite my best wishes.

I have presented a paltry few aspects of the layer Christianity has to offer to those who seek mercenary reward, and are concerned within the bounds of this life.

Christianity is not just pie in the sky when you die. It is also steak on your plate while you wait.

Steak on your plate while you wait

I would like to give links to works on this site that significantly address mercenary concerns within the scope of this life, at least as one layer. This layer may not in the end be separable from obeying God out of sheer and undiluted love, but they are meant to speak here now and address our own interests.

Doxology

If you want to know what set of eyes you should be looking through, look through these eyes here. It tells of a glory offered us that begins here and now: and what kind of glorious God governs the here and now.

Repentance, Heaven's Best-Kept Secret

In *The Paradise Wars*, one character says, "You're not happy unless you're miserable." I generally find myself happiest in repentance—and blindsided by unexpected reward!

A Pet Owner's Rules

God is like a Pet Owner who has only two rules, and the rules are designed for our benefit, not His.

The Angelic Letters

Each of us has a guardian angel assigned at baptism, and a personal tempting demon allowed to test us for our strengthening. C.S. Lewis writes about a personal tempter. I write about our guardian angel.

God the Spiritual Father

Life may sometimes feel like a ship without a Captain. But there is in fact a Captain who has arranged everything for you with as much care as if you were the only person He ever created.

God the Game Changer

Sometimes things happen that appear so bad that nothing good can come out of them. God has been taking good out of terrible situations since before His only Son was crucified.

A Pilgrimage from Narnia

This is what Orthodoxy has that is better than Narnia.

The Arena

Each of us is called to be famous before God, and God wishes to show His excellence in our excellence.

To a Friend

I wrote this, really, for just one friend, and I would do the same for you.

Tong Fior Blackbelt: The Martial Art of Joyous Conflict

I'm not happy with this piece, but it offers an extended exposition of "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

A Canticle to Holy, Blessed Solipsism

There is an Orthodox saying, "Only God and I exist." Learn what it means.

Who Is Rich? The Person Who Is Content

A look at true wealth.

How Shall I Tell an Alchemist?

From one who has both the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, and is not Solomon or Melchizedek

The Best Things In Life Are Free

This looks at how some of the toughest pills to swallow can in fact be the best things in life.

All Orthodox Theology Is Positive Theology

An upgrade from positive psychology.

The Consolation of Theology

I don't know if I can call this any sort of upgrade to Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, but if a Christian may be sustained by the riches of pagan philosophy, *a fortiori* an Orthodox Christian may be sustained by the riches of Christian theology

Paradise

The note on which I wish to end this ensemble.

A Heart-to-Heart About Technology, COVID, and Big Brother

Let there be light!

I think I would like to depart from an initial discussion of lighting, on which point I would quote *Hayward's Unabridged Dictionary*:

Environmentalist, n. One devoted to a particular political agenda, regardless of its impact on the environment.

A recent project at Argonne National Laboratory was working on a new generation of nuclear reactor which would be in many ways a dream come true. Its design would be such that meltdown would be physically impossible. It could run on nuclear waste from other plants, not only generating power but reducing them to material which would become harmless in a matter of roughly a century, rather than millions of years. It could run on nuclear warheads, thus not only providing a safe and permanent manner to dispose of some of the most appalling and destructive devices ever created, but so doing in a manner which would provide useful energy to hospitals and families; a beautiful picture of what it means to beat swords into plowshares.

However, it is still nuclear, and, in the eyes of environmentalism, all nuclear power is evil and must be stopped at any cost. This project was, most definitely, stopped at any cost. It was terminated at great monetary cost; it was nearing completion, and, now that it was ready to be tested on different materials, those materials must be disposed of, at a cost of ninety-four million dollars more than it would have cost to complete. It was terminated at great environmental cost; those materials are dangerous nuclear wastes, and, though they were going to be made harmless, they must now be disposed of in established manners; that is to say, function as the nuclear waste that environmentalists so adamantly oppose. However, they stopped something bearing the dirty 'n' word, so environmentalists are now happy.

It is at least fortunate that environmentalists do not yet have the means to extinguish the sun.

Historically, there have been many transitions of technology. Before he came along, people were happy with the solutions they had for indoor lighting, and those solutions exist: when I grew up we had an oil lantern and various candles, which were trotted out for power outages and candlelight dinners, and I use candles in my prayers today. However, you could brightly illuminate indoor spaces with Edison's light bulbs, and precious few people reach for candles and lanterns when they want illumination. The Amish might, for all I know, because of carefully thought out convictions. However, when the question of illuminating a building or a room comes up, people naturally reach for electric lighting, just like horses exist (and I would love to have a horse), but when the question comes of getting from one point to another, they reach for an automobile of some description, whether gas, hybrid, or electric. I'd personally love to have both a horse and a recumbent trike, and there are bicycle-friendly cities where people have made another carefully-thought-out decision, but for practical purposes I may have a say in which *type* of car I drive; I don't have a say in which of these are live options for my living situation. The invisible hand of the free market has removed candles oil-burning lighting and horse riding from mainstream use.

Having Big Brother legislate a technology transition from incandescent bulbs to good LED lighting would have been bizarre enough, but the move that was actually made, at first, was at any cost to the health of the environment. I have gently twisted a CFL to unscrew it and broken it; my understanding is that there are technical implications which make it not a live option to make a durable plastic shell for the mercury payload, but people can and do mass produce thin tempered glass sheets that

will substantially protect cell phones from some pretty impressive blows. Making CFL's that require more than being treated as if they are made of glass (something adults have learned in dealing with incandescent bulbs) is asking for environmental degradation that dwarfs the higher power consumption of an incandescent heat bulb.

Now the first white LED's I know of were what is called "lunar white", which looked white but (speaking as someone who used a lunar white LED flashlight to pick out clothes from a close closet) everything was a shade of grey and it was a wild guess whether a shirt and a pair of pants had matching color. Something of this has been explicitly acknowledged in LED lighting advertising that they show colors truly, and the problem has been overcome. And it is part of the normal flow for people to note that good LED bulbs don't need to be treated like they are made of glass (or at least I have never broken one), cost pennies on the dollar for your electric bill, apparently last for ages (or at least I've never replaced an LED that died), don't make a well-lit summer room even hotter, can be truthfully advertised as much more attractive for environmental concerns, and so on and so forth, and the forces of the free market would make incandescent heat bulbs go the way of the oil lantern and the horse without the faintest government intervention.

But what is odd, and really historically out of place, was that Big Brother decided he needed to power the change. It would have been a strange thing for the dead hand of government intervention to specify a move from incandescent bulbs to mature LED technology, but the exact inept move enforced was from incandescent bulbs, which contain no toxins to speak of, to a mercury delivery system that seems not to be intended for members of the general public to be able to handle without breakage. And again, I've broken a CFL by a gentle if firm twist that would have been entirely appropriate for a made-of-glass incandescent bulb.

What's true for the goose is true for the gander

We have not directly have laws in force that require us to use any technology, and people off the grid are welcome to stay off the grid. However, the quarantine has created social conditions so that now some technologies are socially mandated. No one is holding a gun to our heads and demanding we use Zoom—but the government is holding a gun to our heads and forbidding us most normal social interactions.

What can we do?

There are several things to do, and I would point out the top 10:

- Read *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* and apply it liberally.

Please note that I am not jockeying for book sales, and if you don't want to buy a copy on Amazon, email me and I will send you a free copy. Most of it was worked out before the present cyberquarantine, but the issues have long roots, and a

book on how to be responsible with beer and wine has everything to do if water and juice are restricted but 151 proof rum is now placed before us and available for free.

- Watch Depression is a Disease of Civilization at tinyurl.com/a-disease-of-civilization, and implement what you can.

There are different helpful material; the full bang for your buck as far as diet is concerned is available if you change your diet to Paleo. If like me you live somewhere winter days are short, compensate for the lack of sun. I use one of many entry level sun lamps during the day (I can see it but not visualize it.)

- Do what you can within the rules to live as human.

It has been said in reference to fair trade that international laws are not biased against poor countries, but for the rich. Fair trade serves as a witness that it is possible to support dignified and human life if a conscious effort to that is done.

The rules are not specifically prohibitions on all human contact; they just load the dice so a Toastmasters Zoom meeting is much more in reach than a face-to-face meeting, and it must be admitted that doing some things virtually has its convenience. However, it is still possible to have human meetings. It is still possible, if socially awkward, to have a conversation with a friend across six feet's distance. It is possible to eat at picnic tables six feet apart. Things like this are not *impossible*; they just take an extra bit of reaching when virtual interaction is in much easier reach.

- Limit your use of counterfeit social interactions, or at least try to consume them in balance.

I have written in *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* about the goal of a tofu virtual chicken in every pot. I mentioned research that cultures that have absorbed tofu use and are not harmed by it consume only fermented soy, in limited quantities, and never as a substitute for meat.

Social media (meaning anti-social media) are fake tofu. FecesBook keeps you plugged in and glued on, but it causes depression. The people who enjoy it most dip in and out quickly; prolonged use is asking for real depression.

If you are feeling lonely, seek out a face-to-face conversation with a friend. Maybe a conversation at six feet distance while wearing a mask, but don't just reach for FecesBook when you feel lonely and want to feel better.

- Make counter-cultural technology decisions.

I agreed with Jean-Claude Larchet's *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* before I read it, but reading Larchet raised the bar higher. I didn't watch TV or movies if there was a polite way to avoid it, and I still don't. What's different is that instead of checking my email every hour (and watching my clock), I now check my email once in the morning and other times as needed on a case-by-case basis. I also don't compulsively check my phone. My life is only the richer for this, and I have unplugged a drain on the human soul.

- If you can get away with it, wear a gaiter mask.

I put on a gaiter mask just around my neck in the morning, pull it up to cover my mouth and nose when a mask is called for, and can breathe without feeling hot. It's a bit of a mask lite, but all the orthochristian.com articles about COVID being a big deal were by older men. I entertain some skepticism for a situation where e.g. a motorcycle fatality is classified as a COVID death because doctors know what side their bread is buttered on.

A gaiter mask removes a strong disincentive to social interactions of the normal face-to-face type.

- Consider getting a pet.

Some people are not animal people, and I am not personally in a position to responsibly own a pet. However, a friendly, good-natured cat or dog makes wonderful companionship without a quarantine, and possibly makes essential companionship with a quarantine. And if you like animals but can't own one now, do spend some time with the pets of any friend you visit.

- Vote your conscience—and your fears

A *First Things* feature sometime back said:

We vote our fears. And a very good thing that we do, according to the formidable Dennis Prager. In his newsletter, he lists the major interest groups of the two major parties and then suggests that we ask ourselves: "If all the listed Republican groups had their way, what would happen to America? If all the listed Democratic groups had their way, what would happen to America?" Mr. Prager asked himself and concluded that, while he supports almost none of the organizations on the Republican list, he fears them less than the groups on the Democratic list, and so he "nearly always" votes Republican. Here are his lists. Republican: National Rifle Association, Christian Coalition and Religious Right, Big Business, Black Conservatives (e.g., Clarence Thomas), Pro-Life Organizations, Conservative Justices, Tobacco Companies. Democrats: American Civil Liberties Union, Hollywood, Teachers' Unions, Black Leaders (e.g., Jesse Jackson), Feminist Organizations, Liberal Justices, Trial Lawyers, Alcohol Companies.

The comment is dated by more than twenty years; the lack of mention of the gender rainbow alone says that the ink is far from being wet. But I would mention something to those who *do* vote your fears:

The quarantine will be bad under Trump and worse under Biden. That it will go badly under Trump hardly needs saying, but under Biden we are talking drones to enforce the wearing of masks, and who knows what else after federal drones have their "killer app" role of enforcing mask use. Please, have the courage to vote your fears.

- Live The Sermon on the Mount and Thomas Hopko's 55 Maxims.
- In Robert Heinlein's sex-crazed, anti-Christian *Stranger in a Strange Land*, the grandfather-figure asks the heroine if she knows the Bible, and when she says "not much," he says, "It merits study, it provides helpful advice for most emergencies." And really, it does. "Do not worry about tomorrow; each day has enough trouble of its own" is very, very practical advice. If you haven't availed yourself of this kind of resource, visit an Orthodox Church that is open (some are). If you have, dig deeper.

And in any case, give thanks in any and every circumstance, and be mindful of what you have to be grateful for.

- Share this with others!

I think this post is worth sharing. If you like it, please share it with others!
And that's all.

All the Best,
C.J.S. Hayward

Here I Bow

Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain humility--I do not accept the authority of the I-lost-count-how-many Protestant denominations and the sprawling bazaar of "Christian" books, for they have gone to the next level in unending contradictions of each other, vastly eclipsing of the the child's play of Popes and Councils Luther complained about--my conscience is captive to the Holy Church that is inseparable from Christ the Word of God. I will not trade a "wall of paper" drawn from saints for a "wall of paper" drawn from the dragon's milk of historical-critical scholarship. I will not go out of the frying pan, into the thermite. I cannot and I will not recant her Tradition for to go against the collected experience of Orthodox Christians and my holy guardian angel is neither right nor safe. Here I bow. I can do no other. Lord have mercy on me. Amen.

How Can I Take my Life Back from my Phone?

Is there someplace in the world that does not have Internet?
-A prolific poster on Twitter

The *Silicon* Rule

In "The *Silicon* Rule," I suggested that a good rule of thumb is to ask, "What do Silicon Valley technology executives choose for their children?" And Steve Jobs, for instance, did not have a nerd's paradise for his kids. He had walls with big bookshelves and animated discussions. They hadn't seen an iPad when it first entered the limelight. And employees of technology company chose what might seem some remarkably strict rules, because they didn't buy into the mystique of hot gadgets. They knew better.

In *Bridge to Terebithia*, the author introduces Leslie as privileged with a capital **P**. The biggest cue is quite possibly not that money is not the issue, but that her family does not own a television. Today that character might also be introduced as not having a smartphone, for several reasons.

People know on several levels that Facebook and smartphones suck the life out of their users. That's old news. This page is about an alternative.

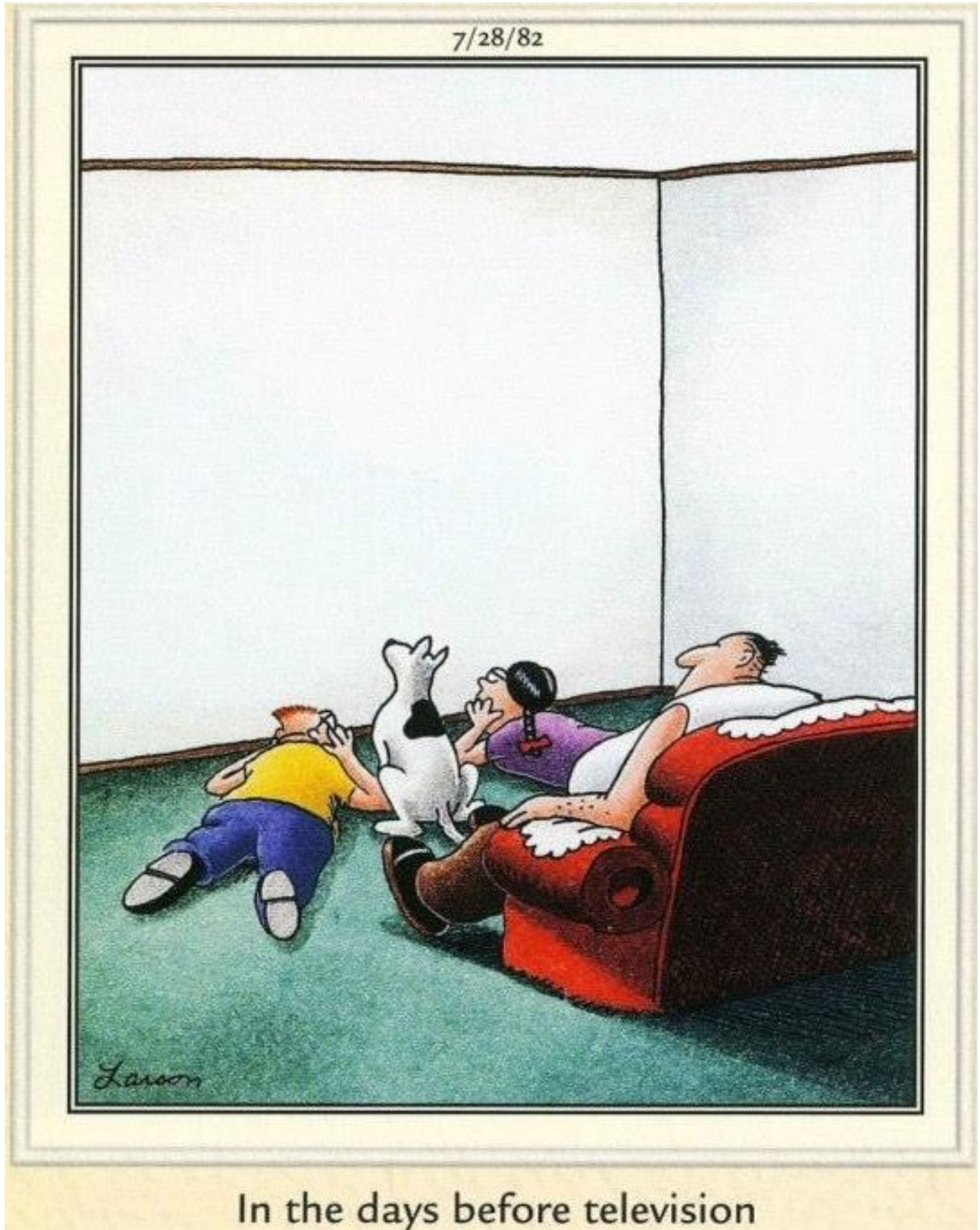
How I tamed my iPhone

I have what might be called a Holy Grail of iPhone usage. I carry my iPhone but I rule it and it does not rule me. It is often at hand, but I have domineered it well enough that I don't compulsively check it. I get almost all of the practical benefits with none of the hidden price tags.

How?

Prequel: How I tamed television

Before I became a strict iPhone user, I was a slightly relaxed television non-user. I grew up with limited television, one hour per day during the schoolyear and two hours during summer vacation, and I read Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in an Age of Show Business* and the more book-like Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, and also books like Stephen Covey's *First Things First*. And I slowly checked out the rest of the way from television. And as an older child and later a young man, I had the vibrancy one associates with an unhindered imagination: the days before television, or something that as might as well be the days before television:



In the days before television

The irony of the Far Side cartoon is that time before television sucked the life out of everything was much more vibrant, not a family huddled around a vacant spot by a wall.

Prequel: Weston A. Price diet

I'm not specifically interested in converting people to Western A. Price or Paleo diets beyond saying that it is my opinion that your body's engine merits pure premium fuel, but I wanted to comment on something very specific about *Nourishing Traditions*. As one friend pointed out, some of the ways food is produced are really gross; most vegetable oils besides olive, avocado, and coconut oils have to be extracted under conditions that goes rancid immediately, like popped popcorn, and are then made yellow and clear and not smelling bad by chemical wizardry, or the artificial phenomenon of getting four gallons of milk from a cow per day and then manipulations to make 2% milk ("No significant difference has been shown between milk derived from rbST-treated and non-rbST-treated cows except for the additional ingredients of blood and pus."). It overall builds a sense of "This is really gross and unfit for human consumption," and that's good.

It is worth your while to read books about how, for instance, standard smartphone use is reprogramming our brains to be bowls of tapioca. I gave, and meant, five stars to Jean-Claude Larchet's *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul*. My own title in the same vein is *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*.

Now on to my iPhone

I check my iPhone at intervals: once per hour, or perhaps once per day. That breaks the spine of constant checking, at least eventually. My phone has three games, all of them for my little nephews, and I've come to dodge showing them games on my smartphone, because when I show them a real, physical toy, they can wait turns and share, while smartphone games are addictive enough that when I take out my phone and let them play with it, squabbles consistently follow. In good spirit, when they wanted to play pinball games on my phone, I deleted the pinball game and then made a crude pinball machine out of some leftover wood, nails, rubber bands, large ball bearings, and a plastic pipe. They were initially disappointed, but when they had some time to play with it, they began to be imaginative in a way I have never seen with a smartphone video game.

Returning to my smartphone, I use it for utilitarian purposes, including making bottom-liner use of Facebook and Twitter. Bottom-liner use of Facebook can be constructed, but having it fill the hours is depressing to anyone.

Specific suggestions for iPhone and Android smartphones

On this point I would say that there are few things you *must* do, but many things you *might* do. Probably the single best advice I know is to work with an Orthodox priest who is comfortable freeing you from your chains to technology. Good advice is to make a small change to start, and then slowly but steadily build up until what you have in place is working for you.

I would also underscore that these are suggestions, that some people have found helpful. I do not use all the rules others have found helpful, and I've found benefit in getting stricter with myself as time has passed. However, you don't owe a duty to make all of these your own.

1. Learn from Humane Tech. Humane Tech is a movement to mitigate some of turning people's brains to tapioca, and it is well worth attending. I don't believe they go far enough; I believe that Orthodox asceticism and fasting provide a good backbone, but knowing which apps make you happy and which apps make you sad is at very least a good start. Three Humane Tech pages you should know about include the following:

- The homepage, for general orientation.
 - Take control. This gives many concrete suggestions. I've thought about all of them and implemented some of them.
 - Familiarize yourself with app ratings. All apps are not created equal in terms of their effect on how you feel. If you want to get your head out of your apps, this is another page I would at least recommend familiarizing yourself with.
- Make a conscious adult decision about what you carry. I would recommend choosing between three primary options:
 - *Keep a smartphone, but be sure that you are the one in charge.* This is the option I go with, but only after not carrying a cell phone when they were becoming common, and have less plugged in days of only checking email once per day. I do more frequent usage, and think that checking it once per hour is also a good baseline, but I only check things more frequently when I have a specific logistical reason. The strongest reason for this may be less the inner logic of dominating your technology, than smartphones being socially mandated.

- *Don't carry a smartphone.* Kings, Emperors, Popes and Patriarchs before the twentieth century lived in great luxury without having any kind of phone access, ever. They weren't deprived. You most likely don't need it.
- *Carry alternate gear.* What about, instead of carrying a smartphone, you carry a standalone GPS, an old-school handset that only does talk and text with a numeric keypad, a paper planner or a small paper pad for your scheduling, todo, and scratchpad use, and maybe a book or Kindle? That sounds like a lot, but it fits nicely, with room to spare, in my favorite messenger bag. Admittedly these things are not the same convergence device, but it really may be possible to carry everything you want without difficulty. And by the way, their not including social media isn't a defect; it's a feature.
- Read *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul*, and *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*. Pay close attention to the rules in *The New Media Epidemic* as taken from Silicon Valley tech Moms and Dads. Chapter 13 is rich in practical application, mentions a #1 rule of no phones in bedrooms ever, and "Alex Constantinople... said her youngest son, who is 5, is never allowed to use gadgets during the week, and her older children, 10 to 13, are only allowed 30 minutes a day on school nights." Not an absolutely different rule from what my parents had for me. Other aspects covered include having the network's router shut off outside of a certain window of time.
- *Take an attitude of "Everything is permitted... maybe, but not everything is beneficial."* We are tempted to try to get the most use out of our investment, when a better use might be more sparing. As far as TV goes, I have sought out to see one Simpsons episode in the past five or so years. Somewhere along the way, I stopped seeing as much television as I was allowed. Don't use as much as you will let yourself use, and recognize that the most beneficial uses are sometimes the ones with the lightest touch. A smartphone in "Do Not Disturb" mode is just as much capable of calling 911 in a bad situation as any other cell phone.
- *Have an attitude of having a life outside of online activity.* When I grew up, I was taught to cast a line with a fishing rod. I didn't end up catching much of anything, but my father taught me the basics, face-to-face, with a genuine fishing rod. Young people today are far more likely to learn to cast a line with the accelerometer on a smartphone, and that was a deprivation. I did my studies

through travelling to campuses face-to-face even if I used email as well. This is a human baseline that is a survival from the Middle Ages, for that matter a survival from the animal world where young wolves are not handed tools necessarily but are taught how to interact with their environment to hunt, face-to-face with other wolves. And I would suggest that traveling to a college campus and also using some email is a pretty good baseline for technology use. And in relation to this, we have:

- *Take up a hobby and give smartphones some competition.* It can be hard to just pull back from habitual technology use. It is somewhat easier, even if it is not really easy, to pull back from the draw of technology and engage in something else, such as candle making. Having a constructive hobby can be very helpful as something else to do instead.
- *Use your phone for a purpose, and never to treat boredom.* A practice of reaching for your phone when you need it to do something, and not much else, can be great. Your phone can be genuinely nice when you use it to contact an acquaintance by any means, or to order a pair of shoes. It's a trap when you use it to just pass time or make boredom easier to deal with. The most miserable use of Facebook, for instance, is when you're always on.
- *Use older technologies and fast from technologies.* Fasting from technologies is explored in *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, and while it may not be possible, there are times where you can make a phone call instead of sending an email, or drive to see someone face-to-face instead of making a phone call. In general, using older space-conquering technologies instead of newer space-conquering technologies can uncover a forgotten richness. Some have had days of no electricity. A *Lead Pencil Society* day here and there can produce just a little freedom, or even just write a single hand-written, lead-pencil letter to a loved one, or perhaps buy a single, paper book instead of an ebook.
- *Treat porn as a real danger,* and get help whenever you need it. Porn is the disenchantment of the entire universe; it is our day's biggest attack on men; it is preparation for committing rape. Take things to a father confessor; use a support group; use xxxchurch.
- *Don't look at your phone as a treasure from a magic world.* A phone can feel exotic until you're already hooked, but I think of people in the second world where a smartphone may seem a relic from the wonderland of the first world. In

fact the U.S. may have more seeking of escape than Uganda. In fact material treasure may be found much more easily in the U.S.—and with it spiritual poverty. I believe that smartphones have uses, but as an experience they are not really helpful if you're an American, and not really helpful if you're a Ugandan friend. There are uses, and you can read ebooks for instance, which is really sweet. However, being sucked into a phone is not really a helpful way of using it. On those grounds I would advise friends both in the U.S. and Uganda to use phones, maybe, but know that God has placed people around you, and a person is infinitely better than a smartphone. Enjoy the *real* treasures!

All of this may seem like a lot, but it is very simple at heart:
Start walking on the path and put one foot in front of the other.
That is all you need.

How to Find a Job: A Guide for Orthodox Christians

The sacred side of finding work

The providence of God

"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?"

"So why worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after these things all the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all of these things. But seek

first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all of these things shall be added to you. Therefore you do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Matthew 6:25-34, *The Orthodox Study Bible*

This text, from the Sermon on the Mount, is a central text, and it is to this text that everything else relates; it is by being anchored to the Sermon on the Mount that keeps the other practices anchored in faith and preserves them from becoming magical or superstitious.

God will provide for his faithful. Sometimes God the Spiritual Father provides in painful ways. Often his understanding of what is good for us varies greatly from our own, and it is only through learning in an experience that we learn that God understands what we need and we do not.

God does not always give us what we want, but he is always willing to give us what we need. Whether or not that includes the job we want. Read "The Angelic Letters", a tale of providence.

God sometimes allows the Evil One to take away the jobs of the pious. But God is in command, and he will not allow us to be tested beyond our strength. Unemployment is a trial, but it will not prevent God from providing and exercising his own providence over people allowed to be tested.

The life of devotion

The most important foundation within this walk of faith is simply living the Orthodox life. This means prayers, confession, communion, and the entire sacramental Orthodox Way. This does not manipulate God; it may involve clearing away obstacles we have created, which is what we work on when we confess our sins. But there is not something alien that is added to the Orthodox faith to activate God's providence; God's providence is active even when we are trying to do everything and he doesn't give what we think we need. And so the first thing is, "Do your rule." (And "As always, ask your priest.")

Generosity

This is the point when things can get a bit scary. Christ, who promises providence, also tells us not to store up treasure on earth. Most of us have not made the monastic renunciation, but we miss the mark if we seek our security in what we can arrange with our own money and resources. That is the point where money becomes a false God and an idol.

(This may *always* be an idol, but the less money and financial security we have, the larger the idol looms.)

One part of Orthodox asceticism that is particularly relevant here is generosity, that of sharing with others what little you have. The person who is generous is lending to the Lord; every gift tells God, "I am trusting you," and seeks providence in God, not money or earthly resources. And we would do well to remember the words, "The Pope is not Christ's vicar on earth—the poor are!" In the Last Judgment, our generosity or hoarding from the needy will be remembered, but there are also much more immediate rewards. I would recall the opening Kontakion to my "Akathist to St. Philaret the Merciful:"

To thee, O camel who passed through the eye of the needle, we offer thanks and praise: for thou gavest of thy wealth to the poor, as an offering to Christ. Christ God received thy gift as a loan, repaying thee exorbitantly, in this transient life and in Heaven. Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures!

It is paradoxical to give more in response to losses. But it is vital.

St. Xenia / Ksenia

We particularly ask the prayers of St. Xenia in seeking employment. If you do not have an icon of St. Xenia, consider buying one. My practice in seeking employment is to pray the Akathist to the Most Holy Lady and Mother of God, and the the Akathist to St. Xenia each day. Their prayers make quite a difference, much as St. John the Much-Sufferer in dealing with lust.

You should also ask the prayers of your priest and parish and the faithful you know.

The secular side of finding work

Two of the books I value most for job hunting are *What Color Is Your Parachute?* and *Games Companies Play*. *Games Companies Play* is perhaps one of the best specimens of mainstream job hunting books, and *What Color Is Your Parachute?* starts much further back, saying, "Let's wait a minute on tweaking resume keyboards. Let's dig much further back and make sure we're answering the right questions."

Resume writing services

Monster and other services offer a "free resume critique:" Buyer beware!

I was working with one friend on his resume and mentioned that Monster offered a free resume critique. He submitted his resume, and the feedback was deceptive and obnoxious. The reviewer said he was going to be "bluntly honest," and was then bluntly dishonest and manipulative and wrote a doozy of a spiel that was engineered to scare

him directly into their paid resume writing service. And it contained almost nothing that could be used to directly improve his resume.

He had asked me if it was worth a professional resume writing service; after seeing that specimen I said, "Maybe; it would be worth asking on LinkedIn, but not with these people." If they were going to be that deceptive and manipulative in their free resume "critique", they were the wrong people to trust with writing your resume.

If you attended college you may have privileges with your alma mater's career services office, even if you didn't graduate: these can be helpful in several ways, including a resume makeover.

Websites

There are a lot of job boards, and several job search engines; Linkup is well worth considering as it pulls jobs from company's websites that haven't hit the "pay to post" boards like Monster. LinkedIn really needs no introduction, but I invite you to connect with me. I also invite you to contact me if you have any questions.

There will be a lot of details to keep track of. This is a use case for a spreadsheet; if you do not have a spreadsheet you use already, LibreOffice is a free and full-featured Office suite that includes a spreadsheet, or you can just use a spreadsheet on the web with Google Sheets.

Research, research, research!

The biggest way you can send a perfumed letter in an interview is research. There are a number of tools at your disposal; you can visit the company website, search for them on Google news, and to give one "best-kept secret", request a copy of the company's annual report. I am not saying you should believe them all; every annual report I've read claims that things are going great and the last year may have been the company's best year ever. As with the "About" section on a company's website, that is how the company presents itself, not necessarily how the company is. Still, it is valuable for insight and the more you know about a company, the better. And if annual reports are a tad too optimistic, they none the less show a company's line of business, where it is focusing, and show how the company would like to be seen.

Find jobhunting / networking groups

In many places, there are jobhunting support groups: not necessarily "support groups" in the counseling psychology sense, but groups where jobhunters can gather, sharing wisdom and expertise. You may find a career coach at one of them: you might get a free resume makeover, or have someone make sense of something puzzling to you. Which brings me to my next point:

Again, buyer beware

There has been one change to the information technology landscape in recent years. Job hunting sites like Monster allow applicants (whether in information technology or not) to state a geographic preference so they can request local opportunities. And there's a whole brigade of recruiters, strange as it may sound, who will ask an applicant in Illinois who has requested Illinois positions to apply for a position in Silicon Valley or NYC, traveling at the candidate's own expense for the in-person interview and perhaps signing a contract that would probably make an attorney really squirm (and assure you this is a standard business practice to protect their needs if you raise questions). Buyer beware; this is part of the cost of doing jobhunting in information technology.

The problem isn't as bad as it used to be; the sheer quantity of these junk calls has dropped to be much more manageable than it was a few years ago. But I let non-local calls go straight to voicemail: there are a few non-local calls that aren't from that class of recruiter, and you can hear them when you check your voicemail.

There are presumably other traps and pitfalls out there: "Be thou the defender of my soul, O God, for I walk through the midst of many snares; deliver me from them and save me, O Blessed One, for thou art the lover of mankind."

Conclusion

I have covered, or rather briefly touched on, the sacred and secular dimensions of jobhunting. But this is more of a "table of contents" than a full book; I point the reader to books or other resources (*What Color Is Your Parachute?* and *Games Companies Play* on the secular side, perhaps along with the highly recommended *The Twenty Minute Networking Meeting*, and one's rule of prayer and parish priest or spiritual father on the sacred). The offering seems insufficient, but I'm not sure I have better. Still, I offer this much in the prayer that God will provide for you in his gracious and eternal love.

This article was written while I was jobhunting and out of work. Later that day, I received and accepted a job offer.

How Shall I Tell an Alchemist?

The cold matter of science—
Exists not, O God, O Life,
For Thou who art Life,
How could Thy humblest creature,
Be without life,
Fail to be in some wise,
The image of Life?
Minerals themselves,
Lead and silver and gold,
The vast emptiness of space and vacuum,
Teems more with Thy Life,
Than science will see in man,
Than hard and soft science,
Will to see in man.

How shall I praise Thee,
For making man a microcosm,
A human being the summary,
Of creation, spiritual and material,
Created to be,

A waterfall of divine grace,
Flowing to all things spiritual and material,
A waterfall of divine life,
Deity flowing out to man,
And out through man,
To all that exists,
And even nothingness itself?

And if I speak,
To an alchemist who seeks true gold,
May his eyes be opened,
To body made a spirit,
And spirit made a body,
The gold on the face of an icon,
Pure beyond twenty-four carats,
Even if the icon be cheap,
A cheap icon of paper faded?

How shall I speak to an alchemist,
Whose eyes overlook a transformation,
Next to which the transmutation,
Of lead to gold,
Is dust and ashes?
How shall I speak to an alchemist,
Of the holy consecration,
Whereby humble bread and wine,
Illumine as divine body and blood,
Brighter than gold, the metal of light,
The holy mystery the fulcrum,
Not stopping in chalice gilt,
But transforming men,
To be the mystical body,
The holy mystery the fulcrum of lives transmuted,
Of a waterfall spilling out,
The consecration of holy gifts,
That men may be radiant,
That men may be illumined,
That men be made the mystical body,
Course with divine Life,

Tasting the Fountain of Immortality,
The transformed elements the fulcrum,
Of God taking a lever and a place to stand,
To move the earth,
To move the cosmos whole,
Everything created,
Spiritual and material,
Returned to God,
Deified.

And how shall I tell an alchemist,
That alchemy suffices not,
For true transmutation of souls,
To put away searches for gold in crevices and in secret,
And see piles out in the open,
In common faith that seems mundane,
And out of the red earth that is humility,
To know the Philosopher's Stone Who is Christ,
And the true alchemy,
Is found in the Holy Orthodox Church?

How Shall I Tell an Alchemist?

How to Think About Psychology: An Orthodox Look at a Secular Religion

Introduction: A study of secularization

Thomas Dixon in *Theology, Anti-Theology, and Atheology: From Christian Passions to Secular Emotions*, offers a model of societal secularization intended to be a more robust than just seeing "theology vs. anti-theology," "theology vs. theology in disguise," or "theology vs. anti-theology in disguise." He argues for a process that begins with full-blooded theism, such as offered by almost any strain of classic Christianity, and then moves to "thin theism," such as Paley (today think Higher Powers), then "anti-theology" that is directly hostile to theism, then "atheology" which is alienated from theological roots but is merely un-theological, "in much the same way as a recipe in a cookery book is un-theological."

Dixon, like a good scholar, provides a good case study explored at greater length in his dissertation, and I am very interested in the case study he chose. He looks at the formation of a secular category of psychology, and the steps that have been taken to depart from older religious understandings situating the concept of passions, to a secular concept of emotions. The development of the secular category of emotions serves as a microcosm of a study of a society's apostasy (a term Dixon does not use in his article) from understanding aspects of life as features of religion, to covering similar territory in terms of what is explained, but understanding things on secular terms,

disconnected from religion. (Much prior to the transition Dixon documents, it's difficult to see what the West would make of psychobabble about "Feelings aren't right. They aren't wrong. They're just feelings.")

If I may summarize Dixon's account of the apostasy, while moving the endpoints out a bit, in the *Philokalia*, passions are loosely sin viewed as a state, with inner experience (and sometimes outer) related to how we live and struggle with our passions. Orthodox Christians have quite an earful to give (and sometimes the maturity not to give it) if someone from the West asks, "What are your passions?" In an Orthodox understanding, taken literally, that question has nothing to do with activities we enjoy and get excited about (unless they are wrong for us to engage in). It is more the matter of a habit of sin that has defaced their spiritual condition and that they are, or should be, repenting of. That is one of the more "Western-like" points we can take from the *Philokalia*; another foundational concept is that many of the thoughts we think are our own, and make our own (such as authentic handling of non-straight sexuality as is broadly understood today), are the unending attempted venomous injections of demons and we need to watchfully keep guard and destroy what seems to be our own thoughts. This is not present, nor would be particularly expected, in Dixon's account. However, the "before" in Dixon's "before and after" clearly situates what would today be considered feelings as markers and features of spiritual struggle, spiritual triumph, and spiritual defeat. The oldest so-to-speak "non-influence" figure Dixon attends to lived his life well after the Orthodox eight demons, that attack us from without, were revised to become our own internal seven deadly sins.

The first alternative Dixon studies is a concept of emotion that is paper-thin. The specific text he studies, which is remarkably accurately named, is Charles Darwin's *The Expressions of Emotion in Man and the Animals*. The title does not directly herald a study of *emotion*, but the expressions of *emotion*, with an a priori that diminishes or removes consideration of human emotional life being distinctive (contrast Temple Grandin, *Animals in Translation*; she believes very much that animals have a psyche, but takes a sledgehammer to all-too-easy anthromorphization of animal psyches). Furthermore, an emotion is something you feel. Emotion is not really about something, and emotional habits are not envisioned. Darwin's study was a study of physiologically what was going on with human and animal bodies approached as what was really going on in emotion.

Later on, when atheology has progressed, this begins to change. After a certain point people could conceive that emotions are about something; another threshold crossed, and you could speak of emotional habits; another threshold crossed, and you could regard a person's emotional landscape as healthy or unhealthy. All of this fits Dixon's category of atheology if one is using his framework. There remain important differences from either the *Philokalia* or the earliest models Dixon studies: it is today

believed that you should let emotions wash through you until they have run their course, an opinion not endorsed by any framing of passions that I know. However, I would recall G.K. Chesterton on why it was not provocative for him to call the Protestant Reformation the shipwreck of Christianity: the proof is that, like Robinson Crusoe, Protestants keep on retrieving things from the Catholic ship.

Perhaps the fullest atheological rediscovery of the concept of a passion I am aware of is the disease model of alcoholism lived out in Alcoholics Anonymous. The passions are, in the *Philokalia*, spiritual wounds or diseases of some sort, and the dominant metaphor for a father confessor is that of a physician or healer. While the important term "repent" is not included in the wording of the twelve steps, the twelve steps paint in powerful and stark relief what repentance looks like when it puts on work gloves. The community is in many ways like a church or perhaps is a church. Steps may be taken to qualify strict doctrine, but the teaching and resources are a sort of practical theology to help people defeat the bottle. (One thinks of Pannenberg's essay "How to Think About Secularism" suggests that secularism did not arise from people grinding an axe against all religion; it arose from people wanting to live in peace at a time when it was mainstream to wish that people on the other side of the divide would be burned at the stake.) There is a bit of haziness about "God as I understand him," but this is decidedly not the result of hazy thinking. The biggest difference between Alcoholics Anonymous and the Orthodox Church may be that Alcoholics Anonymous helps with one primary disease or passion, and the Church, which could be called Sinners Anonymous, doesn't say, "Hi. I'm Joe, and I'm an alcoholic." It believes, "Hi. I'm Joe, and I'm the worst sinner in history."

Where is the Orthodox Church in all of Dixon's study?

At a glance, there may not be much visible. The Orthodox Church is not mentioned as such, the text seems to focus on English-speaking figures from the 17th century onwards, and the only figure claimed by the Orthodox Church is the Blessed Augustine, who is first mentioned in a perfunctory list of influences upon authors who retained significant grounding in older tradition. (The next stop seems to jump centuries forward to reach Thomas Aquinas.) The text does not seem to have even a serious pretension to treat Orthodoxy as far as the case study goes. Furthermore, while passions were and are considered important in Orthodoxy, the theological affections that counterbalance theological passions in the "before" part of "before and after" are obscure or nonexistent in Orthodox faith.

However, there is something that would feel familiar to Orthodox. To the Orthodox student in a Roman university, there may be the repeated effect of a Catholic student conspiratorially explain that the Roman Catholic Church has been doing that was daft and wrong, but now Rome is getting its act together, has progressed, and has something genuinely better to offer. To Orthodox, this whole topos heralds something

specific; it heralds the dismantling of one more continuity that Rome used to have with Holy Orthodoxy. And while Dixon does not discuss "Catholic" or "Protestant" as such and does not even have pretensions of treating Orthodoxy, he offers a first-class account of Western figures dismantling one more continuity with Holy Orthodoxy. To many Orthodox, the tune sounds all too familiar.

Quasi-Mystical-Theology

In Orthodoxy, all theology is "mystical theology", meaning what is practically lived in the practice of Holy Orthodoxy. Systematic theology is off-limits, as a kind of formal book exercise that is not animated by the blood of mystical theology.

Clinical psychology offers what Dixon terms quasi-theology, and I would more specifically term quasi-mystical theology. Not all psychologists are clinical practitioners; there are a good number of academic research psychologists who explore things beyond the bounds of what a counselor would ordinarily bring up. For instance, academic psychology has developed theories of memory, including what different kinds of memory there are, how they work, and how they fit together. These are not only more detailed than common-sense understandings, but different: learning a skill is considered a type of memory, and while it makes sense on reflection, the common, everyday use of "memory" does not draw such a connection.

This is a legitimate finding of research psychology, but it falls outside of common counseling practice unless the client has some kind of condition where this information is useful. Clinical practitioners attempt to inculcate aspects of psychology that will help clients with their inner state, how to handle difficulties, and (it is hoped) live a happier life. All of this is atheology that is doing something comparable to theology, and more specifically mystical theology; the speculative end is left for academics, or at least not given to clients who don't need the added information. In Dixon's framing, some atheology is additionally quasi-theological, meaning that it offers e.g. overarching narratives of life and the cosmos; he mentions science-as-worldview as one point. Clinical psychology offers a different, humbler, and vastly more powerful quasi-theological project. It offers an attempt at a secular common ground that will let people live their lives with the kind of resources that have been traditionally sought under religious auspices. As far as the *Philokalia* as the Orthodox masterwork for the science of spiritual struggle goes, at times the content of clinical psychology runs parallel to the *Philokalia* and at times it veers in a different and unrelated direction from the *Philokalia*, but it is almost a constant that clinical psychology is intended to do *Philokalia* work that will help overcome bad thoughts, preventable misery, regrettable actions, being emotionally poisoned by people who are emotionally poisonous, etc. There is of course an additional difference in that the works in the *Philokalia* are concerned with building people up for eternal glory, but clinical

psychology is meant to build people up for a positive life, and that much is common ground.

What is a religion? Can religion be secular?

Q> With so many religions [in India], how do you stay united ?

A: A common hatred of stupid Americans.

—An FAQ list written by an exasperated Indian

The term "religion" etymologically comes from Latin, "religare", which means to bind. It is the same root as in "ligament" in the human body, which do a job of connecting muscles to each other. And while the FAQ list contains some astonishingly silly questions, there is some degree of insight reflected in a realization of many religions in India leading to a question of, "How do you stay united?"

I bristled when I read scholars saying that courtly love and chivalry was the real religion of knights and nobles late in the Middle Ages, but some years later, the claim makes a lot more sense to me. The medieval versions of Arthurian legend I read before and during *The Sign of the Grail* repeatedly talked about how people didn't love (in courtly fashion) anything like the days of King Arthur, which is a signal warning that courtly love was present in a sense that was unthinkable in the claimed days of King Arthur's court. The first widespread version of Arthurian legends outside of Celtic legend were in the twelfth century; the dates reported, with mention of St. Augustine of Canterbury, put Arthur as being in the sixth century. The number of intervening centuries is roughly the same as the number of years between our time and the tail end of the medieval world.

Furthermore, I have not read Harry Potter but I would offer some contrasts. First of all, Harry Potter is produced, offered, and among the more mentally stable members of the fan base, received as a work of fiction. The version of King Arthur that first swept through mainland Europe was a work of pseudohistory produced mostly out of thin air, but was presented and received as literal history. Secondary, Harry Potter mania is not expected to be a fixture for all of a long lifetime: the cultural place we have is like nothing else in its heyday, but it is a candidate for a limelight that shone on many other things before it and is expected to shine on many things after it. The Arthurian legends were more of a Harry Potter without competition. Today one can walk in the bookstore and see fantasy novels representing many worlds; Arthurian legends tended to absorb anything beside them that was out there (like the story of Tristan and Yseult, included in Sir Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*). It might be pointed out that the present Pope as of this writing is named after a medieval Western saint, Francis of Assisi, who was named under the inspiration of France and more specifically French troubadours. I am not sure where the troubadours' lyrics began and ended, but Arthurian legends entered

the vulgar (i.e. common, instead of Latin) tongue in France and troubadours were part and parcel to what spread. Notwithstanding that the Arthurian legends take place in England, they are to this day as well-known, or better-known, in France, than the story of the (French) Roland and his paladins. The Roman Catholic Church forbade reading "idle romances," meaning, essentially, all Arthurian literature, but it seems that, in the circles of courtly love, the active endeavors of chivalry were much more on the front burner with Christianity assumed to be on the back burner, and chivalry was more of one's real religion to knights and nobles than Christianity.

One Orthodox student, perhaps not making himself particularly well-liked in a theology program by complaining about Karl Rahner's reliance on Western analytic philosophy (one particularly memorable cart-before-the-horse heading was "The presence of Christ in an evolutionary worldview"), and was answered by saying that it was to reach the unbeliever. He responded and said that he did not see why the common ground between all world religions was Western analytic philosophy. The professor said that it was to reach the unbeliever in us. The student said that Western analytic philosophy did not speak to the unbeliever in him. (The conversation moved on from there, but without uncovering any particular reason why Western analytic philosophy should fit the job description Rahner was conscripting it to do.)

In psychology today, the common ground that is legitimately given the job of a secular and artificial religion in a sense of what common ground binds us together is material derived by Buddhism and Hinduism (whether or not their incarnations would be recognized by the religious communities). Jainism is omitted perhaps because of a lack of familiarity with Indian religion. (The term "yoga," for instance, means a spiritual path, in which sense it would be natural for a Christian to claim to be practicing the Christian yoga, but yoga in the usual sense is lifted from Hinduism. As to whether Orthodox may practice yoga, as always, ask your priest; I do not see why Christians need yoga, but many priests are much more lenient than I would be.) What is presented in psychology today is a secular religion, not specifically requiring one to reverence certain deities or providing as complete a moral code as world religions, and for that matter expected to be markedly different than the secular religions offered ten years in the past and ten years in the future, and no less meant to do a religion's job because it is concocted.

Why are we seeking mindfulness from the East?

Perhaps because we because we have dismantled it in the West.



Buddhism has four noble truths, and an eightfold noble path in which a Western philosopher or historian of philosophy would recognize a path of virtue-based morality. One of them, "Right Mindfulness," has been given a heyday in the sun, although mindfulness is best understood holistically in a society where self-identified Buddhists find license to treat morality as optional (Buddhist societies and religious texts seem to find a great deal of moral debt owed to other humans, as one can likely find by reading whatever the Wikipedia page for Buddhism mentions). Virtue-based moralities are common in many world religions and world philosophical traditions; if Christianity offers a virtue-based morality, this has never been a Christian monopoly. Besides Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, for instance in the East, and Aristotle and the Stoics in the West, approach morality by virtues. There are important differences in *how* they approach morality by virtues, but the concept of virtues as such is common. (A virtue is a disposition, or an internal state influencing action, that "points towards" some category of good action and/or "points away" from some category of bad action.)

As compared to Western philosophy without much Eastern influence, there is not a packaged standalone virtue of mindfulness. Another Indian virtue that is shared between Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, *ahimsa* or not-harming, says in essence "I cannot harm you without harming myself," and while it may be easier to see from pantheism, even secular grounds can recognize that divorce is not the only misfortune that hurts all involved. Various stripes of abuse are destructive for the victim, but they are also destructive to the abuser. To steal or lie to another is also a self-violation. This virtue may not be spelled out in older Western texts, but a philosopher who knows Western virtue philosophy should be able to immediately recognize mindfulness, *ahimsa*, etc. as newly met members of the family of virtues, and possibly cardinal virtues to boot. (Cardinal virtues are virtues that are both important in themselves, and something that other virtues hinge on.)

Mindfulness is something that's part of the terrain of virtue, in the West as well as the East; it's just that with how something like a "political map" is drawn, it's not framed as its own separate territory. (This kind of thing is familiar enough to students of

philosophy and religion.) However, there are repeated points of contact between mindfulness and Fr. Thomas Hopko's "55 Maxims for the Christian Life":

1. Be always with Christ and trust God in everything.
4. Repeat a short prayer when your mind is not occupied.
8. Practice silence, inner and outer.
9. Sit in silence 20 or 30 minutes a day.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings.
23. Live a day, or even part of a day, at a time.
29. Be grateful.
30. Be cheerful.
33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake and attentive, fully present wherever you are.
35. Flee imagination, analysis, fantasy, figuring things out.

34 is not the only item that exhorts us to be mindful.

But we are rediscovering mindfulness after having dismantled it at home. One friend talked about how his grandmother complained about Walkmans, that if you are running through natural surroundings and listening to music, you are not paying due attention to your surroundings. There has been a stream of technologies, from humble, tape-eating Walkmans to the iPod's apotheosis in an iPhone and Apple Watch pairing, whose marketing proposition is to provide an ever-easier, ever-more-seductive, ever-more-compelling alternative to mindfulness. Now an iPhone can be awfully useful (I have a still-working iPhone 7), but using technology ascetically and rightly is harder than not using it at all, and Humane Tech only reaches so far.

One CEO talked about how she wanted to share one single hack, and the hack she wanted to share was that her mother gave you her full attention no matter who you were or what you were doing. And evidently this was something the CEO considered important both to do and to invite others to do. However, her mother's behavior, however virtuous, and virtuously mindful, was nothing distinctive in her generation, nor was it presented as such. Even with no concept of mindfulness as such, people in her mother's generation were taught in life, faith, and manners to give mindful attention to everyone you dealt with.

G.K. Chesterton exposes the sadness of laboring in the prison of one idea, and something similar might be said by laboring in the prison of one virtue, especially if that is not a cardinal virtue that opens to a vista of other virtues. Mindfulness, for instance, is much more worthy of attention when viewed as part of an Eightfold Noble Path of interlocking virtues. A TED talk about what makes people beat the odds, presented as original research to a virtue the presenter calls "grit," which (however much research is done) is quickly recognizable as the standard virtue of perseverance.

There may be hope for a TED talk about an interlocking family of virtues. Tim Ferris's talk about Stoicism does not discuss virtue as such, but does introduce the oblong concept that life lessons learned in ancient times can be relevant and useful today, and discusses Stoicism as the substance of a play George Washington used to strengthen his troops, and discovered as a kind of ultimate power tool by some of the top coaches in the NFL.

The first book of the *Philokalia*, moved to an appendix by formerly Protestant editors, was misattributed to one saint and the stated reason for its banishment was that it was spiritually insightful but not written by a Christian; it was Stoic and not Christian in certain respects. That may be true, but the *Philokalia* is universally human and its authors have usually been quick to borrow from, and respect, Stoic virtue philosophy.

One influential book from the West is Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*. C.S. Lewis gives its reception a cardinal place in *The Discarded Image*, and contests a tendency to have to choose between Boethius's Christianity and his philosophy. Both should be taken seriously, and the book, among other excellences, shows a Christian who has profited from the best pagan philosophy had to offer, including important Stoic elements.

We've seen a TED talk that doesn't name virtues but shows enthusiasm for ancient philosophy in which virtues were important. Perhaps someday we may have a TED talk about an ancient or modern *family* of virtues.

"Hi, my name's Joe, and I'm an alcoholic," is fundamentally not an "affirmation."

I would like to look at the phrase, "Hi, my name's Joe, and I'm an alcoholic" to dismiss two ideas that might already be obviously ridiculous.

The first is that it's sadistic, Alcoholics Anonymous rubbing member's noses into the dirt because of some cruel glee. The practice of introducing yourself as an alcoholic is part and parcel of a big picture intended to free alcoholics from a suffering you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy, perhaps reminding members that someone who has been fifteen years sober can return to bondage to alcohol. Furthermore, the main intended beneficiary of saying "Hi, my name's Joe, and I'm an alcoholic," is simply the alcoholic who says it.

The second is that it's wishful thinking. Perhaps there are some confused people who believe that it would be nice to be drunk all the time and drink more and more.

However, for someone who knows the incredibly destructive suffering alcoholism inflicts on oneself and those one loves, it is an absurdity to think of "Hi, my name's Joe, and I'm an alcoholic" as a way to talk something into being, for someone who's been stone cold sober lifelong to wish to be in cruel slavery to alcohol. "Hi, my name's Joe, and I'm an alcoholic" being an "affirmation" of wishful thinking belongs in a Monty Python sketch. The introduction as an alcoholic falls under the heading of facing already present reality.

"Here is a trustworthy saying which deserves acceptance: Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Such said St. Paul, and such is enshrined in two brief prayers before communion. Confessing oneself the chief of sinners is not a positive affirmation: but it is a handmaiden to being one Christ died for, and another saying which has rumbled down the ages, "The vilest of human sins is but a smouldering ember thrown into the ocean of God's love." The confession as the chief of sinners is not an endpoint. It is a signpost lighting up the way to, "Death is swallowed up in victory." However vile the sins one owns up to, they are outclassed in every possible way by the Lord who is addressed in, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." ("Mercy" is said to translate *chesed*, a Hebrew word usually translated as "lovingkindness.")

How do modern psychological affirmations look to a theist? A bit like trying to nourish yourself by eating cotton candy, but I'd really like to give more of an argument than an unflattering comparison. The introduction to *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* describe a shift in wisdom literature (written and other materials about how to live life well; the concept heavily overlaps both theology and psychology). The shift is from a character ethic, which says that you get ahead by moral character or moral virtue, to a personality ethic which does not call for submitting to inner transformation, and whose hallmarks include exhortations to "Believe in yourself." (Since Covey wrote his introduction, the jobhunting world is not the only arena to undergo a second fall into a personal brand ethic, but affirmations have not gotten to that point, or at least not that I'm aware of.)

Spirituality and organized religion

One Orthodox priest mentioned, for people who want to be spiritual but express distrust of organized religion, "If you don't like organized religion, you'll love Orthodoxy. We're about as disorganized as you can get." But he also had a deeper point to make.

That deeper point is that "objection to organized religion" is usually at its core "objection to someone else holding authority over me." And that is deadly, because someone else having authority over you is the gateway to much of spiritual growth.

Spirituality that is offered as neutral, and has been castrated enough not to visibly trample any mainstream demographic's religious and spiritual sensitivities, may have some effect, but true growth takes place outside of such spiritual confines.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World* almost opens on "spirituality." He discusses its vacuity, and how it exacerbates an already secular enough life. The reader is directed to him for what one might have that is better than taking a secular life and adding spirituality.

For lack of knowledge my people perish

I would like to take a moment to talk about mental illness.

The teaching of the Orthodox Church on what we understand as mental illness (see some "hard pill to swallow" prayers), as articulated by an Orthodox MD/PhD, is that the terrain we frame as mental illness has already been analyzed and addressed. Mental illnesses, or what are called such, are tangles of passion. But the psychiatrist was clear that he could and did prescribe medications to lessen patients' suffering.

One bugbear that needs to be addressed is the idea that if you are suffering from mental illness, you need more faith, and/or you just need to snap out of it. Now all of us really need more faith, and if you suffer from a mental illness, you obviously should pray. However, trying to pray hard enough to make it go away may not work any better than trying to snap out of it.

Now, with caveats, I would recommend Orthodox Christians with mental illness to see a psychiatrist and/or a counselor. Their methods can be very effective, and for all my writing about ersatz religion, they can significantly reduce suffering.

The caveat I would give is not theologically motivated. It is that there are excellent psychiatrists and counselors, but psychology is a minefield, with counselors who will tell you to use pornography and masturbate. If I were looking for a provider, I would do research and/or ask someone you trust to do research for you (if, for instance, you are depressed enough that it's difficult to get out of bed). And if your provider seems to be acting inappropriately or displaying incompetence, it may be the entirely right decision to switch providers.

However, there is one piece more that the secular category of psychology does not understand. *Mental illness can improve dramatically when you delve into new layers of repentance.* While it doesn't work to just try harder to have more faith, as you walk the Orthodox journey of repentance you will see things to repent of, and some of that repentance can slowly help untangle the knot of passions that the Fathers of the *Philokalia* knew, and *St. Isaac the Syrian*, a saint who has benefitted many mentally ill people.

The reason this section is titled "For lack of knowledge my people perish" is that we usually don't see what we need to repent of to work at that level. We don't know the steps. The solution I would expect is to work hard to repent, and make your confession include that one sin that you are wishing to forget when you confess. But walk on the journey of repentance: Repentance is Heaven's best-kept secret. Monasticism is rightly called repentance, but the treasure of repentance is for everyone.

For those for whom this is a live option, the care of a spiritual director receives a central endorsement in *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, a classic which says that if patristic spiritual direction were to be introduced today, it would not likely be classified as religion so much as a therapeutic science. A good, experienced spiritual director who is familiar with mental illness as understood in Orthodoxy can be a much better alternative to fumbling around until you find out what sin you need to repent of and reject to turn your back on a particular point of mental illness. "For lack of knowledge my people perish" can be greatly alleviated by a spiritual director who understands classic Orthodox teaching on mental illness.

One more thing: a wise Orthodox protopresbyter said, "Avoid amateur psychologists. They usually have more problems than the rest of us!"
Et cetera

There are other things I do not wish to treat in detail. After it has been observed that clinical psychology often takes a person who is miserable and raise that person to feeling OK, but not rise above feeling OK, there has been a "positive psychology" meant for everyone, to help people rise above OK and make use of great talents. I would comment briefly that monasticism is both a supreme medicine for those of us who need some extra structure, *and* a school for positive excellence, and the latter is more central than the former.

In terms of "Christian psychology," Cloud and Townsend's *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No* is consistently violent to Biblical texts in the process of presenting secular boundaries as Christian. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is ludicrous hyperbole, and not properly understood until it is recognized as ludicrous hyperbole, in which the Good Samaritan goes through a road infested by brigands, gambles with his life when he gives in to what would ordinarily be the bait to brigands' oldest and deadliest trick in the book, and so on. It was made to make the listener who asked Christ, "Who is my neighbor?" profoundly uncomfortable. Cloud and Townsend, however, present the Good Samaritan as giving a moderate and measured response, and asks us to imagine the rescued victim asking the Samaritan to give even more, and the Good Samaritan wisely saying, "No."

If you have to be that violent to the Bible to make it agree with you, you're almost certainly wrong.

And there are other things. I'm not going to try to detail life without thinking in terms of boundaries, beyond saying that Christianity, and almost certainly not only Christianity, has a concept of "Love your neighbor as yourself" that unfolds into right relations with other people, but without psychology's concept of boundaries.

Let me mention one more point.

Honest?

Perhaps most striking of all was a session under the heading of honesty, and showed a TED talk where a psychiatrist shared (in retrospect and in context, this seems like a deliberate name-drop) that he was named after his father, a Baptist minister. Then he came out as an illegitimate child, and I would like to repeat why my own parents do not like the term "bastard."

While they wanted to teach polite language, my parents did not object to the term "bastard" because it is forceful enough to be a rude word. They objected to the term "bastard" because the term refers to someone who did not and could not have any say or any agency in a wrong decision. If there is a term forceful enough to be a rude word in this context, and the relevant act was consensual, the abrasive word should refer to the parents and not the child. And now that we've mostly retired the use of words like "adulterer" and "fornicator", we have an abrasive term for the victim who had no choice in a matter and not those who made the victimhood and the victim. If the worst TMI delivery in the TED talk was that the psychiatrist was an illegitimate child, one could have answered, "Well, Christ was also born from a scandalous pregnancy." But in fact this is not all the TMI psychiatrist was "sharing."

Back to the TED talk. Coming out as a bastard was a softening up of the audience for behavior in which the psychiatrist genuinely *did* have agency. He then came out as a philanderer; he did not use any negative terms, but talked about honesty and authenticity when he opened up to his wife, now his 2nd ex-wife whom he presents as not really harmed, and shared to her, of himself, that he was both *married* and *dating*. It was, to adapt a striking phrase from Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*, a confession with total absence of contrition or repentance.

No light bulbs went on above staff members' heads when patients complained that this was the most autistic version of honesty they had yet seen endorsed by a mental health professional, and explained that you don't open a coat and say "Here's all there is to see, whether or not seeing it will help you," or that you don't bleed all over a casual acquaintance who asks "How are you?" in passing; as sometimes has to be explained to the autistic patient, it is rarely a shirking of due honesty to withhold a full-strength informational answer in responding to a merely social question.

And perhaps no light bulbs should have gone on over staff heads because the session on honesty had nothing to do with honesty. Staff members were in fact not

ignorant of the major concept of "negative politeness" and that right speech usually both conceals and reveals. Ostensible "honesty" was just how an unrelated payload was delivered.

To spell it out, the payload is that whatever sexual practices you find yourself most drawn to pursue, and others pursue, is your real, authentic self, and honesty takes that as a non-negotiable foundation. The lecture was devoid of any clear or even vague reference to any stripe of queers (or whatever they are called this week), and if the speaker's philandering tried out dating a guy, he did not disclose this point. But as much as coming out as an illegitimate child paved the way for coming out as a philanderer, accepting his coming out as a philanderer on the terms he presented was masterfully crafted to pave the way to saying the *only* real payload to that TED talk: "The sexual practices you are most drawn to engage in are your real, authentic self, and authenticity starts with accepting these practices as its foundation," and if one labors under the delusion that a successful straight marriage is what happens when one man, and one woman, lay the reins on the horse's neck, one is in a position that has little to no ground to dissent from a position of, "If you allow straight marriage to be authentic, you have to give queers the same right too."

The entire session ostensibly offered to teach honesty was itself treacherously dishonest.

(Queer advocacy has long since been baked into the societal common ground that psychology deems inoffensive to all religions.)

Conclusion: Beyond solipsism

The goal and lesson of psychology is quite often solipsistic. There are exceptions: positive psychology may cover three versions of the good life, the last and deepest version being the meaningful life, a non-solipsistic life of service to others. (Though this is seldom covered in psychology, service to others gives a real happiness). However, a session on boundaries covers how to establish and maintain our own boundaries, but probably does not cover respecting other boundaries, including when someone draws a boundary when you think it would be so much better not to establish the boundaries. The further you go, the tightest the constriction of solipsistic self-care. The endgame approached by most pillars of counseling psychology is a client with self-contained happiness.

In Orthodoxy, we do one better: "Only God and I exist."

"Only God and I exist." What does that mean? In a nutshell, the only standing that ultimately matters is your standing before God. Now the Orthodox Church has various forms of mediated grace, and that mediation may be included. However, the only one you need seek to please is God; if you are pleasing God, it doesn't matter what people

may do, or even the demons. Arrogance has a place; we are summoned to be rightly and properly arrogant of the demons in pleasing God. And trample them.

One major difference between ancient Judaism and its neighbors was that, as God's people knew, there was only one God, and our problem before him was sin; if one has sinned, the one and only necessary remedy was atonement. The polytheistic neighbors believed in something much less rational, not to mention far less humane, was that one could do things that offended one or more gods, and the solution to this situation was to appease the offended deity, but unfortunately what appeased one deity could offend another. The unfortunate picture was much like the fool's errand of being on friendly terms with everyone in a bickering junior high.

St. Moses is in fact one who confessed what Orthodox believe as "Only God and I exist."

Once one has crossed that ground, and found that there is only one God to serve and offer our repentance, we move beyond the junior high of our life circumstances... and find that the one God is in fact the Lord of the Dance and the Orchestrator of all Creation. And this time everything besides oneself again becomes real, but not ultimately real. There are billions of people in the world whom we should love, and we should show virtue and politeness to all we meet, but in the end only God has the last word.

Psychology offers a narrower and narrower constriction if you take it a guide to living with others. "Only God and I exist," by contrast, opens wider and wider and wider, in a solipsism that is vaster than the Heavens that it, also, embraces. It is a solipsism in which you are summoned to dance the Great Dance with your neighbors and all Creation!

If you need psychology and psychiatry, by all means, use them. But remember that only God and you exist!

Much Love,
C.J.S. Hayward

A Humanist Eye Looks at Evolution

One minor turning point, which I mention as an example of a type of humanist observation, was when I was in a doctor's office and read a forceful "MYTH vs. FACT" for the MMR vaccine. What struck me was, "You're fighting awfully hard for someone who is running unopposed!"

Earlier, after a hostile reception on a mailing list, I wrote, "The Evolution of a Perspective on Creation and Origins," and shortly after "Why Young Earthers Aren't Completely Crazy" which suggests that young earth creationism drew an unfortunate line in the sand, but they were not wrong to draw a line. Origins questions have been periodically addressed in these pages; it is a very good thing if you don't have the background to get "Fr. Cherubim (Jones) Anathematized by the Canonical Autonomous True Orthodox Synod in Dissent, of the Dregs of the Dregs of Rubbish Outside of Rubbish Bins (RORB)," which discusses a polarizing thinker whose bellicose followers insist that the universe is only 7500 miles in size. (I neglected to develop a corresponding "Small World Science.") If there is one piece that I consider edifying of the lot, it is by far "Two Decisive Moments."

In terms of my education, I have an M.S. in math from UIUC and an M.Phil. in theology from Cambridge (plus doctoral coursework from Fordham). I had many evolution-centric biology courses before college, though I would really not paint myself as an expert in biology; I do, however, intend to be frank about the limitations of my biological study and do my reader a basic courtesy of not presenting guesses as facts. As an undergraduate, I had a couple of advanced courses in probability and statistics;

however this does not matter terribly much as the statistics I use are driven by concepts that should be reasonably presented in Statistics 101.

While I would downplay the significance of my scientific knowledge here and I wouldn't want to overemphasize my quite limited knowledge of biology (for instance, I don't know what are the standard lines of arguments to put the phyla of the Cambrian explosion in an orderly evolutionary sequence rather than all at once), I do not wish to downplay the status I have as an unemployed humanities scholar. One wonderful Roman priest I knew, who was conservative and could every bit say Rome's Creed without crossing his fingers, listened to me wanting to study theology and he explained that his spiritual father wanted him to study under "the best bad guys," and the bishop overrode his decision because a more conservative school would happen to get him graduating faster and be back in ecclesiastical action. His point in mentioning this was not in any sense that he wanted me to go liberal; he was asking me to consider, not trying to find a school that was sufficiently conservative, but that I should actively choose to study under "the best bad guys."

My first thesis in theology, "Dark Patterns / Anti-Patterns and Cultural Context Study of Scriptural Texts: A Case Study in Craig Keener's 'Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul,'" was part and parcel a study of shady argument. I rightly or wrongly brought in the context of a pattern as it originated in architecture and then object-oriented computer programmers, and offered a framework to classify bad arguments. And in this study, I continued to grow some sensitivities that I had already started earlier: sensitivities to what is clean argument, and what is dirty argument. The difference matters quite a lot; clean argument is only convincing if you're somewhere near the truth, where dirty argument "includes the gift of making any color appear white," if I may quote Ambrose Bierce. I can count on one finger the number of times I was given dirty argument that told a truth I would have done well to heed.

I might call myself a "dislodged intelligent design member", meaning that I don't know how much intelligent design I accept, but evolutionary apologetics push me away.

For one example, that has happened a couple of times, the evolutionary apologist denies Darwin's original picture of a slow evolution, but articulates a "punk eek" (formally "punctuated equilibrium") scenario where when things are stable, they will probably be stable for a long time, but when things are chaotic, there is a much greater incentive to make big changes quickly, until equilibrium is restored. And what I failed completely to communicate is that there might have been a much greater incentive to make big changes quickly, there is no explanation offered, or at least none that would not embarrass a statistician, to say that there is an ability for a breeding population to acquire and sustain a large number of beneficial changes quickly.

The earliest and perhaps most striking example I remember was, wet behind the ears, I brought up intelligent design in a forum with alumni from the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. Before presenting a conclusion, I asked a question: suppose that I claim to be able to predict lottery numbers in advance. I do it once, and you think it's an odd coincidence. I do it twice, and you think it's a really odd coincidence. If I continue, and we suppose for the sake of argument that I can make at most one prediction per minute, I can only predict for a forty hour workweek, and I will die of old age at 70 if nothing else gets me sooner, is there any way I could predict enough lottery tickets to convince you that I can genuinely predict lottery tickets? I was answered that yes, I could be taken to predict lottery tickets with "no more than a dozen" predictions. I then proceeded to show that at very least the production of new Cambrian life forms by mutagen exposure (I had allowed for the possibility of mutagen exposure at least for the sake of argument) was much, much more improbable than correctly predicting a dozen lottery numbers in advance by mere chance. To this I was given a response of, "There may be some things we can never know;" closing out a theistic argument at the price of not having a valid explanation was better than acknowledging intelligent design as an apparent part of the explanation. Perhaps surprisingly, or not surprising at all given the humility of greatness, the one member of the entire discussion who did not try to jackhammer down intelligent design was... a microbiology graduate student. He did not claim to be convinced, but he said, "You appear to be well-read," which is in one sense politeness, but I believe the non-committal tone was genuine, and I further believe that if he had seen a hole or an impossibility in the argument I presented, he would have said so politely but plainly. The microbiology graduate student was the one other person in the discussion who refrained from slamming me and saving naturalist evolution at any cost. I don't think I convinced him, but it was the one discussion partner who knew the most about neo-Darwinian evolution and dealt with it on most intimate terms who was most open to my statement that mutagen exposure does not account for the Cambrian explosion in any way that makes sense to a statistician.

If I may expose my ignorance of alchemy for a moment, rumor has it that alchemy was not originally just one more scheme to make money fast; it recalls a comment by Chesterton(?) that compared some desire to a spiritualist's desire to see a nymph's breasts, as opposed to the straightforward lecher's desire to see a nymph's breasts. In Western history, there has been extraordinarily strong incentive and desire to turn lead into gold, and while during some childhood some nuclear physicists whimsically made gold into lead by a few nuclei, even if their method were reversible the energy would be prohibitively expensive compared to old-fashioned gold mining. Today we are having a renaissance of renaissance alchemy, and we again have a very strong incentive to turn lead into gold; more broadly capitalistic economies would heavily reward, at least

temporarily, someone who could turn cheaper materials into gold with revenues vastly exceeding expenses. For the transformation to happen, alchemy needs not only have incentive; it needs a live possibility, a possibility not known to exist under mainstream science.

What has been asserted to me, by naturalist evolutionists, is on statistical grounds the equivalent of there being long stretches of people steadily buying lottery tickets but rarely if ever does someone draw a winning lottery ticket, then somewhere completely off the fossil record a breeding population wins one lottery after another after another, and finally, after they have won enough lottery tickets, the environment stabilizes and the incentive to innovate recedes.

This is the assertion as it has been given to me. I knew two theistic evolutionists but I do not know their responses to such arguments (in this case, formulated after our last real conversation), because socially whenever I tried to make a point about intelligent design, they shut me down completely and prevented me from even beginning an argument. For the more forceful of the two, this was not his boilerplate behavior; when he was contradicted by someone and he knew he was right, he would let the other person fill out his argument completely, then allow the conversation to explain why the other person was wrong.

I have doubts about intelligent design as presented. I was dismayed to find out that one Orthodox brotherhood, in making a posthumous book on origins, had asked Philip Johnson to write the introduction, and the introduction reeked of having been written by a lawyer. It masterfully avoided treating the question of the age of the universe, so that young earth creationists and old earth creationists could read it and see their own reflection. However, the single, simple strongest reason to believe I was onto something in reading intelligent design materials was simply that it is the one topic of any short where I was always rudely shut down socially before I could begin to make my point. That is not the behavior of people who know they are right!

I am going to leave the example of the pepper moth itself at a brief mention. As far as the pepper moth goes, I have heard that Darwin's version of the pepper moth example is not the image that has been copied by many hands, and so what I read in intelligent design about the pepper moth example not being an example of natural selection creating or at least making some population extinct, I'm merely going to acknowledge that people have discussed the point from different angles.

What I do not wish to be silent on, because I have seen it in living discourse in my own time, is tuskless elephants. And what arguments Johnson gives for the pepper moth are relevant here. In the case of tuskless elephants, we do not have an example of a new feature being suddenly developed. We have an example of a feature being suddenly removed. Furthermore, the feature is not new. Historically, something like 3% of female elephants have been tuskless; the proportion of tuskless elements is "only" a major shift

in which individuals within a genetic population sport a feature ("phenotype"). The source I was read that ordinarily, tuskless males are unable to mate, but in these careful words it contained no assertion that tuskless males never appear. Among humans (and, for I know, elephants), until recent treatments hemophilia would make someone bleed to death, quite possibly well before reproductive age. (If untreated hemophilia allows patients to live long enough to successfully reproduce, substitute Tay-Sachs Disease.) Regarding Robert A. Heinlein's eugenic comment that the only real cure for hemophilia is to let all hemophiliacs bleed to death, *H. sapiens sapiens* has been around, on some counts, 400,000 years, and hemophiliacs' bleeding to death all that time has not removed them from the gene pool. Heinlein's remark may be heartless, but that does not make it intelligent or show a perceptive grasp of biology: a breeding pool can and often will produce individuals with phenotypes that do not get to mate. There may be a few tuskless bull elephants; we are not told the frequency merely by a statement that tuskless males do not ordinarily get to mate.

The tuskless elephant example is brought as an example of the kind of change that powers Darwinism, and that it is not. It has suppressed what is normally a feature of elephantine anatomy; it has not created new or additional organs. We, or at least I, have never heard of pachyderms developing even stronger and tougher forms of skin that will repel poachers' machine gun fire. "All" that has happened, as with pepper moths, is that two existing variations are being altered in their frequency, possibly permanently and possibly for a time as with pepper moths.

It used to be that Intelligent Design drew me by its apologetic arguments; it is now evolutionist apologetic arguments that repel me. I haven't read anything new to me in intelligent design that was convincing; I have read evolutionary assertions that convincingly demonstrated flaws. I remember being the only person in a Ph.D. program to dissent from Darwinian evolution - and almost assuredly the only person in the Ph.D. program who could explain the difference between paleo-Darwinian evolution, the slow process, and neo-Darwinian evolution, the punk eek, or why, as I put it once before, "Darwin's theory of evolution has been dead in the academy for so long that it no longer even smells bad."

It used to be that naturalists would accuse theists of a "God of the gaps", a God whose heavy lifting lies in the gaps of scientific knowledge. The allegation was meant to sting, but not by being impossible: in the set of all conceivable circumstances, we could have (for one non-biology example) God holding together the nuclei of all multi-proton atoms because the protons are all positive and electrically repel each other. The implication is more that you're on the losing end of an argument if your God has to hide in the gaps of our knowledge. But now we are seeing a "natural selection of the gaps," a natural selection that does most or all of its true heavy lifting in geological eyeblinks without direct remaining evidence of intermediate forms: it all hides in tiny areas where

paleontology has nothing positive to tell us. And if tuskless elephants are given as an example of positive additions being made in a geological eyeblink, perhaps that is because evolutionary apologists do not know any better example to offer.

In addition, C.S. Lewis, before intelligent design, played the self-referential incoherence card and explained why naturalist forms of evolution could not possibly be true. The basic argument he gives is as follows: romantic love can be explained away as a biochemical state, but there's a nasty backswing to that explanation: by the same stroke as it explains away romantic love, it also explains away all explanation, including the explanation of romantic love. If mental states, including holding scientific theories, are just permutations of matter, then it is a category error to assign truth or falsehood to such a permutation of matter. Mere physical states do not rise to the dignity of error. The theory of evolution may explain why we have brains good enough to recognize food and avoid natural dangers; it does not explain why we have brains good enough to formulate a theory of evolution, or for that matter any scientific theory ordinarily deemed worthy of provisional assent. Possibly theistic evolutionists have an option of saying that God did something special when humans came forth: I would want to understand a theistic theory of evolution better before deciding whether I would play a self-referential incoherence card. However, I have not heard of a way to deal with this from naturalist evolution, and I would note that it was a matter of great consternation to C.S. Lewis, not that people did not agree with his objection, but that few people were able to see what the objection was at all. This one point is not one I've pulled from interactions with evolutionists, but it represents something similar in Lewis's own observations: not, specifically, that they failed to agree with his argument that evolution is an explanation that explains away all explanation, but that people were in most cases completely unable to see a serious philosophical objection to evolution producing brains that could produce a scientific theory of evolution. He wasn't upset that people rejected his point (they apparently didn't); he was upset that people didn't see what his point was in the first place.

Before intelligent design, I was a settled theistic evolutionist; afterwards, I was straightforwardly a member of intelligent design; now I am wary of intelligent design but on a humanist's eye can't see why evolution is true. But it is on increasingly humanist grounds that I look at a movement, I look at discourse, and I say that evolution is everywhere but it repeatedly fails to have the ring of truth. I regard neo-Darwinian (punk eek) evolution as a theory in crisis, and I stand, perhaps, as a churchman without a church.

The Hydra

A Surprise About "Joy"

Before beginning a critique that begins with C.S. Lewis, I should stop to pause and state that the choice of C.S. Lewis is deliberate and intended to be provocative. C.S. Lewis is considered by many Christians to be their chief spokesman in the modern age; though it would unfairly impute to him an unworthy calculating approach, he made deliberate choices to try to stay within what he called "mere Christianity," meaning classic, little 'o' (o)rthodoxy, the Christianity of orthodox Christians, who might be described in Oden's turn of phrase as "people who can say the Creed without crossing their fingers." Most of people somewhere within the confines of Lewis's mere Christianity, can look at most of what Lewis says and find that there are mostly things they can accept. Different groups of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestants who remain in continuity with historic roots and recognizable Christianity may believe things Lewis doesn't say, but a snatch of Lewis from almost anywhere attracts most real Christians. And needless to say, this is not the only thing Lewis had going for him. He was a brilliant author yet able to communicate clearly and simply; he was an able expositor; and he had a formation in much of what is best in Western literature, a formation that enriched first of all his fiction and fantasy but also affected his nonfiction. And he was, himself, a person who could say the Creed without crossing his fingers, and a good deal more than that. If one is going to look for an able spokesman for any spiritually alive form of 20th century Christianity, C.S. Lewis is at least one of the front runners, and

depending on the circles you move in, it might be said that choosing anyone else is a choice that requires justification.

And that is why I would like to begin my investigations with him.

C.S. Lewis, in one pivotal passage in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, wrote:

...The first is itself the memory of a memory. As I stood beside a flowering currant bush on a summer day there suddenly arose in me without warning, and as if from a depth not of years but of centuries, the memory of that earlier morning at the Old House when my brother had brought his toy garden into the nursery. It is difficult to find words strong enough for the sensation which came over me; Milton's "enormous bliss" of Eden (giving the full, ancient meaning to "enormous") comes somewhere near it. It was a sensation, of course, of desire; but desire for what? not, certainly, for a biscuit tin filled with moss, nor even (though that came into it) for my own past.

Ἰουλιανποθω [Oh, I desire too much]—and before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, the whole glimpse withdrawn, the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing for the longing that had just ceased. It had taken only a moment of time; and in a certain sense everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in comparison.

The second glimpse came through *Squirrel Nutkin*; through it only, though I loved all the Beatrix Potter books. But the rest of them were merely entertaining; it administered the shock; it was a trouble. It troubled me with what I can only describe as the Idea of Autumn. It sounds fantastic to say that one can be enamored of a season, but that is something like what happened; and, as before, the experience was one of intense desire. And one went back to the book, not to gratify the desire (that was impossible—how can one possess Autumn?) but to reawake it. And in this experience also there was the same surprise and the same sense of incalculable importance. It was something quite different from ordinary life and even from ordinary pleasure; something, as they would now say, "in another dimension."

The third glimpse came through poetry. I had become fond of Longfellow's "Saga of King Olaf:" fond of it in a casual, shallow way for its story and its vigorous rhythms. But then, and quite different from such pleasures, and like a voice from far more distant regions, there came a moment when I idly turned the pages of the book and found the unrhymed translation of "Tegner's Drapa" and read

I heard a voice that cried,
Balder the Beautiful
Is dead, is dead—

I knew nothing about Balder; but instantly I was uplifted into huge regions of northern sky, I desired with almost sickening intensity something never to be described (except that it is cold, spacious, severe, pale, and remote) and then, as in the other examples, found myself at the very same moment already falling out of that desire and wishing I were back in it.

The reader who finds these three episodes of no interest need read this book no further, for in a sense the central story of my life is about nothing else. For those who are still disposed to proceed I will only underline the quality common to the three experiences; it is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished from both Happiness and from Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again. Apart from that, and considered only in its quality, it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures of the world. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is.

I know that desire. I know it intimately, and it has been called one of the central defining characteristics. And, as is said in *Ostrov*, "I know [the demon] personally." It is a form of covetousness, one that dwarfs the mere covetousness inspired by car ads, which portray luxury cars as mysterious, sensual, and intimate, and are in their own way "a particular kind of unhappiness or grief", and which are in their own lesser way "a kind we want." So far as I know, the *Philokalia*, which are (more than any other collection I've read, including the Bible) the science of interior struggle and spiritual warfare) says nothing of this secular enrapturement in its description of human beatitude. It does, perhaps, discuss something like this in the demon of noonday; today monks are perennially warned of the passion of escaping the here and now in which God has placed us, and the strict monastic is ordinarily to stay in one's cell and fight the demon of noonday. One classic story tells of a monk who said he defeated the demon of noonday by visiting an elder, and another monk sharply corrected him: far from defeating the demon of noonday, his trip was giving in to the demon of noonday. This longing, called *Sehnsucht* by the Romantics (and remember that C.S. Lewis's first

work after returning to Christianity was *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Defense of Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism*, is eloquently given voice in a work connecting conservative Christianity with Jungian psychology in "Brent Curtis's *Less-Wild Lovers: Standing at the Crossroads of Desire*," which was published in *Mars Hill Review*, republished along with *First Things* and other heavyweights in the conservative *Christian Leadership University*, and been gobbled up by complementarians (I am one) with works such as John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart*. But there is an issue, not with complementarianism as such (though complementarians may jump at a literate voice saying something out of [lock]step with feminism), but with what is not present in *Less-Wild Lovers*. And I would challenge the reader to look at the compelling, haunting picture in *Less-Wild Lovers*, and ask what is not there for something that complains to be Christian: where, in the entire piece, is the human plight described in terms of the sin and evils condemned by Christian tradition? For the moment let's set aside the question of whether sin is understood, as in *Pilgrim's Progress*, through the paradigm example of a judicial crime, or whether it is understood as in Orthodoxy through the paradigm example of a disease. John Bunyan and an Orthodox Christian can alike say that judged by the paradigm of the Ten Commandments, we don't stack up, and the Ten Commandments provide a yardstick of something seriously important in human living. Where in the entire article is the yardstick of human failing associated with such things as are in the Ten Commandments? And once a problem is admitted, where does God stand with regard to the center of things? Admittedly one is invited to a larger spiritual world, but when does the advocated "way of the heart" revolve around Christ? Admittedly the differences here between Protestant and Orthodox are significant, but even with these differences where does the thesis that we are marred by sin and saved by Christ ever shape the outlook in the article? *Less-Wild Lovers* compellingly concentrates something that diluted C.S. Lewis's Christianity, something that helps make the *The Chronicles of Narnia* compelling, and a clue to something that is rotten in the state of Denmark. The longing C.S. Lewis appeals to is a form of covetousness, one I am too familiar with, and seriously not-cool.

The question of whether Lewis's ardent longing is covetousness is not purely academic. If you ask, "If it is sin, and it makes his life happier, does it really matter?" then my answer will be, "It didn't make Lewis's life happy, or at least it didn't make my life happy. The moment of haunting is sweet, whether or not one appreciates it at the time. But it darkens the overall picture. The times in my life when I have been most governed by 'Joy,' as Lewis calls it, have been the times when I was more unhappy, and times when I made others unhappy." But I am getting ahead of myself. The question of whether something is sin is in fact closely related to whether it will make us more unhappy.

In "A Pet Owner's Rules," I said, God is like a pet owner who only has two rules:

1. **I am your Owner.** Receive freely of the food and drink I have given you.
2. Don't drink out of the toilet.

And, I argued, all sin is drinking out of the toilet. For example, getting drunk may feel enticingly nice the first time or two. But being drunk all the time, as any recovering alcoholic will tell you, is suffering you wouldn't want on your worst enemy. And covetousness as a whole is drinking out of the toilet. Pornography, with its lustful shade of covetousness, begins by being very enticing, but lust is the disenchantment of the entire universe: first pornography disenchants everything that is not porn, and then it progressively disenchants itself. And it also fits to add that ordinary covetousness is pleasant at first. Watching a really enticing commercial may help you understand the words, "Having is not as pleasing as wanting. It is not logical, but it is often true." But the cost of covetousness is a loss of contentment. One begins by not being satisfied by what one has, and ends by not being satisfied by what one can get. Buying things may get momentary satisfaction, but the ultimate delivery, if you can buy what you covet, is nicer things and with them less contentment than one had before. And in these lines, it matters a great deal whether the intense longing of "Joy" or *Sehnsucht* is in fact covetousness. If it makes the human person settled in happiness, this is news to the Orthodox spiritual person. Everything that is like it is deemed unhelpful in the ascetical literature; avarice is poison, and obeying the demon of noonday is poison. I don't see that my own extensive experience with Joy has made me happy, and even its advocate in Lewis openly says that it can be seen as an intense joy or an intense wounded unhappiness. Admittedly we are to yearn for Christ God, perhaps in a sublimation of the impulse to yearn for created things, and some authors use 'eros' or 'yearning' in relation to God: but neither Lewis nor Curtis finds this desire to be particularly a desire for God. The cost of yearning something that, unlike cars and chewing gum, I cannot have no matter how much money I have, is like the more vulgar yearning stimulated by commercials. It seems palatial from the inside, like a doorway to a larger space, and it costs me something, namely contentment with what God has given me now. Some times I have recognized that my actions when I have been in the service of such yearning have been toxic. I now remember not a single time in my life when I have been happy that such yearnings have been prominent. If, as Lewis says, these yearnings are such that in their service one would choose them over happiness, perhaps this is not a mark of how wonderfully good they are. Perhaps it is a mark of how foul they are.

The hydra, or one end of a fallen tree branch

I have written a fair amount of what is more or less nonmagical fantasy (short stories: "The Spectacles," "Stephanos," "Within the Steel Orb;" novellas: "The Steel Orb," "Firestorm 2034," "The Sign of the Grail"), enough so that one fellow author, in a conversation where someone said the first three books by an author establish his brand, suggested that my brand might itself be nonmagical fantasy. And it is something I would not like to be my brand now, but it is a clue to something significant.

I had stepped away from most fantasy with its portrayal of magic; in response to friends who said, "Why can't we have fantasy with different physical laws?" I said (besides a bit about physics) that they were asking not for fantasy with different *physical* laws, but different *moral* laws, and I asked why they didn't want fantasy in which other unlawful things besides magic were all kosher. The "different physical laws" seemed to always mean laws that would allow life as we know it (which is astronomically improbable: for physical constants alone, getting things right enough to allow us to live would require precision in excess of a marksman who could hit a proton from the opposite side of the universe), but in addition allow occult activity without what Christianity has regarded as occult sin. And why, I asked, if one could allow such things under the heading of different physical laws, why not envision universes in which sexual sins were innocent and harmless? And amidst all this, I sought to recreate fantasy, but without magic... which is to say that I sought to excise portrayal of magic from a fabric woven from the same root. I removed the picture but kept the frame on the wall. What fantasy offers is an alternative to the here and now, an alternative that crystallizes in the portrayal of magic. And I had removed magic from fantasy but retained the ambient orientation that powers magical fantasy.

What I am interested in here is a nexus that is something like a many-headed hydra: it appears in different places and different ways, but it is connected to the same reality (or, perhaps, unreality) underneath. People have said, "You pick up one end of a stick, you pick up the other," and while this nexus is perhaps more like a branch that keeps forking, with many places one can pick it up, it is still aspects of the same thing.

Magic as an unnatural vice

My most recent haunting of "Joy" came with a desire for spring greenery and nature, by assumption in a neo-Pagan light. There are a couple of issues here; for one issue, our worship of nature is a worship of an idealized nature that cuts away plants that grow naturally because they are "weeds" (the definition of a "weed" is a plant I don't want, and the kinds of plants that intrude on our gardens as weeds tend to be those best suited to the local ecology), and puts plants that are ill-suited to grow in the area, perhaps needing extensive fresh water in an environment where fresh water is scarce.

But the other, deeper issue has to be that when we reach for natural religion our eyes search for neo-paganism, perhaps Druidry. It was always with a faintly guilty conscience that in looking for wallpaper for my computer, I grasped for wallpapers of Stonehenge. Now I do not object to nature wallpaper as such; I have a waterfall wallpaper on my computer now and a clean conscience with it. But the Stonehenge wallpaper has to do with imagining nature in a pagan light. Perhaps this is a pagan light that neo-pagans and Druids would recognize; perhaps they would call it an outsider's conception. But in either case, as with the recent haunting of Joy, my reaching for nature was a grasping that had Romantic, pagan, or occult resonance.

But the Fathers regard occult sin as an unnatural vice. (There are other unnatural vices besides queer sexuality.) Our more ordinary adoration of nature seems to express itself in wanting to make it something it is not, culling plants that grow naturally as weeds and then trying hard to make "better" plants grow outside of their normal operating range. My haunting mentioned before was for spring greenery; I didn't respect that where I live, at this time of year, it is right and proper for everything green (besides evergreens) to be buried beneath a thick mantle of snow. (At least I didn't go to shovel the yard to make it like my idealization.)

But there is a deeper sense in which nature-worship, or nature-magic, is unnatural. It is a bit like getting into a test-taking strategy where the only live question is how to best go about cheating on a test, and discussion of taking test is not about any legitimate method of test-taking, but only of how to cheat.

If there is anything that is natural for us to have, it is the here and now, and the plain sense of the here and now. This "here and now" may be out of doors, or it may be inside a house, or it may be in an even more artificial environment like Antarctica or an airplane cockpit. But regardless of which of these possibilities we are actually in, "Your cell will teach you everything you need to know," and escape from the here and now is unnatural cheating on a test. It's not learning the main lesson brought by the here and now. And if nature is looked to as providing the substance of an escape, then nature is being looked to for something unnatural. Stepping out of a house into something green may momentarily provide escape; but the nature of "out of doors" is no more permanently exotic than "indoors." If the out of doors appears to us to have a shimmer of something magical, a shimmer of exotic escape from the here and now, then we are using nature to dodge the chief lesson that nature is intended to teach us. We are being unnatural in our use of nature herself.

I have mentioned Lewis's "Joy" and my "nonmagical fantasy" as heads of this many-headed hydra. It is also the poison that animates unnatural occult use of nature; for other heads, look at "metaphysics" in the occult sense, which is not (like the "metaphysics" of philosophy proper) a discipline of delving into the roots of existence as we know it, but using mental gymnastics, acrobatics, contortions to dodge the plain

sense of existence as we know it. Gnosticism is seductively appealing, but there is a catch. The Gnostic appeal hinges on a spiritual climate of despair in the here and now; its good news is a salvation from the here and now. To someone who is genuinely happy, who appreciates the here and now, gnosticism will fall on deaf ears; it is like offering completely free chemotherapy to someone who has no trace of cancer. Video games, iPhones, special effects in movies, and an almost limitless array of technical options obviate the need to pursue the spiritual discipline of Gnosticism or occult practice to escape the here and now, also provide a way out of the dull here and now—and make the here and now duller in the process! The list is open-ended and seemingly limitless; one of the characteristics of pride to the degree of prelest (which has been called "spiritual illusion" and "spiritual lust") is a progressive disengagement from the here and now, absorbed in funhouse mirrors.

Awakening

There were many years when I read *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and wished to be in another world, wished to be in Narnia and contradictorily wished to have in this world something from another world. The desire is a self-defeating: in my case, not coveting something like a watch or a car that I could perhaps buy if I could spare the money, nor for something like the Mona Lisa that physically exists even if it's not for sale, but a desire for something that, almost by definition, "If I can have it, by that very fact it is not what I want." It's a bit like wanting to drink wine from an unopened bottle: as soon as the bottle is open and the wine available to drink, it ceases to be what I want.

More recently, after years of struggling against this kind of coveting, which was in turn after decades of struggling to satisfy this kind of coveting, I remember thinking of Narnia as something I didn't want—I wanted things that were real. And I started to less want things I don't have, and more want things I do have. One saint said that we should desire whatever conditions we have, instead of desiring other conditions.

And it may turn out in the end that happiness was, like a pair of glasses, on our nose the whole time. If we let go of paganism as a way to connect with nature, we may find that Orthodoxy has held this connection with nature all the time, in details like the flowers adorning icon stands and the saying that if you have two small coins you should use one to buy prosphora and the other to buy flowers for the icons, to the status of the Orthodox Church as the vanguard of the whole visible Creation returning to her Lord, to monastics who cultivate a connection with God and end up having a connection to the natural world as well, to everything discussed in Hymn to the Creator of Heaven and Earth. It turns out that the idea of paganism and Romanticism as the way to connect with nature was a decoy, but the good news is that the decoy is not needed. We have better.

Creation is both angle worm and angel host. It is not just rocks and trees, or even rocks, trees, and men, for the race of mankind has always been part of nature, but spiritual and visible: ministering spirits sent to serve the elect, seraphim, cherubim, thrones, dominions, powers, authorities, principalities, archangel, and angel. And in all of this man is microcosm and mediator, the recapitulation and ornament of spiritual and visible creation alike. "In Christ there is no... male nor female," sounds today like a drop of feminism woven into the Bible today and correcting its fabric, but the ancients knew something greater. Deification leads to the transcendence of the difference between male and female, between paradise and the inhabited world, between Heaven and earth, between the spiritual and visible creation, and finally between uncreated and created nature. All these differences are transcended in the Dance. And we dance the Great Dance with Nature, not when we submit to her lead, but when we properly lead her.

An ancient hymn says, "Adam, trying to be god, failed to be god; Christ became man, that he might make Adam god." C.S. Lewis well enough said that though the journey to Heaven may cost us our right hand and our right eye, if we persevere through Heaven, we may find that what we have left behind is precisely nothing. If we let behind Romanticism and its by-definition-impossible quest for its harmony with nature, and all the occult hydra's heads offering escape from the here and now, we may find that when we have really and truly repented, repentance being the most terrifying moment in Christian experience, once we have opened our hands and let all their necessary-seeming contents fall away as far as God wants, what we have left in our hands is all the good we did not choose, together with all the good we did choose. Letting go of that perennially seductive wish for a moment of deep harmony with nature, deepens our harmony with nature: for indeed, in terms of true harmony with nature that is continuous with virtue, being at peace with one's surroundings, even in a skyscraper or even a space station, is more than a vacation where one is overwhelmed by hills and trees. And when we have repented of the escape that seems like our only real salvation given our circumstances, we are given real salvation in our circumstances: not wine from an unopened bottle, but appreciated wine from a bottle opened the usual way.

We have nothing to lose but our bondage to sin.

Hymn to the Creator of Heaven and Earth

With what words
shall I hymn the Lord of Heaven and Earth,
the Creator of all things visible and invisible?
Shall I indeed meditate
on the beauty of his Creation? As I pray to Thee, Lord,
what words shall I use,
and how shall I render Thee praise? Shall I thank thee for the living tapestry,
oak and maple and ivy and grass,
that I see before me
as I go to return to Thee at Church?

Shall I thank Thee for Zappy,
and for her long life—
eighteen years old and still catching mice?
Shall I thank thee for her tiger stripes,
the color of pepper?
Shall I thank thee for her kindness,
and the warmth of her purr?

Shall I thank Thee for a starry sapphire orb
hung with a million million diamonds, where
"The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands.
Day to day utters speech,
and night to night proclaims knowledge.
There are no speeches or words,
in which their voices are not heard.
Their voice is gone out into all the earth,
and their words to the end of the earth.
In the sun he has set his tabernacle;
and he comes forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber:
he will exult as a giant to run his course."?

Shall I thank Thee for the river of time,
now flowing quickly,
now flowing slowly,
now narrow,
now deep,
now flowing straight and clear,
now swirling in eddies that dance?

Shall I thank Thee for the hymns and songs,
the chant at Church, when we praise Thee in the head of Creation, the vanguard of
Creation that has come from Thee in Thy splendor and to Thee returns in reverence?

Shall I thank thee for the Chalice:
an image,
an icon,
a shadow of,
a participation in,
a re-embodiment of,
the Holy Grail?

Shall I forget how the Holy Grail itself
is but the shadow,
the impact,
the golden surface reflecting the light,
secondary reflection to the primeval Light,

the wrapping paper that disintegrates next to the Gift it holds:
that which is
mystically and really
the body and the blood of Christ:
the family of saints
for me to be united to,
and the divine Life?

Shall I meditate
on how I am fed
by the divine generosity
and the divine gift
of the divine energies?

Shall I thank Thee for a stew I am making,
or for a body nourished by food?

Shall I indeed muse that there is
nothing else I could be nourished by,
for spaghetti and bread and beer
are from a whole cosmos
illuminated by the divine Light,
a candle next to the sun,
a beeswax candle,
where the sun's energy filters through plants
and the work of bees
and the work of men
to deliver light and energy from the sun,
and as candle to sun,
so too is the bread of earth
to the Bread that came from Heaven,
the work of plants and men,
the firstfruits of Earth
returned to Heaven,
that they may become
the firstfruits of Heaven
returned to earth?

Shall I muse on the royal "we,"
where the kings and queens
said not of themselves "I", but "we"
while Christians are called to say "we"
and learn that the "I" is to be transformed,
made luminous,
scintillating,
when we move beyond "Me, me, me,"
to learn to say, "we"?

And the royal priesthood is one in which we are called to be
a royal priesthood,
a chosen people,
more than conquerors,
a Church of God's eclecticism,
made divine,
a family of little Christs,
sons to God and brothers to Christ,
the ornament of the visible Creation,
of rocks and trees and stars and seas,
and the spiritual Creation as well:
seraphim, cherubim, thrones
dominions, principalities, authorities,
powers, archangels, angels,
rank on rank of angels,
singing before the presence of God,
and without whom no one can plumb the depths
of the world that can be seen and touched.

For to which of the angels did God say,
"You make my Creation complete," or
"My whole Creation, visible and invisible,
is encapsulated in you,
summed up in your human race?"

To which of the angels
did the divine Word say,
"I am become what you are
that you may become what I am?"

To which of the angels did the Light say,
"Thou art my Son; today I have adopted Thee,"
and then turn to say,
"You are my sons; today I have adopted you;
because I AM WHO I AM,
you are who you are."?

So I am called to learn to say, "we",
and when we learn to say we,
that "we" means,
a royal priesthood,
a chosen people,
more than conquerors,
a Church of God's eclecticism,
a family of little Christs,
made divine,
the ornament of Creation, visible and invisible,
called to lead the whole Creation
loved into being by God,
to be in love
that to God they may return.

And when we worship thus,
it cannot be only us, for
apples and alligators,
boulders and bears,
creeks and crystals,
dolphins and dragonflies,
eggplants and emeralds,
fog and furballs,
galaxies and grapes,
horses and habaneros,
ice and icicles,
jacinth and jade,
kangaroos and knots,
lightning and light,
meadows and mist,
nebulas and neutrons,

oaks and octupi,
porcupines and petunias,
quails and quarks,
rocks and rivers,
skies and seas,
toads and trees,
ukeleles and umber umbrellas,
wine and weirs,
xylophones and X-rays,
yuccas and yaks,
zebras and zebrawood,
are all called to join us before Thy throne
in the Divine Liturgy:

Praise ye the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
praise him in the heights.
Praise ye him, all his angels:
praise ye him, all his hosts.
Praise ye him, sun and moon:
praise him, all ye stars of light.
Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
and ye waters that be above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord:
for he commanded, and they were created.
He hath also stablished them for ever and ever:
he hath made a decree which shall not pass.
Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:
Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours;
stormy wind fulfilling his word:
Mountains, and all hills;
fruitful trees, and all cedars:
Beasts, and all cattle;
creeping things, and flying fowl:
Kings of the earth, and all people;
princes, and all judges of the earth:
Both young men, and maidens;
old men, and children:
Let them praise the name of the Lord:

for his name alone is excellent;
his glory is above the earth and heaven.
He also exalteth the horn of his people,
the praise of all his saints;
even of the children of Israel,
a people near unto him.
Praise ye the Lord.

How can we know Christ
as the bridge between God and mankind
if we forget Christ
as the bridge between God
and his whole Creation?
Can a wedge come between the two?
Shall we understand the human mind
without needing to know of the body?
Shall we worship in liturgy at Church
without letting it create a life of worship?
Shall we say, "Let them eat cake?"
of those who lack bread?
No more can we understand Christ
as saving "Me, me, me!"
but not the whole cosmos,
of which we are head, yes,
but of which he is the greatest Head.

On what day do we proclaim:

As the prophets beheld,
as the Apostles have taught,
as the Church has received,
as the teachers have dogmatized,
as the Universe has agreed,
as Grace has shown forth,
as Truth has revealed,
as falsehood has been dissolved,
as Wisdom has presented,
as Christ awarded...
thus we declare,

thus we assert,
thus we preach
Christ our true God,
and honor as Saints
in words,
in writings,
in thoughts,
in sacrifices,
in churches,
in Holy Icons;
on the one hand
worshipping and reverencing
Christ as God and Lord,
and on the other hand
honoring as true servants
of the same Lord of all
and accordingly offering them
veneration... [Then louder!]
This is the Faith of the Apostles,
this is the Faith of the Fathers,
this is the Faith of the Orthodox,
this is the Faith which has established the Universe.

Is it not the day
when we celebrate the restored icons,
because Christ became not only a human spirit,
but became man,
entering the Creation,
the Word become matter,
taking on himself all that that entails.

And all that that entails
means that Christ became matter
and that matter is to be
glorified in his triumph,
the same Christ
whose physical body was transfigured
and shone with the Light of Heaven itself
and this was not an opposite

of what is to be normal
but rather transformed what is normal
so that our embodiment is to be our glory.
And this Christ,
who lived as a particular man,
in a particular place,
honored every time and place,
as the Nobel Prize for physics
honors not simply one chosen physicist per year,
but in its spirit
honors the whole enterprise of physics.
When Christ entered a here and now,
he honored every here and now,
and the Sunday of the restoration of icons
is not "The Sunday of Icons"
but
"The Sunday of Orthodoxy."
Christ was not a "generic" man
with no real time or place.
Christ entered a here and now
and his saints entered a here and now
and if he became what we are,
that we might become what he is,
the divine become human
that the human might become divine,
then if we are not to divide the Christ,
or truncate the Christ,
then his victory extends
to spirit shining through matter
in icons.
How can we praise Thee for this, O Lord?

Is not it all born up
in the scandal of the particular,
and we remember the woman in whom Heaven and Earth met,
who cannot be separated from the Church,
nor from the Cosmos,
to whom we sing
with the beauty of Creation?

Shall we recall his work in Creation
in the song to the woman
in whom Heaven and Earth met?

I shall open my mouth,
and the Spirit will inspire it,
and I shall utter the words of my song
to the Queen and Mother:
I shall be seen radiantly keeping
feast and joyfully praising her wonders.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Beholding thee,
the living book of Christ,
sealed by the Spirit,
the great archangel exclaimed to thee,
O pure one:
Rejoice, vessel of joy,
through which the curse
of the first mother is annulled.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, Virgin bride of God,
restoration of Adam and death of hell.
Rejoice, all-immaculate one,
palace of the King of all.
Rejoice, fiery throne of the Almighty.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice, O thou who alone
hast blossomed forth the unfading Rose.
Rejoice, for thou hast borne the fragrant Apple.

Rejoice, Maiden unwedded,
the pure fragrance of the only King,
and preservation of the world.

Both now and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Rejoice, treasure-house of purity,
by which we have risen from our fall.
Rejoice, sweet-smelling lily
which perfumeth the faithful,
fragrant incense and most precious myrrh.

O Mother of God,
thou living and plentiful fount,
give strength to those
united in spiritual fellowship,
who sing hymns of praise to thee:
and in thy divine glory
vouchsafe unto them crowns of glory.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

From thee, the untilled field,
hath grown the divine Ear of grain.
Rejoice, living table
that hath held the Bread of Life.
Rejoice, O Lady, never-failing
spring of the Living Water.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

O Heifer that barest the unblemished Calf
for the faithful, rejoice,
Ewe that hast brought forth the lamb of God
Who taketh away the sins of all the world.
Rejoice, ardent mercy-seat.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice brightest dawn,
who alone barest Christ the Sun.
Rejoice, dwelling-place of Light,
who hast dispersed darkness
and utterly driven away
the gloomy demons.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Rejoice, only door through
which the Word alone hath passed.
By thy birthgiving, O Lady,
thou hast broken the bars and gates of hell.
Rejoice, Bride of God,
divine entry of the saved.

He who sitteth in glory
upon the throne of the Godhead,
Jesus the true God,
is come in a swift cloud
and with His sinless hands
he hath saved those who cry:
Glory to Thy power, O Christ.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

With voices of song in faith
we cry aloud to thee,
who art worthy of all praise:
Rejoice, butter mountain,
mountain curdled by the Spirit.
Rejoice, candlestick and vessel of manna,
which sweeteneth the senses of all the pious.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, mercy-seat of the world,
most pure Lady.
Rejoice, ladder raising all men
from the earth by grace.
Rejoice, bridge that in very truth
hast led from death to life
all those that hymn thee.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, most pure one,
higher than the heavens,
who didst painlessly carry within thy womb
the Fountain of the earth.
Rejoice, sea-shell that with thy
blood didst dye a divine purple robe
for the King of Hosts.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice, Lady who in truth
didst give birth to the lawgiver,
Who freely washed clean
the iniquities of all.
O Maiden who hast not known wedlock,
unfathomable depth, unutterable height,
by whom we have been deified.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Praising thee who hast woven
for the world a Crown
not made by hand of man,

we cry to thee:
Rejoice, O Virgin,
the guardian of all men,
fortress and stronghold and sacred refuge.

The whole world was amazed
at thy divine glory:
for thou, O Virgin
who hast not known wedlock,
hast held in thy womb
the God of all
and hast given birth
to an eternal Son,
who rewards with salvation
all who sing thy praises.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, most immaculate one,
who gavest birth to the Way of life,
and who savedst the world
from the flood of sin.
Rejoice, Bride of God, tidings
fearful to tell and hear.
Rejoice, dwelling-place of the Master
of all creation.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, most pure one,
the strength and fortress of men,
sanctuary of glory,
the death of hell,
all-radiant bridal chamber.
Rejoice, joy of angels.
Rejoice, helper of them
that pray to thee with faith.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, O Lady,
fiery chariot of the Word,
living paradise,
having in thy midst
the Tree of Life,
the Lord of Life,
Whose sweetness vivifieth
all who partake of Him
with faith, though they
have been subject to corruption.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Strengthened by thy might,
we raise our cry
to thee with faith:
Rejoice, city of the King of all,
of which things glorious and worthy to be heard
were clearly spoken.
Rejoice, unhewn mountain,
unfathomed depth.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Rejoice, most pure one,
spacious tabernacle of the Word,
shell which produced
the divine Pearl.
Rejoice, all-wondrous Theotokos,
who dost reconcile with God
all who ever call thee blessed.

As we celebrate this sacred
and solemn feast

of the Mother of God,
let us come, clapping our hands,
O people of the Lord,
and give glory to God who
was born of her.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

O undefiled bridal chamber of the Word,
cause of deification for all,
rejoice, all honorable preaching
of the prophet;
rejoice, adornment of the apostles.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

From thee hath come
the Dew that quenched
the flame of idolatry;
therefore, we cry to thee:
Rejoice, living fleece wet
with dew,
which Gideon saw of old,
O Virgin.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Behold, to thee, O Virgin,
we cry: Rejoice!
Be thou the port and a haven
for all that sail
upon the troubled waters of affliction,
amidst all the snares of the enemy.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Thou cause of joy,
endue our thoughts with grace,
that we may cry to thee:
Rejoice, unconsumed bush,
cloud of light
that unceasingly overshadowest the faithful.

The holy children
bravely trampled upon the threatening fire,
refusing to worship created things
in place of the Creator,
and they sang in joy:
'Blessed art Thou and
praised above all,
O Lord God of our Fathers.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

We sing of thee, saying aloud:
Rejoice, chariot of the noetic Sun;
true vine, that hast produced ripe grapes,
from which floweth a wine making glad
the souls of them that in faith glorify thee.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Rejoice, Bride of God,
who gavest birth
to the Healer of all;
mystical staff,
that didst blossom with the unfading Flower.
Rejoice, O Lady,
through whom we are filled
with joy and inherit life.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

No tongue, however eloquent,
hath power to sing thy praises, O Lady;
for above the seraphim art thou exalted,
who gavest birth to Christ the King,
Whom do thou beseech
to deliver from all harm
those that venerate thee in faith.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

The ends of the earth
praise thee and call thee blessed,
and they cry to thee
with love:
Rejoice, pure scroll,
upon which the Word was written
by the finger of the Father.
Do thou beseech Him
to inscribe thy servants
in the book of life, O Theotokos.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

We thy servants pray to thee
and bend the knees of our hearts:
Incline thine ear, O pure one;
save thy servants who are always sinking,
and preserve thy city
from every enemy captivity, O Theotokos.

The Offspring of the Theotokos
saved the holy children in the furnace.
He who was then prefigured
hath since been born on earth,
and he gathers all the creation to sing:

O all ye works of the Lord,
praise ye the Lord and exalt Him
above all for ever.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Within thy womb
thou hast received the Word;
thou hast carried Him who carrieth all;
O pure one, thou hast fed with milk
Him Who by His beck feedeth the whole world.
To Him we sing:
Sing to the Lord,
all ye His works,
and supremely exalt
Him unto the ages.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Moses perceived in the burning bush
the great mystery of thy childbearing,
while the youths clearly prefigured it
as they stood in the midst of the fire
and were not burnt,
O Virgin pure and inviolate.
Therefore do we hymn thee
and supremely exalt thee unto the ages.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

We who once through falsehood
were stripped naked,
have by thy childbearing been clothed
in the robe of incorruption;
and we who once sat in the darkness of sin
have seen the light, O Maiden,
dwelling-place of Light.
Therefore do we hymn thee
and supremely exalt thee unto the ages.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Through thee the dead are brought to life,
for thou hast borne the Hypostatic Life.
They who once were mute
are now made to speak well;
lepers are cleansed,
diseases are driven out,
the hosts of the spirits of the air are conquered,
O Virgin, the salvation of men.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Thou didst bear the salvation of the world,
O pure one, and through thee we
were lifted from earth to heaven.
Rejoice, all-blessed, protection and strength,
rampart and fortress of those who sing:
O all ye works of the Lord,
praise ye the Lord
and supremely exalt Him unto the ages.

Let every mortal born on earth,
radiant with light,
in spirit leap for joy;
and let the host of the angelic powers
celebrate and honor the holy feast
of the Mother of God, and let them cry:
Rejoice! Pure and blessed Ever-Virgin,
who gavest birth to God.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Let us, the faithful, call to thee:
Rejoice! Through thee, O Maiden, we have
become partakers of everlasting joy.
Save us from temptations, from barbarian
captivity, and from every other injury
that befalleth sinful men
because of the multitude of their transgressions.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Thou hast appeared as our
enlightenment and confirmation;
wherefore, we cry to thee:
Rejoice, never-setting star
that bringest into the world
the great Sun. Rejoice, pure Virgin
that didst open the closed Eden.
Rejoice, pillar of fire,
leading mankind to a higher life.

Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Let us stand with reverence
in the house of our God,
and let us cry aloud:
Rejoice, Mistress of the world.
Rejoice, Mary, Lady of us all.
Rejoice, thou who alone art immaculate
and fair among women.
Rejoice, vessel that receivedst
the inexhaustible myrrh poured out on thee.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

Thou dove that hast borne the Merciful One,
rejoice, ever-virgin!
Rejoice, glory of all the saints.

Rejoice, crown of martyrs.
Rejoice, divine adornment
of all the righteous
and salvation of us the faithful.

Both now, and ever,
and unto the ages of ages.
Amen.

Spare Thine inheritance, O God,
and pass over all our sins now,
for as intercessor in Thy sight,
O Christ, Thou hast her that on earth
gave birth to Thee without seed,
when in Thy great mercy
Thou didst will to take the form of man.

To Thee, the Champion Leader,
we Thy servants dedicate
a feast of victory and of thanksgiving
as ones rescued out of sufferings,
O Theotokos:
but as Thou art one with might which is invincible,
from all dangers that can be
do Thou deliver us,
that we may cry to Thee:
Rejoice, Thou Bride Unwedded!
To her is sung:

More honorable than the cherubim,
and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim,
thou barest God the Word.
True Mother of God,
we magnify thee.

Shall we praise thee
for the beauty of a woman
with a child in her arms,
or a child nestled in her womb?

Mary is the one whose womb
contained the uncontainable God.

When that happened,
she gave him his humanity,
and there was an exchange of gifts.

Once you understand this exchange,
it changes everything.

She gave him
his humanity.
He gave her
grace,
the divine life,
as none before her
and none after.

The cherubim and seraphim are the highest ranks of angels.
'Seraph' means fiery one
and they stand most immediately in God's presence.

What is this fire?
Is it literal heat from a real fire?
Or is it something deeper,
something more fire-like than fire itself?
Would not someone who understood the seraphim
as the highest angels,
angels that burn,
would instead ask if our "real" fires
are truly real?
Is it emotion?
Or is it not "emotion"
as we understand the term,
as "deep love"
is not "hypocritical politeness"
as we understand the term?
Or yet still more alien?

Is there anything in our visible Creation
that can explain this?

If a man were to be exposed to this fire,
and he were not destroyed that instant,
he would throw himself into burning glass
to cool himself.

And yet an instant
of direct touch with God the Father,
were that even possible,
would incinerate the seraphim.

Then how can we approach God?

The bridge between Heaven and Earth:
the Word by which the Father is known,
the perfect visible image of the invisible God,
who has become part of his Creation.

When we look at the Christ, the Bridge,
and see the perfect image of God,
God looks at Christ, the Bridge,
and sees the perfect image
of mankind
and not merely mankind,
but inseparably the whole Creation.

How shall we worship the Father,
fire beyond fire beyond fire?

How shall we worship God,
holy, holy, holy?

It is a mystery.
It is impossible.
And yet it happens
in one who was

absolutely God and absolutely man,
and one who is
absolutely God and absolutely man,
bringing Heaven down to Earth,
sharing our humanity
that we might share in his divinity,
and bring Heaven down to Earth,
that Earth may be brought up to Heaven.

There is a mystic likeness
between
Mary, the Mother of God,
the Church,
and the world,
feminine beauty
created, headed, and served
by a masculine revealed God
whom no one can measure.
His Light is incomparably more glorious;
we can know the energies from God
but never know God's essence,
and yet to ask that question is
the wrong way of looking at it.
It is like asking,
"Which would you choose:
Compassion for your neighbor or common decency,
Being a good communicator or using language well,
Living simply or not wasting electricity?"

Christ and the Church are one,
a single organism,
and in that organism,
the rule is one unified organism,
not two enemies fighting for the upper hand.
I am one of the faithful,
and the clergy are not clergy at my expense.
We are one organism.
The Gift of the Eucharist does not happen,
except that it be celebrated by a priest,

and except that the people say, "Amen!"
The Church in its fullness is present
where at least one bishop or priest is found,
and at least one faithful—
and without the faithful,
the clergy are not fully the Church.
The "official" priest is priest,
not instead of a priestly call among the faithful,
but precisely as the crystallization of a priesthood in which
there is no male nor female,
red nor yellow nor black nor white,
rich nor poor, but Christ is all,
and is in all, with no first or second class faithful.
Every Orthodox,
every Christian,
every person
is called to be
part of a single united organism,
a royal priesthood,
a chosen people,
more than conquerors,
a Church of God's eclecticism,
made divine
a family of little Christs,
sons to God and brothers to Christ,
the ornament of Creation, visible and invisible,
called to lead the whole Creation
loved into being by God,
to be in love
that to God they may return.

So what can we do,
save to give thanks
for rocks and trees,
stars and seas,
pencils and pine trees,
man and beast,
faces and embraces,
solitude and community,

symphonies and sandcastles,
language and listening,
ivy vines and ivy league,
cultures and clues,
incense and inspiration,
song and chant,
the beauty of nature
and the nature of beauty,
the good, the true, and the beautiful,
healing of soul and body,
the spiritual struggle,
repentance from sin
and the freedom it brings,
and a path to walk, a Way,
one that we will never exhaust—
what can we do
but bow down in worship?

Glory be
to the Father,
and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit,
both now and ever,
and to the ages of ages.

Amen.

Hysterical Fiction: A Medievalist Jibe at Disney Princess Videos

From Falstaff to Herodotus, grace: I send your excellence my manuscript, as revised again, and have returned the Imaginarium. I have tried to envision what life was really like in The Setting, but yet also keep things contemporary. Please send my boots and cloak by my nephew.

Here is the story:

Oct 8, 2020, Anytown, USA.

Anna looked at the sky. The position of the sun showed that it was the ninth hour, and from the clouds it looked like about four or five hours until there would be a light rain.

She stood reverently and attentively, pulled out her iPhone, and used a pirated Internet Explorer 6 app to spend deliberate time on social networks: first Facebook, then Twitter, then Amazon. It was the last that offered the richest social interaction.

Technology in that society underscored the sacred and interlocking rhythm of time, with its cycles of lifetime, year, month, and day, right down to the single short hour. But there was a lot of technology, and it had changed things. The road had for ages

been shared between pedestrian man and horse. Now, decades after automobiles had taken root, it had to be shared between man, horse, and motorcar. A shiny, dark Ford Ferrari raced by her on the sidewalk. She paused to contemplate its beauty. Then she listened, entranced, as a poor street musician played sad, sad music on an old Honda Accordion.

And in all this she was human. Neither her lord nor she knew how many winters each had passed when they married; neither she nor her lord for that matter knew that it was the twentieth century. She cared for birth and mirth, and she loved her little ones. She did not know how many winters old they were, either. And there was life within her.

And she was intensely religious, and intensely superstitious, so far as to be almost entirely tacit. She knew the stories of the saints, and attended church a few times a year. She lived long under religion's shadow. And her mind was tranquil, unhurried, unworried, and this without the slightest effort to learn Antarctican Mindfulness.

And in all this, she was *content*. Her family had lived on the same sandlot; more than seven generations had been born, lived, and died without traveling twenty miles from this root. The stones and herbs were family to her as much as men, but this was, again, tacit.

She was human. Really and truly human, no matter what others thought the epoch was.

Then a crow crowed. She looked around, thoughtfully. It was well nigh time to visit her sister.

"But how to get there?" she thought, and then, "I have walked in the opposite direction, and she will be upset if I am even two or three hours late."

Then a solution occurred to her. She reached into her pocket, pulled out her new iPhone Pro, pulled up the Uber app, and ordered a shared helicopter ride.

Ignorance

I've been thinking after reading a tweet that quoted a French educational minister who had announced that French schoolchildren would be taught Latin and Greek starting in 5th and 6th grade. He was asked whether students would also be taught "PHP, JavaScript, Python." He was rather confused by the question, and the interlocutor asked, "Will they be taught to code?" and he answered, "No, they will not be taught to code."

The tweet treated the French leader as so obviously out of touch with reality that further comment was not even offered. But I'd like to talk a bit about my own education to say why there was a problem, not with the French leader, but the tweet.

I have had about as much education in mathematics and STEM as there is to be had, though I did not end up with a PhD, and about as much education in academic theology as there is to be had, though I did not end up with a PhD there either, and read Latin and Greek at a significant level, and for that matter spent a semester at the Sorbonne (I am the local francophone at my monastery). And I believe studying Latin and Greek is relevant, or at least reading classics in translation (I have read little beyond the Bible in Latin or Greek). And I believe a knowledge of the world's classics, such as one can find in the Norton Anthology of World Literature (beginnings to 1650, 1650 to present).

My six best works, or at least those that have most met with profound reader approval, are those in *C.J.S. Hayward in Under 99 Pages*:

- An inversion of C.S. Lewis's most famous work in "The Angelic Letters."
- A paradoxically meditative poem in "A Canticle to Holy, Blessed Solipsism."
- A nontechnical version of what I had hoped to argue in my PhD thesis in theology, "'Religion and Science' Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution."
- A very light adaptation of Plato's most famous allegory in "Plato: The Allegory of the... *Flickering Screen?*"
- A hymn of glory in "Doxology."
- The book people ask why St. Boethius did not write: "The Consolation of Theology." (St. Boethius instead wrote *The Consolation of Philosophy*, neo-Platonism's finest little gem.)

And just for the record, I have not read Plato in Greek nor St. Boethius in Latin, and I am on the whole not a literary Weird Al Yankovic; it's just that my best works seem to go further when I am leaning on a past giant. Also, for what it's worth, I have worked in PHP, JavaScript, and Python, the last of which is my favorite (computer) language.

My first and less serious objection to the perspective in the tweet has to do with how I talked my way out of candidacy for a dream job. My interviewer said I would have my complete choice of languages and platform, and the core of the job and its description was to program a payment gateway that would take about a million people's membership fees. I tried, unsuccessfully, to explain one Information Technology manager's published opinion that ten years prior, IT work was "build, build, build", but then, even then, it was "Partner before buy; buy before build." And it wouldn't just be faster and cheaper to zero in on a good, vetted, mature open source project that could handle the collection of annual membership fees; it would have been hands down more secure. For me to give my interviewer what he thought he wanted would have been to put both of us in a situation where a routine programming error could jeopardize a million people's finances, and I would have had no other programmer in the organization to ask to review my code. A business analyst would not have boiled down "collect membership fees" to "write a program from scratch to collect membership fees;" a more obvious interpretation of the situation would have been to "identify and acquire a secure software solution appropriate to collecting membership fees." By that time, the wheel had already been reinvented many different ways, and so had the internal combustion engine. And I do not say that Python etc. skills are irrelevant; when I had

trouble with WordPress I circumvented the issue by implementing a simple content management system in Python, and that has generated a site that I'm building. But the number of people who really need to know these languages is small and shrinking. I think Python is a particularly good choice for people interested in recreational and hobbyist programming, but I do not think it is beneficial across the board to expand primary education to cover the five R's of Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic, and Ruby on Rails.

But here is my more serious concern. My prior spiritual director, before this monastery, looked at what I talked about and had written and said that my primary contribution seemed to be talking about Orthodoxy and technology. And that is work where a deep and sensitive understanding of METS issues is essential, but the heavy lifting is all done on humanities's power. And in terms of the liberal arts ideal, and educating an informed public, Latin and Greek in middle school makes sense. It sounds like an informed opinion, and not only makes classics more available to the general public, but provide an environment where French intellectual giants will grow up with the languages of most of the heavy lifting in humanities in the history of Western culture. Proficiencies in classical languages will also age and mature well compared to computer languages in particular. Someone who learned to read classics in Latin and Greek twenty years ago will have much profitable reading available today; but someone who had learned C, C++ and Java ten years ago, and has not kept up with the risings and fallings of programming languages, will be considered a dinosaur today. Classics age better than fashion.

"Conversation is like texting for adults"

There is a sort of chauvinism I have encountered, not least in my advisor saying, "Do you make allowances for greater ignorance in the past?" to which I coolly answered, "I do not make allowances for greater ignorance in the past. Allowances for different ignorance in the past are more negotiable." I refrained from saying that I make allowances for greater ignorance in the *present*. But I get ahead of myself.

Today's youth are not even learning face-to-face social skills, and still we have a chauvinism that we assume the competencies of our predecessors without needing to acquire these competencies as our predecessors have. Thomas Kuhn's post-truth account of science, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, says that after a heavily political revolution has occurred, history is rewritten so as to provide an additive picture where the history of related developments adds increases of knowledge when the change is not additive, but ecological. I have studied, though I find it very hard to put into words, what was lost in the founding of Western science. (The best indication I can easily give is to look at what C.S. Lewis says about science/magic in the final third of *The Abolition of Man*, and dig deeper in Mary Midgley's *Science as Salvation: A*

Modern Myth and Its Meaning, and perhaps my "Physics", which may or may not help.) But there is some real merit in what a friend wrote:

Learning with your whole body

I'm assuming that most of you have been to college. Even if you haven't, you've been learning for 12 years in an institution that has taught you that learning is done with the brain, that it comes from words written on screens or paper, and that the way you show what you've learned is to write intelligent words on screens or paper.

Here is the first thing I need you to understand: out here in the garden, you do not learn with your brain. You learn with your hands and with your eyes and with your whole body. Your brain is involved, sure. But don't let it take over. Don't separate "learning" and "working." Every moment you're in this teaching garden, and even a lot of the time you're working in other parts of the farm, if you pay attention you can be learning constantly.

School teaches us to think of learning as information. It's such a mistake! Yes, there is information that will help you learn to garden, and I'll teach you some of it—but if you don't learn it with your body, it won't be much use to you.

You're going to need educated eyes—you're going to need the ability to look at a plant and know if it's thriving, to look at a little seedling and be able to see in your mind how big it'll be so you can give it enough space, to look at a patch of weeds and have a sense of how much bigger it'll be next week if you don't kill it now. (The most advanced skill, which I'm still learning, is looking at a row of green beans and estimating—from how thick the blossoms & small beans on it are—how much it's going to produce over the next couple weeks.) You need educated hands—you need to be able to feel, when you're swinging a hoe, whether you're really biting into the roots of the weeds, and you need hands that know how to weed fast and effectively, and how to use a pitchfork, etc, etc. And you need instincts, too—when you've just transplanted a plant, you need to have the instinct to check on it till it's established, same as people have the instinct to check on a baby.

And you learn all that by experience. Writing it down won't help. Doing it while being aware of it is what helps. Be in the moment, don't be thinking of something else while you work. (Well, maybe when you're weeding strawberries!) Get your hands in the dirt and feel it, compare it with how it felt last week, watch and observe the plants as they grow—and watch the weeds as they die! Watch how much quicker they die on a sunny or a windy day, watch how they re-root themselves even from a lying-down position if

it's too wet. At some point it all comes together and you start to develop a sort of instinctive understanding of the garden as a natural system. I've been doing this for five years now—I knew next to nothing about gardening before that—and I have a sense now of how all the pieces work together, not in theory but what's happening in real time in my own garden, and it's such a pleasure. It has been such a pleasure to go from someone who learned things only with her brain, to someone with hands and eyes that understand my garden.

I know some of what I'm saying you may already know, but I still think it's worth saying at the start here. I've just seen so often how hard it is to get rid of the idea that reality is in our heads or on paper and start focusing on the reality that's under our feet—to stop going on what you think is supposed to happen instead of looking at what really happens. I know it took me a lot longer than it should have. I still remember my breakthrough moment. I was using the push-cultivator—which I'll teach you how to use—and it was a new tool for us at that point so I didn't know its capabilities. The thing is that when the weeds get to a certain height, the push-cultivator doesn't kill them anymore—you have to use a hoe. But I would push the cultivator on down the row and it would kill a few weeds and knock down the rest and cover them with dirt so the row looked clean, and I never noticed that their roots were still in the soil, and in my head I would make a little check mark—well that row's done. The next week, we'd be looking through the garden to see what needed doing, and there would be a bunch of weeds in that row again, and I'd go, "Wow! They came back fast!" and cultivate again. I still remember the day the little lightbulb came on in my head and I realized I'd never killed those weeds at all. I felt so dumb. That was the day I learned to look at what I was doing. Not just at what I thought I was doing.

And that's a lot of what is involved in learning a skill—not just knowing "how" but involving your hands and eyes and brain all together in the process, so that you can feel how the motion is working and you can see whether it's working—and you remember to double-check the next day whether it worked!

Okay, I have one more story. This one taught me so much. We had a temporary volunteer in the garden for three days. He was this guy who, if you told him how to do something, would look annoyed as if you were patronizing him or something. Because, you know, everybody knows how to hoe, right? Well, I got embarrassed by him being offended and figured he was right, maybe it was rude to try and tell someone how to do such simple stuff. I was a beginner too, at the time. Erin told us to hoe a certain section, and we did it.

And we did it backwards. We started at the back of the section and walked backwards to the front as we hoed, so that all the plants we hoed up ended up in a pile in the next bit we had to hoe, covering the weeds there. The result was that at the end of our work all you could see was a pile of dead plants, so it looked great, it looked done. And the next day when those dead plants had dried up and withered away, what you could see was a section that looked like someone had hit it a few times here and there with a hoe—at least half of the weeds were still alive and kicking. The next day Erin took me aside and showed me how to hoe for real: you move forward, and you hoe up every inch of the soil, whether you see a plant there or not. And I've never felt embarrassed to teach anyone to hoe since then. It's a skill.

It's a huge mistake to think of any part of farming as unskilled labor. A skilled worker can weed about five times as fast as a beginner—if not more. Farming is skilled, complicated, grounded work that involves your hands and your eyes and your brain and your whole body—and at some point you may find it starts to involve your heart. You're learning something this year that you can be proud of.

(Heather Munn)

In other conversation, she said that people seem to assume that low-prestige work doesn't require skill. And this is, if you will, one case of our chauvinism in assuming we have the knowledge of prior ages without any attempt to learn it, because we're making progress or whatever.

Before zeroing in on one case study, let me underscore one quote by General Omar Bradley that I will also quote below:

We have too many men of science; too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount.

Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.

A Deliberate and Studied Ignorance

I would like to quote "Un-man's Tales: C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra*, Fairy Tales, and Feminism" in entirety:

A first clue to something big, tucked into a choice of children's books

I was once part of a group dedicated to reading children's stories (primarily fantasy) aloud. At one point the group decided to read Patricia Wrede's *Dealing with Dragons*. I had a visceral reaction to the book as something warped, but when I tried to explain it to the group by saying that it was like the Un-man in *Perelandra*, I was met with severe resistance from two men in the group. Despite this, and after lengthy subsequent discussions, I was able to persuade them that the analogy was at least the best I could manage in a tight time slot.

I was puzzled at some mysterious slippage that had intelligent Christians who appreciated good literature magnetized by works that were, well... *warped*. And that mysterious slippage seemed to keep cropping up at other times and circumstances.

Why the big deal? I will get to the Un-man's message in a moment, but for now let me say that little girls are *sexist way* too romantic. And this being *sexist way* too romantic motivates girls to want fairy tales, to want some knight in shining armor or some prince to sweep her off her feet. And seeing how this *sexist* deeply romantic desire cannot easily be ground out of them, feminists have written their own fairy tales, but...

To speak from my own experience, I never realized how straight traditional fairy tales were until I met feminist fairy tales. And by 'straight' I am not exactly meaning the opposite of queer (though that is close at hand), but the opposite of twisted and warped, like "Do You Want to Date My Avatar?" (I never knew how witchcraft could be considered unnatural vice until I read the witches' apologetic in Terry Pratchett's incredibly warped *The Wee Free Men*.) There is something warped in these tales that is not covered by saying that *Dealing with Dragons* has a heroine who delights only in what is forbidden, rejects marriage for the company of dragons, and ridicules every time its pariahs say something just isn't done. Seeing as how rooting out from the desire for fairy tales from little girls and little kids in general, authors have presented warped anti-fairy tales.

Ella Enchanted makes it plain: for a girl or woman to be under obedience is an unmixed curse. There is no place for "love, honor, and obey."

The commercials for *Tangled* leave some doubt about whether the heroine sings a Snow White-style "Some day my prince will come."

The Un-man's own tales

One question that can be fairly raised is how far this might just be Lewis's creative imagining for one story—and it would be a brave soul who would deny Lewis can be imaginative. Whether *this* point is just imagination, or something Lewis would say in a nonfiction essay, can in fact be seen from a nonfiction essay, "Priestesses in the Church?"

Perelandra has a protagonist who visits Venus or Perelandra, where an unfallen Eve is joined first by him and then by the antagonist, called the Un-man because he moves from prelest or spiritual illusion to calling demons or the Devil into himself and then letting his body be used as a demonic puppet.

How does the Un-man try to tempt this story's Eve?

[The Lady said:] "I will think more of this. I will get the King to make me older about it."

[The Un-man answered:] "How greatly I desire to meet this King of yours! But in the matter of Stories he may be no older than you himself."

"That saying of yours is like a tree with no fruit. The King is always older than I, and about all things."...

[The Lady said,] "What are [women on earth] like?"

[The Un-man answered,] "They are of great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does..."

...The Lady seemed to be saying very little. [The Un-man]'s voice was speaking gently and continuously. It was not talking about the Fixed Land nor even about Maleldil. It appeared to be telling, with extreme beauty and pathos, a number of stories, and at first Ransom could not perceive any connecting link between them. They were all about women, but women who had apparently lived at different periods of the world's history and in quiet differences. From the Lady's replies it appeared that the stories contained much that she did not understand; but oddly enough the Un-man did not mind. If the questions aroused by any one story proved at all difficult to answer, the speaker simply dropped that story and instantly

began another. The heroines of the stories seemed all to have suffered a great deal—they had been oppressed by their fathers, cast off by husbands, deserted by lovers. Their children had risen up against them and society had driven them out. But the stories all ended, in a sense, happily: sometimes with honours and praises to a heroine still living, more often by tardy acknowledgment and unavailing tears after her death. As the endless speech proceeded, the Lady's questions grew always fewer...

The expression on [the Lady's] face, revealed in the sudden light, was one that [Ransom] had not seen there before. Her eyes were not fixed on the narrator; as far as that went, her thoughts might have been a thousand miles away. Her lips were shut and a little pursed. Her eyebrows were slightly raised. He had not yet seen her look so like a woman of our own race; and yet her expression was one he had not very often met on earth—except, as he realized with a shock, on the stage. "Like a tragedy queen" was the disgusting comparison that arose in his mind. Of course it was a gross exaggeration. It was an insult for which he could not forgive himself. And yet... and yet... the tableau revealed by the lightning had photographed itself on his brain. Do what he would, he found it impossible not to think of that new look in her face. A very *good* tragedy queen, no doubt, very nobly played by an actress who was a good woman in real life...

A moment later [the Un-man] was explaining that men like Ransom in his own world—men of that intensely male and backward-looking type who always shrank away from the new good—had continuously laboured to keep women down to mere childbearing and to ignore the high destiny for which Maleldil had actually created her...

The external and, as it were, dramatic conception of the self was the enemy's true aim. He was making her mind a theatre in which that phantom self should hold the stage. He had already written the play.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the Lady is complementarian to the point where one wonders if the label 'complementarian' is sufficient, and the demon or Devil using the Un-man's body is doing his treacherous worst to convert her to feminism. Hooper says he is trying to make her fall

by transgressing one commandment, and that is true, but the entire substance of the attack to make her fall is by seducing her to feminism.

A strange silence in the criticism

Walter Hooper's *C.S. Lewis: Companion and Guide* treats this dialogue in detail but without the faintest passing reference to feminism, men and women, sex roles, or anything else in that nexus. It does, however, treat the next and final book in the trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*, and defend Lewis from "anti-feminism" in a character who was a woman trying to do a dissertation on Milton: Lewis, it is revealed, had originally intended her to be doing a dissertation on biochemistry, but found that he was not in a position to make that part of the story compelling, and so set a character whose interests more closely paralleled his own. So the issue of feminism was on his radar, possibly looming large. But, and this is a common thread with other examples, he exhibits a mysterious slippage. His account gets too many things right to be dismissed on the ground that he doesn't know how to read such literature, but it also leaves too much out, mysteriously, to conclude that he gave anything like such a scholar's disinterested best in explaining the text. (It is my own opinion that Hooper in fact *does* know how to read; he just mysteriously sets this ability aside when Lewis counters feminism.) And this slippage keeps happening in other places and context, always mysterious on the hypothesis that the errors are just errors of disinterested, honest scholarship.

Jerry Root, in his own treatment in *C.S. Lewis and a Problem of Evil: An Investigation of a Pervasive Theme*, treats subjectivism as spiritual poison and problem of evil Lewis attacks in his different works: Root argues it to be the prime unifying theme in Lewis). But with slight irony, Root seems to turn subjectivistic, or at least disturbing, precisely where his book touches gender roles and egalitarianism. In his comments on *The Great Divorce's* greatest saint-figure, a woman, Susan Smith, is slighted: among other remarks, he quotes someone as saying that women in C.S. Lewis's stories are "he neglects any intellectual virtue in his female characters," and this is particularly applied to Sarah Smith. When he defends Lewis, after a fashion, Root volunteers, "a book written in the 1940s will lack some accommodations to the culture of the twenty-first century." But this section is among the gooiest logic in Root's entire text, speaking with a quasi-psychoanalytic Freudian or Jungian outlook of "a kind of fertile mother-image and nature-goddess," that is without other parallel and certainly does not infect the discussion of Lewis's parents, who

well enough loom large at points, but not in any psychoanalytic fashion. Root's entire treatment at this point has an "I can't put my finger on it, but —" resemblance to feminists disarming and neutralizing any claim that the Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary could in any way, shape, or form contribute to the well-standing of women: one author, pointing out the difficulty of a woman today being both a virgin and a mother, used that as a pretext to entirely dismiss the idea that She could be a model for woman or a token of woman's good estate, thus throwing out the baby, the bathwater, and indeed the tub. The Mother of God is She who answered, Be it unto me according to thy word, an answer that may be echoed whether or not one is a virgin, a mother, or for that matter a woman.

The critique Root repeats, on reflection, may meet an Orthodox response of "Huh?", or more devastatingly, "Yes, but what's your point?", not because Lewis portrays a saint as "no model of intellectual virtue," but because Orthodox sainthood is not a matter of intellectual virtue. Among its rich collection of many saints there are very *few* models of intellectual virtue, admittedly mostly men, and usually having received their formation *outside* the Orthodox Church: St. John Chrysostom was called "Chrysostom" or "Golden-Mouth" because of his formation and mastery of pagan rhetoric. But intellectual virtue as a whole is not a central force in the saints, and Bertrand Russell's observation that in the Gospels not one word is put in praise of intelligence might be accepted, not as a weakness of the Gospel, but as a clarification of what is and is not central to Christian faith. And in terms of what is truly important, we would do well to recall the story of St. Zosima and St. Mary of Egypt. If Lewis's image of sainthood is a woman who is not an academic, this is not an embarrassment to explain away, but a finger on the pulse of what does and does not matter for sainthood.

Humankind, *n.* Mankind, as pronounced by people who are offended at "man" ever being inclusive language.

-Hayward's Unabridged Dictionary

Root mentions the Un-man briefly, and gives heavy attention to the man who would become the Un-man as he appears in the prior book in the trilogy, but does not reference or suggest a connection between the Un-man and feminism. Root became an egalitarian, and shifts in his book from speaking of "men" to saying "humankind". And this is far from one scholar's idiosyncrasy; a look at the World Evangelical Alliance's online

bookstore as I was involved with it showed this mysterious slippage not as something you find a little here, a little there, but as endemic and without any effective opposition.

Un-man's tales for Grown-Ups

During my time as webmaster to the World Evangelical Alliance, the one truly depressing part of my work was getting the bookstore online. Something like eighty to ninety percent of the work was titles like *Women as Risk-Takers for God* which were Un-man's tales for adults. I was depressed that the World Evangelical Alliance didn't seem to have anything else to say on its bookshelves: not only was there a dearth of complementarian "opposing views" works like *Man and Woman in Christ*, but there was a dearth of anything besides Un-man's tales. The same mysterious phenomenon was not limited to a ragtag group of friends, or individual scholars; it was dominant at the highest level in one of the most important parachurch organizations around, and not one that, like Christians for Biblical Equality, had a charter of egalitarian or feminist concerns and priorities.

Conclusion

G.K. Chesterton said, "Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed." That might hold for Chesterton's day, and classics like Grimm and MacDonald today, but today's fairy tales, or rather Un-man's tales, do not tell children the dragons can be killed. Children already know that deep down inside. They tell children dragons can be befriended and that dragons may make excellent company. For another title of the myriad represented by *Dealing with Dragons*, look at the tale of cross-cultural friendship one may look for in *The Dragon and the George*. When first published, *Dealing with Dragons* might have been provocative. Now *Tangled* is not. And reading *Perelandra* leaves one with an uncomfortable sense that C.S. Lewis apparently plagiarized, in the Un-man's tales, works written decades after his death.

This issue is substantial, and Lewis's sensitivity to it is almost prophetic: sensibilities may have changed, but only in the direction of our needing to hear the warning more. And it is one Christians seem to be blind to: complementarianism seems less wrong than petty, making a mountain out of a molehill. But the core issue is already a mountain, not a molehill.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Aim for something better than Un-man's Tales.

What is this mysterious slippage?

One of the two men who shut me down completely when I compared *Dealing with Dragons* with Un-man's tales, told me when I spoke with him a reason why my comparison was out of bounds: it provoked "a strong emotional reaction" to compare the book the group had chosen to Un-man's tales, and so I was making a problematic comparison. With his efforts to waft away and disable my reaction, I zeroed back in on the center: first, that the *style* of telling the tales was exactly the same between the Un-man and Patricia Wrede, and second, the *content* of the tales was exactly the same. But let me take a step further back.

That man was my best friend, and there was one time where he went away for a weekend and had a conversation with me the like of which I have not seen before or since. He gave extremely forceful and heavily loaded language indicating that "there is no... male nor female" mean as much as possible (he did not honestly admit that included was that "no male nor female" mean as much as possible what a feminist would want it to mean), and the question remains of what to do with passages that "appear to say" (always, and with another friend who found her way into the gender rainbow, heavy verbal stress on "appear" for any inconvenient passage) something contrary, and tried to neutralize the claim that the husband is the head of his wife by saying that in Greek the term "head" need not mean "boss" but can also mean "source," as in that "the head of a stream is where the stream came from (he never explained why the assertion that "head" means "source" diminished the authority of a husband).

I took a bit before responding, "That's loaded language!," followed by suggesting that he might repeat what he said with the language loaded in the opposite direction.

That conversation, with a man whose character was gentleness, honesty, and truth, left me mystified: why is it that feminism is always advanced by slimy language? This might be a worst example in my life (at least apart from the text I analyzed in my diploma thesis, Craig Keener's *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Woman's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*), but it is far from an only example in my life, and since I started paying attention to the matter I have never noticed an attempt to advance feminism that was not slippery in rhetoric. The jarring blow helped me move from sitting on the fence between egalitarianism and complementarianism (and not considering the question important), to the belief that feminism is bankrupt enough that it cannot convincingly be advanced through clean methods of persuasion. My

question was initially one of rhetoric alone, but my concern grew to encompass a movement that needs to use such language to recruit, and needed to use such language when feminism was widely held to be the moral high ground over complementarianism, and there was an incredible hegemony to the belief that if you want to advance the good of woman, you do so by promoting feminism. This was years and almost decades before I would quip, "He for She. Because feminism knows it is sinking."

My advisor on that dissertation, incidentally, has been a plenary speaker at a Christians for Biblical Equality ("well, I suppose one in three is not bad") conference. And he did not hinder me from a conservative thesis; Cambridge professors do not normally take out their differences on students. But he did try to recruit me. One example was, "And what about Biblical Egalitarians, who believe 'In Christ, there is no male nor female'?"

I responded by dismantling the missile: I first commented that in English language idiom, talking about the group who does such-and-such idiomatically means that the unshared, distinguishing feature of that group is such-and-such, and his assertion communicates that feminists and Biblical Egalitarians believe that "In Christ, there is no male nor female" and their opponents do not, where one conservative response might be, "The same God inspired passages feminists like and passages they don't like, and if your interpretation needs to neutralize one to make room for the other, your interpretation is broken." I do not ever recall a conservative rejection or attack on "In Christ there is no male nor female," because complementarians also believe, really and truly, that "In Christ there is no male nor female" is as much part of divine revelation as passages feminists attack.

Then I drew attention to a hidden payload: "In Christ there is no male nor female" was assumed to mean as much as possible what a feminist would want it to mean, an identical legal franchise extended to both male and female. If it is hard to see anything else, I would add a passing reference to St. Maximus the Confessor, who said that in hesychasm monks know what temptation is coming by what image they see: if a man's face who had wronged us appeared imagination, there was a temptation to anger coming, and if a woman's face appeared, a temptation to lust was coming, and in Christ there is no male nor female, meaning neither anger nor lust. Now I don't believe this is a complete interpretation; if it is truth, it has the truth of a layer, and there are other things on other levels that "In Christ there is no male nor female" should mean. But I reference St. Maximus the Confessor to give an example of what besides a feminist goal of equal legal-style franchise "In Christ there is no male nor female" could mean.

And this happened easily a couple of dozen times: he asked, regarding inclusive language in translation, if I thought Greek or English language conventions should be followed in Bible translations, and I said, "You're begging the question!" because he used "English language conventions" to automatically mean *belabored inclusive*

language instead of *naturally inclusive language*, when the very point under consideration was whether a New Testament written in naturally inclusive language should be most faithfully translated by exchanging the naturally inclusive Greek for belabored inclusive English. At some point, after a great deal of this, he got discouraged and tried to recruit me less often.

I would suggest that feminism represents a deliberate and chosen ignorance that needs to reach out and dupe others. The verse in Genesis that declares the image of God also says what may more picturesquely be stated as, "Prong and tunnel He created them." And feminism is devoted to annihilating what in society that works out, just as its rhetoric is post-truth, the rhetoric of *the assassin's guide to making foul rhetoric*.

The most politically incorrect passage in Scripture: Romans 1

For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and venerated and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who

knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Some people have said this reads as a description of today, and I used to agree with that.* I quote the passage because it is explicitly an assessment of a deliberate and chosen ignorance.

* What's the asterisk for? Simply put, we've managed to go farther. What used to be called LBG has now become "the alphabet people," because they keep adding letters in a brainstorm of sexualities (or numbers, as in 2-S). (As a techie, I think /L.* / is appropriate for LGBTQ+, and which people are actively working on expanding to LGBTQP+.)

Furthermore, there was a moralist injunction regarding SecondLife, saying, "Fornicate using your OWN genitals!" The technological nexus we live in has had a breach with natural living. Our ancestors devised one kind of artificial environment to be in, namely indoors most of the time, and we've taken artificiality to a next level unimaginable in St. Paul's day. Committing sexual vice in person, which is all the Apostle imagined, suggests face-to-face social skills. "Chang[ing] the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," has been superceded for changing the glory of God for monsters that don't exist except as created by man: Pokemon is "in" as I write. Pokemon trainers do things St. Paul never imagined. Again, let me quote General Omar Bradley about one single dimension of our chosen ignorance, and that before technology that must be taken for granted today:

We have too many men of science; too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount.

Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.

You can read my work *Origins Questions* if you like. I have raised concerns loud and long about The Seraphinians who have imported Protestant beliefs and practice into Orthodoxy by their young earth "Creation 'Science'". But there are serious humanist

objections to the theory of evolution as well, and I have written about the theory of evolution from a humanist's eye.

Much as C.S. Lewis points out in *The Abolition of Man* that the popular impression that magic was the old medieval thing and science was the new thing that swept it away, when in fact there was very little magic in the Middle Ages and science was born around the high noon of magic, Darwinism arose in the same nexus as eugenics and respectable racism which treated it as a problem to show human compassion to other races. Though I don't think this is what St. Paul had in mind, we have traded in human life in the image of God to human life in the image of mere animals, and lost a sense of special obligation to other people. Some people admit of finally getting that the Creation account in Genesis 1 means that all of us are family, a very different picture from the idea that the races can and should be in ruthless and violent competition. Darwin and Galton were cousins, and the former created a theory of evolution very different from what scientists call "evolution" today, while Galton used his concept of IQ to push eugenics.

The ignorance we have today is a hydra. We have phones to turn our brains into tapioca, and in the case of *The Damned Backswing*, we are using Zoom to connect to people all over the world, people which we could only once in a blue moon meet with face to face. In recent history, Google scanned books and made them available, and has now confiscated access to priceless classics. Today Zoom makes things easy in terms of connecting with others, but that can be whisked away too. And at some point we will stop meeting our neighbors face-to-face, even worse than the present conditions that have led a religious leader to tell America "You can put a man on the moon but you do not meet your neighbors face-to-face." And the time will come when people stop meeting together.

Then the end will come.

Knights and Ladies

I would like to talk about men and women and the debate about whether we are genuinely different or whether this aspect of our bodies is just packaging that has no bearing on who we are. I would like to begin by talking about three things:

- "Egalitarianism," which says not only that men and women are due equal respect but the differences are differences of body only and not differences of mind, heart, and spirit.
- "Complementarianism," which says that there are real and personal differences, and men and women are meant to complement each other.
- Why the debate between egalitarianism and complementarianism is like a car crash.

Egalitarianism, Complementarianism, and Car Crashes

I was in a theology class when the professor argued emphatically that for two claims to contradict each other, one *must* be the exact opposite of the other. With the example he gave, it sounded fairly impressive, and it took me a while to be able to explain my disagreement.

Saying, for one claim to contradict another, that one must be the *exact* opposite of the other, its mirror image, is like saying that you can only have an auto collision if the two cars are the same kind of car, with the same shape, and they must be perfectly aligned when they hit each other—because if there's part of one car that doesn't touch the other car, then there hasn't been a *real* collision.

That is simply wrong. In the world of cars, only the tiniest fraction of collisions are two identical cars, hitting each other dead center to dead center. When there's a collision, it is usually two different things which hit off center. And the same is true of ideas. Most collisions in the realm of ideas are two very different things, not mirror images. What happens is that one piece of one of them, perhaps the leftmost edge of the bumper, hits one piece of the other, and in both that one piece is connected to the whole structure. There is much more involved in the collision, on both sides, than that one little bit.

A debate many Christians care about, the debate between the feminist-like egalitarians and the more traditional complementarians, is interesting. (I'll say 'complementarian' for now, even though I don't like the term.) It is interesting as an example of a debate where the collision is not between mirror images. Egalitarianism is not the mirror image of complementarianism, and complementarianism is not the mirror image of egalitarianism. They are very different beasts from each other.

Although this is only the outer shell, egalitarians are usually better communicators than complementarians. Most egalitarians make an explicit claim and communicate it very powerfully. Complementarians usually have trouble explaining their position, let alone presenting it as compellingly as egalitarians do. This has the effect that people on both sides have a much clearer picture of what egalitarian stands for than what complementarianism stands for. The egalitarian claim is often backed by a coherent argument, while the complementarian claim may have Biblical proof texts but often has little else.

I would like to try and suggest what complementarians have so much trouble explaining.

Colors

When I took a cognitive science class, the professor explained a problem for cognitive science: 'qualia'. A computer can represent red and green as two different things. As far as theory problems go, that's *easy* to take care of. The problem is that the computer knows red and green are different only as we can know that two numbers are different. It can't deal with the redness of the red or the greenness of the green: in other words it lacks *qualia*. It can know things are different, but not experience them as really, *qualitatively different*.

Some people can only hear complementarianism as rationalising, "White is brighter than black." Yet it is foundationally a claim of, "Red is red and green is green."

I don't like the term 'complementarian.' It tells part of the truth, but not enough—a property you can see, but not the essence. I would suggest the term 'qualitarian,' for a belief in qualia and qualitative differences. The term's not perfect either, but it's describing some of the substance rather than detail. From here on I'll say 'qualitarian' rather than 'complementarian' to emphasise that there are qualia involved.

With that mentioned, I'd like to make the most unpalatable of my claims next, and hope that if the reader will be generous enough not to write me off yet, I may be able to make some coherent sense.

The Great Chain of Being

This is something that was important to many Christians and which encapsulates a way of looking on the world that *can* be understood, but takes effort.

God
Angels
Humans
Animals
Plants
Rocks
Nothing

The Great Chain of Being was believed for centuries. When the people who believed it were beginning to think like moderns, the Great Chain of Being began to look like the corporate ladder. If there were things above you, you wanted to climb higher because it's not OK to be *you* if someone else is higher than you. If there were things above you, you wanted to look down and sneer because there was something wrong with anything below you. That's how heierarchy looks if the only way you can understand it is as a copy of the corporate ladder.

Before then, people saw it differently. To be somewhere in the middle of the great order was neither a reason to scorn lower things nor covet higher places. Instead, there was a sense of connection. If we are the highest part of the physical creation, then we are to be its custodian and in a real sense its representative. If we are spirits as well, we are not squashed by the fact that God is above us; the one we should worship looks on us in love.

Unlike them, our culture has had centuries of democracy and waving the banner of equality so high we can forget there are other banners to wave. We strive for equality so hard that it's easy to forget that there can be other kinds of good.

The Great Chain of Being is never explained in the Bible, but it comes out of a certain kind of mindset, a mindset better equipped to deal with certain things.

There's an old joke about two people running from a bear. One stops to put on shoes. The other says, "What are you doing?" The first says, "I'm stopping to put on tennis shoes." The second says, "You can't outrun the bear!" "I don't need to outrun the bear. I only need to outrun you."

One might imagine a medieval speaking with a postmodern. The medieval stands in his niche in the Great Chain of Being and stops. The postmodern says, "Why are you stopping?" The medieval says, "I want to enjoy the glorious place God has granted me in the Great Chain of Being." The postmodern says, "How can you be happy with that? There are others above you." The medieval says, "Not all of life is running from a bear."

What am I trying to say? Am I saying, for instance, that a man is as high above a woman as God is above an angel? *No*. All people—men, women, young, old, infant, red, yellow, black, white—are placed at the same spot on the Great Chain of Being.

The Bible deals with a paradox that may be called "equality with distinction". Paul writes that "In Christ there is no Jew nor Greek", yet claims that the advantage of the Jew is "much in every way." Biblical thinking has room to declare both an equality at deepest level—such as exists between men and women—and recognize a distinction. There is no need to culturally argue one away to defend the other. Both are part of the truth. It is good to be part of a Creation that is multilayered, with inequality and not equality between the layers. If this is so, how much more should we be able to consider distinction with fundamental equality without reading the distinction as the corporate ladder's abrasive inequality?

One writer talked about equality in relation to containers being full. To modify her image, Christianity wants *all* of us to be as full as possible. However, it does not want a red paint can to be filled with green paint, nor a green paint can to be filled with red paint. It wants the red and green paint cans to be equally full, but does not conclude that the green can is only full if it has the same volume of red paint as the red paint can. It desires equality in the sense of everyone being full, but does not desire *e-quality* (being without a *qual*-itative difference), in the sense of *qualia* being violated.

Zen and the Art of Un-Framing Questions

May we legitimately project man-like attributes up on to God?

Before answering that question, I'd like to suggest that there are assumptions made by the time that question is asked. The biggest one is that God is gender-neutral, and so any talking about God as masculine is projecting something foreign up on to him.

The qualitarian claim is not that we may legitimately project man-like attributes up on to God. It is that God has projected God-like attributes down on to men. Those are different claims.

A feminist theologian said to a master, "I think it is important that we keep an open mind and avoid confining God to traditional categories of gender."

The master said, "Of course. Why let God reveal himself as masculine when you can confine him to your canons of political correctness?"

I can't shake a vision of an articulate qualitarian giving disturbing answers to someone's questions and sounding like an annoying imitation of a Zen master:

Interlocutor:

What would you say to, "A woman's place is in the House—and in the Senate!"?

Articulate Qualitarian:

Well, if we're talking about disrespectful, misogynistic... Wait a minute... Let me respond to the intention *behind* your question.

Do you know the Bible story about the Woman at the Well?

Interlocutor:

Yes! It's one of my favorite stories.

Articulate Qualitarian:

Do you know its cultural context?

Interlocutor:

Not really.

Articulate Qualitarian:

Most Bible stories—including this one—speak for themselves. A few of them are much richer if you know cultural details that make certain things significant.

Every recorded interaction between Jesus and women, Jesus broke rules. To start off, a rabbi wasn't supposed to talk with women. But Jesus *really* broke the rules here.

When a lone woman came out and he asked for water, she was shocked enough to ask *why* he did so. And there's something to her being alone.

Drawing water was a communal women's task. The women of the village would come and draw water *together*; there was a reason why *this* woman was alone: no one would be caught dead with her. Everyone knew that *she* was the village slut.

Her life was dominated by shame. When Jesus said, "...never thirst again," she heard an escape from shamefully drawing water alone, and she asked Jesus to help her hide from it. When he said to call her husband, she gave an evasive and ambiguous reply. He gave a very blunt response: "You are right in saying you have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband."

Yowch.

Instead of helping her run from her shame, Jesus pulled her *through* it, and she came out the other side, running without any shame, calling, "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!"

There's much more, but I want to delve into one specific detail: there was something abnormal about her drawing water alone. Drawing water was women's work. Women's work was backbreaking toil—as was men's work—but it was not done in isolation. It was something done in the company of other people.

It's not just that one culture. There are old European paintings that show a group of women, bent over their washboards, talking and talking. Maybe I'm just romanticizing because I haven't felt how rough washboards are to fingers. But I have a growing doubt that labor-saving devices are all they're cracked up to be. Vacuum cleaners were introduced as a way to lessen the work in the twice-annual task of beating rugs. Somehow each phenomenal new labor-saving technology seems to leave housewives with even more drudgery.

I have sympathy for feminists who say that women are better off doing professional work in community than doing housework in solitary confinement. I think feminists are probably right that the Leave It to Beaver arrangement causes women to be lonely and depressed. (I'm not sure that "Turn the clock back, *all* the way back, to 1954!" represents the best achievement conservatives can claim.)

The traditional arrangement is not Mom, Dad, two kids, and nothing more. Across quite a lot of cultures and quite a lot of history, the usual pattern has kept extended families together (seeing Grandma didn't involve interstate travel), and made those extended families part of an integrated

community. From what I've read, women are happier in intentional communities like Reba Place.

Interlocutor:

Do you support the enfranchisement of women?

Articulate Qualitarian:

Let me visit the dict.org website. Webster's 1913 says:

Enfranchisement \En*fran"chise*ment\, n.

1. Releasing from slavery or custody. —Shak.
2. Admission to the freedom of a corporation or body politic;
investiture with the privileges of free citizens.

Enfranchisement of copyhold (Eng. Law), the conversion of a copyhold estate into a freehold. —Mozley & W.

WordNet seems less helpful; it doesn't really mention the sense you want.

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enfranchisement
  1: freedom from political subjugation or servitude
  2: the act of certifying [syn: certification] [ant:
disenfranchisement]
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If I were preaching on your question, I might do a Greek-style exegesis and say that your choice of languages fuses the egalitarian request to grant XYZ with the insinuation that their opponents' practice is equivalent to slavery. Wow.

I think you're using loaded language. Would you be willing to restate your question in less loaded terms?

Interlocutor:

Ok, I'll ask a different way, but will you *promise* not to answer with a word-study?

Articulate Qualitarian:

Ok, I won't answer with a word-study unless you ask.

Interlocutor:

Do you believe that women have the *same* long list of rights as men?

Articulate Qualitarian:

Hmm... I'm trying to think about how to answer this without being misleading...

Interlocutor:

Please answer me *literally*.

Articulate Qualitarian:

I'm afraid I'm going to have to say, "No."

Interlocutor:

But you at least believe that women have *some* rights, correct?

Articulate Qualitarian:

No.

Interlocutor:

What?!?

Articulate Qualitarian:

I said I wouldn't give a word-study...

Is it OK if I give a comparable study of a *concept*?

Interlocutor:

[Quietly counts to ten and takes a deep breath:] Ok.

Articulate Qualitarian:

I don't believe that women have any rights. I don't believe that men have any rights, either. The Bible doesn't use rights like we do. It answers plenty of questions we try to solve with rights: it says we shouldn't murder, steal, and so on. But the older Biblical way of doing this said, "Don't do this," or "Be like Christ," or something like that.

Then this really odd moral framework *based on* rights came along, and all of a sudden there wasn't a universal law against unjustified killing, but an entitlement not to be killed. At first it seemed not to make much difference. But now more and more of our moral reasoning is in terms of 'rights', which

increasingly say, not "Don't do this," or "You must do that," but "Here's the long list of entitlements that the universe *owes* me." And that has meant some truly strange things.

In the context of the concrete issues that qualitaricians discuss with egalitarians, the Biblical concept of seeking the good of all is quietly remade into seeking the enfranchisement of all, and so it seems that the big question is whether women get the same rights as men—quite apart from the kind of situation where language comparing your opponents' behavior to slavery is considered polite.

Interlocutor:

Couldn't we listen to, say, Eastern Philosophy?

Articulate Qualitarian:

There's a lot of interesting stuff in Eastern philosophy. The contrast between Confucian and Taoist concepts of virtue, for instance, is interesting and worth exploring, especially in *this* nexus. I'm really drawing a blank as to how one could get a rights-based framework from Asian philosophy. And I'm not sure African mindsets would be much more of a help, for instance. Even if you read one Kwaanza pamphlet, it's hard to see how individual rights could come from the seven African values. The value of Ujima, or collective work and responsibility, speaks even less of individual rights than, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

Interlocutor:

Ok, let me change the subject slightly. Would you acknowledge that Paul was a progressive?

Articulate Qualitarian:

Hmm... reminds me of a C.S. Lewis book in which Lewis quotes a medieval author. The author is talking about some important Greek philosopher and says, "Now when we come to a difficulty or ambiguity, we should always ascribe the views most worthy of a man of his stature."

Lewis's big complaint was that this kind of respect *always* reads into an author the biases and assumptions of the reader's age. It honors the author enough to think he believed what we call important, but not enough that the author can disagree with our assumptions *and be able to correct us*.

When we ask if Paul is a progressive, there are two basic options. Either we say that Paul was not a progressive, and relegate him to our

understanding of a misogynist, or we generously overlook a passage here and there and generously include him as one of our progressives.

It seems that *neither* response allows Paul to be an authority who knows something we don't.

On second thought, maybe it's a *good* thing there aren't too many articulate qualitarrians.

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus... and Gender Psychologists are from the Moon

When pop psychology talks about gender, it is trying to make academic knowledge available to the rest of us. An academic textbook by Em Griffin illustrates Deborah Tannen's theories, saying, "Jan hopes she's marrying a 'big ear'." This thread is picked up very well in popular works.

William Harley's *His Needs, Her Needs* is a sort of Christianized *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Harley devotes a full chapter to explaining that one of the most foundational needs for a husband to understand is a woman's need for listening. He devotes a full chapter to convincing husbands that it is essential that they listen to everything their wives want to say. It was perhaps because reading this work (and *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*, part of *You Just Don't Understand*, etc.) that I was shocked when I reread C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*. It was much more than Mother Dimble's words, "Husbands were made to be talked to. It helps them concentrate their minds on what they're reading..."

The shock was deep. It wasn't like having a rug pulled out from under your feet. It was more like standing with your feet on bare floor and having the floor pulled out from under your feet.

The gender books I'd read, both Christian and non-Christian, made a seamless fusion of the basic raw material, and one *particular* interpretation. The interpretation was as hard to doubt as the raw material itself—and one couldn't really see the fusion as something that *can* be questioned. It was like looking at a number of startlingly accurate pictures of scenes on earth—and then realising that all the pictures were taken from the moon.

That Hideous Strength suggests an answer to the question, "How else could it be?" I'm hesitant to suggest everyone else will have the same experience, but...

If we look at a Hollywood movie targeting young men, there will be violent action, a fast pace, and a sense of adventure. A movie made for young women will have people talking and delving into emotions as they grow closer, as they grow into more mature relationships. If we sum these up in a single word, the men's movie is full of *action*, and the women's movie is filled with *relationship*.

Aristotle characterized masculinity as active and femininity as passive. It seems clear to me that he was grappling with a real thing, the same thing that shapes our movie offerings. It also seems clear that he didn't quite get it right. Masculinity is active. That much is correct. But femininity is not described by the absence of such action. It's described by the *presence* of relationship. It seems that the following can be said:

- Aristotle was grappling with, and trying to understand, something real.
- Even though he's observing something real, his interpretation was skewed.

These two things didn't stop with Aristotle. If a thinker as brilliant as Aristotle fell into this trap, maybe gender psychology is also liable to stumble this way, too. (Or at least *today's* gender psychology stumbles this way. If you're willing to listen to people who look and talk a bit different and are a bit older than us, Charles Shedd's *Letters to Karen* and **Letters to Philip** are examples of slightly older books worth the time to look at.)

Christian Teaching

About this point, I expect a question like, "Ok, men reflect the masculine side of God. But don't you have a place for femininity, and can't women reflect the feminine side of God?"

This is a serious question, and it reflects a serious concern. Many Hindus believe that everything is either part of God or evil: your inmost spirit is a real part of God, and your body is intrinsically evil and illusory like everything else physical. I'm told that Genesis 1 was quite a shocker when it appeared—not, so much, because it says we're made in the image of God, but because after the stars, rocks, plants, and animals were created, the text keeps on saying, "And God saw that it was good." That's really a staggering suggestion, if you knew the other nations' creation stories. The Babylonians believed that the god Marduk killed the demoness Tiamat, tore her dragon carcass apart, and made half of it the land and half of it the sky. So your body and mine, every forest, every star, is part of a demon's carcass that happens to be left over after a battle.

Please think about this claim for a minute, and then look at part of Genesis 1:

- Creation didn't happen as a secondary result of divine combat. God created the world because he specifically wanted to do so.
- Physical matter, and life, and everything else, is *good*.
- God made us in his image. Only then was his creation very good, and complete.

One thing that comes out of these things is that *God can create good*. God created the physical world without being physical. Our bodies, indeed the whole natural world, are good, because God created something outside of himself. Femininity is like this, only much more so. *Femininity is a created good*, and it is much more beautiful, more mysterious, more wondrous, more powerful thing than physical matter. People are the unique creation where matter meets spirit—no other creation can claim that. Women are the unique point where spirit meets the very apex of femininity.

Every woman is a mystery, and every man is a king. To be a Christian man is to be made like the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There is something kingly and lordly about manhood. Part of this is understood when you realize that this does *not* mean domineering other people and standing above them, but standing under them, like the servant king who washed feet. The sign and sigil of male authority is not a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns.

But all this is a hint. I give sketch here and there, and I hope less to provide an inescapable logical framework than suggest entry points that can look into the Bible and see these things.

I'd like to give a glimpse of the qualities:

Qualia

Lord Adam, Dragonslayer **Lady Eve, Poet's Heart**

If you could see Adam, you would see a knight, in burnished armor brightly gleaming, astride a white horse. What you wouldn't see is why the armor shines brightly. It is not burnished by him, nor any other human hands, but the claws of the dragons he wars against. Under his helmet is a lion's mane of thick hair and beard. Under his breastplate are scars, some quite close to his heart.

This knight errant yearns for quests. Something difficult, something dangerous, something active. Some place to prove himself by serving in a costly way. He longs for that battle when his blood will mingle with that of his fellow warriors and he may at last embark on the last great adventure.

He has a lord above him, to whom

If you could see Eve at her best, she would be beside a fire, inside a great hall. She would be stoking a fire with one hand, another hand would call forth forth music from a silver harp, another hand would be writing a letter, and she would use both hands to embrace the sorrowing child on her lap in comforting love. And she would do this lightly, joyfully, with a smile from the other side of pain. Though Eve sits still, one can almost see her dancing. It would take time to see all her many layers of beauty... if that were even possible. *What is the secret behind her enigmatic smile? What deep mysteries lie hidden in her heart of hearts?*

Her beauty is as a rose: a ladder of thorns leads up to a flower so exquisite as to be called God's autograph. She toils hard, and it is difficult to see lines of pain in her

he owes allegiance and honor. He is also a face only because she has worked through mentor, turning his face to a squires whom them so that they have become part of her he focuses on and draws up. He draws joy. She knows a mother's worry, and she them, as he was drawn, out of the comfort looks on others with a mother's caring eyes. of home, into the mysteries of life, and into She looks with the joy on the other side of the company of men and society to sorrow.

reconnect more deeply. He has tried to Her home is her castle, and it is a explain that siring a child is something an castle she tries to run well. Adam... well, impudent youth can do, but being a dear man as he is, he isn't very good with spiritual father is the mark of a *man*. managing resources. She runs the castle in

Once his mind is on a task, it moves an orderly and efficient manner, and as the forward from beginning to end. It moves lady in charge, she handles well a great with the force of an avalanche. He does many things that her lord wouldn't know one task at a time, and wants to do it well. how to begin doing. The castle is their

There is another side to his castle, of course, but there are things that seriousness. He can be deadly serious, but need attending to so that Adam can there is a merry twinkle in his eye. His continue slaying dragons. Yet to say that is force and his energy are too much to to put last things first. The reason she contain, and he is capable of catching handles so many taxing details is that Adam people off guard. (Especially in his is the light of her life, her king and her lord, practical jokes.) Like the lion, he is not her bright morning star.

safe and not tame; he is both serious and She turns to her loom as a place to silly, and can astound in both. When he make wall hangings. At least, that's what plays with children, playing with him is someone would say if he missed the point both like playing with a kitten and playing completely. She makes beautiful wall with a thunderstorm. hangings, but there's more.

To his lady Adam turns with The loom is a centering place for her, reverence. She is a wonder to him. The a quieting place. After other things happen extravagance of the quests she bids him that take processing, she settles into that and he embarks on, is a spectacular peace. Her heart is quieted as she lets it all offshoot of his more quiet service in sort out.

private. Though Adam would never see it That quieting is not far from her this way, he is taller when he bows and mystic's heart. She is mystery and lives in kisses her hand, and richer when he gives connection with the mystery of faith. There her a costly gift. is One she is closer to than her lord, and

His honor is his life, and wants to presence, mystical communion, dwelling in live and act as a son of God. He believes the presence of the divine, is precious to that *faithworks*, and strives to show virtue her. and behave in a manner worthy of Christ.

Favorite Scripture Passage:

Favorite Scripture Passage: "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you
"And being found in human form he has done a beautiful thing to me. For you
humbled himself and became obedient always have the poor with you, but you will
unto death, even death on a cross. not always have me. In pouring this
ointment on my body she has done it to
Therefore God has highly exalted him and ointment on my body she has done it to
bestowed on him the name which is above prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you,
every name, that at the name of Jesus wherever this gospel is preached in the
every knee should bow, in heaven and on whole world, what she has done will be told
earth and under the earth, and every in memory of her."

tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to **A Quote:**
the glory of God the Father." "Little surprises and big hugs and kisses.

A Quote: Musical dances and bright reminisces,
"God, give me mountains to climb and the Quiet with stories and roast leg of lamb,
strength for climbing." People who value me for who I am,

Something to say and someone who will
hear it,

A home in good order and a mystical spirit,
Warm fireside chats and a minstrel who
sings,

These are a few of my favorite things."

CJS Hayward, with thanks to Martin, Phil, Mary, Xenia, Patrick, Yoby, Mom, and
Kathryn.

The Law of Attraction: A Dialogue with an Eastern Orthodox Christian Mystic

Paidion: I found some really interesting stuff about the Law of Attraction.

Aneer: What is it that you have found?

Paidion: This wonderful secret, the Law of Attraction, is a secret where if you understand how you attract what you think about... then you have the key to happiness!

Aneer: Have you seen what else the Law of Attraction could be?

Paidion: You mean the Law of Attraction could be more?

Aneer: Let me think about how to explain this...

Paidion: Did the Church Fathers say anything about the Law of Attraction? Or did the Bible?

Aneer: Where to start, where to start—the Law of Attraction says our thoughts are important, and that is true. Not just a little bit true, but deeper than a whale can dive. The Apostle writes:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Paidion: And there is something about "ask, seek, knock?"

Aneer: Yes, indeed:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

It is part of the Sermon on the Mount. But there is something that you may be missing about what is in the Sermon on the Mount, and something you may be missing about the Law of Attraction.

Paidion: Why? Is there anything relevant besides the Sermon on the Mount?

Aneer: Yes indeed, from the first pages of Genesis:

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, "Yea, hath God said, "Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

And the woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

And the serpent said unto the woman, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your

eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat,

The Law of Attraction is here. The very *heart* of the Law of Attraction is here. Have you read *The Magician's Nephew*?

Paidion: It is one of my favorite books.

Aneer: Do you remember what Jadis stole?

Paidion: How could Jadis steal anything? She was a queen!

Aneer: Then you have forgotten the verse when Jadis met a garden enclosed:

"Come in by the gold gates or not at all,
Take of my fruit for others or forbear,
For those who steal or those who climb my wall
Shall find their heart's desire and find despair."

The story gives a glimpse of the Queen Jadis finding her heart's desire: undying years, and undying strength. She found everything the Law of Attraction promises. If the Law of Attraction does anything, you can see it unfold in Eve choosing to be attracted to the fruit, or Jadis.

But undying strength was not the only thing in the picture. When Jadis ate that apple, she might never age or die, but neither could she ever live again. She cheated death, perhaps, but at the expense of Life. Which is to say that she didn't really cheat Death at all. And she damned herself to a "living" death that was hollow compared to her previous life she so eagerly threw away.

Paidion: So you think Eve was like Jadis? Halfway to being a vampire?

Aneer: Paidion, you're big on imagining. I want you to imagine the Garden of Eden for just a moment. Adam and Eve have been created immortal,

glorious, lord and lady of all nature, and Eve tastes an exhilarating rush that has something very vampiric about it: a moment passed, and the woman who had never known pain found the seed of death deep inside her. And in a flash of insight, she *realized* something.

Paidion: What is it she realized?

Aneer: She had the seed of death eating away at her. Nothing could stop her from dying. And her deathless husband would watch her die.

Paidion: A sad end to the story.

Aneer: What do you mean?

Paidion: But it's a tragedy!

Aneer: It may be tragic, but how is it an end to Adam's story?

Adam was still deathless. He would live on; did you assume he would be celibate, or that Eve envisioned God to never provide him a wife to share in blessed happiness?

Paidion: Look, this is all very impressive, but is any of this really part of the ancient story?

Aneer: I cut off the story before its usual end. The end goes surprisingly fast:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Paidion: Why? Is this just Eve's... solution... to... the... problem... of... Adam's...
[shudder]

Aneer: Do you think your generation is the first to invent jealousy?

Paidion: But can't the Law of Attraction be used for good?

Aneer: When people speak of the Law of Attraction, it always sounds like the unearthing of the key to happiness.

Paidion: But what else could it be once we are attracting the right thoughts?

Aneer: What, exactly, are the right thoughts might be something interesting to discuss someday. But for now let me suggest that the Law of Attraction might be something very different, at its core, from the key to happiness: it could be the bait to a trap.

The Sermon on the Mount truly *does* say,

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

but only after saying something that is cut from the same cloth:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

The Sermon on the Mount finds it unworthy of the children of a loving and providing God to chase after food and clothing—or cars and iPods or whatever—as if they have to do so because their Heavenly Father has forgotten their needs. God knows our needs before we begin to ask, and it's a distraction for us to be so terribly concerned about the things that will be added to us if we put first things first and last things last.

Paidion: But what is wrong with wanting abundance?

Aneer: Have you read Plato's *Republic*?

Paidion: No.

Aneer: Did you know that royalty do not touch money?

Paidion: Why not? It would seem that a king should have the most right to touch money.

Aneer: Well, let us leave discussion of rights for another day. But there's something in the *Republic* where Plato knows something about gold, and it is the reason why royalty do not touch money.

Paidion: And that is?

Aneer: Plato is describing the guardians, the highest rulers of an ideal city. And what he says about them is that they have true gold in their character: they have a truer gold than gold itself, and they are set apart for something high enough that they would only be distracted by handling the kind of gold that is dug up from the earth like something dead.

Paidion: But kings have palaces and jewels and such!

Aneer: Not in Plato's *Republic* they don't. The life of a ruler, of a king, in Plato is something like the life of a monk. It's not about having palaces of gold any more than being President is all about being able to watch cartoons all day!

Paidion: Ok, but for the rest of us who may not be royalty, can't we at least want abundance as a consolation prize?

Aneer: "The rest of us who may not be royalty?"

What can you *possibly* mean?

Paidion: Um...

Aneer: All of us bear the royal bloodline of Lord Adam and Lady Eve. All of us are created in the divine image, made to grow into the likeness of Christ and—

Paidion: So we are all made to rule as kings?

Aneer: Read the Fathers and you will find that the real rule of royalty is when we rule over God's creation as royal emblems, as the image of God. For people to rule other people is not just not the *only* kind of royal rule: it's almost like a necessary evil. Do you know of the ritual anointing of kings? In the Bible, a man is made king when he is anointed with oil. Such anointing still takes place in England, for instance. And when a person receives the responsibility for sacred work in the Orthodox Church, he is anointed—

chrismated—and in this anointing, the Orthodox Church has always seen the sacred anointing of prophet, priest, and king.

Paidion: But this is just for priests, right?

Aneer: Paidion, every one of us is created for spiritual priesthood. Perhaps I wasn't clear: the anointing of prophet, priest, and king is for every faithful member of the Church, not just a few spiritual Marines. Chrismation, or royal anointing, is administered alongside baptism to all the faithful.

Paidion: And it's part of this royal dignity not to touch money?

Aneer: There is a very real sense in which Christians may not touch money. Not literally, perhaps; many Christians touch coins or other items, and so on and so forth. But there is a real sense in which Christians never have what you search for in abundance, because they have something better.

Paidion: Are you saying half a loaf is better than an *abundance* of loaves?

Aneer: I know a number of people who have found that an abundance of loaves is not the solution to all of life's problems. Easy access to an abundance of loaves can lead to weight issues, or worse.

May I suggest what it is that you fear losing? It isn't exactly abundance, even if you think it is.

Paidion: So am I mistaken when I think I want shrimp and lobster as often as I wish?

Aneer: Maybe you are right that you want shrimp and lobster, but you don't *only* want shrimp and lobster. You want to be able to choose.

Remember in Star Wars, how Luke and Ben Kenobi are travelling in the Millennium Falcon, and Kenobi puts a helmet on Luke's head that has a large shield completely blocking his eyesight? And Luke protests and says, "With the blast shield down, I can't even see. How am I supposed to fight?" And then something happens, and Luke starts to learn that he can fight even without seeing what was in front of him, and Kenobi says, "You have taken your first step into a larger world."?

What you want is to have your ducks in a row and be able to see that you can have shrimp and lobster as often as you want.

What the Sermon on the Mount says is better than a way to do a better job of having your next meal right where you can see it. It says to put the blast shield down...

And take your first step into a larger world.

Paidion: I'm sure for a man of faith like you—

Aneer: Why call me a man of faith? I may not have all my ducks lined up in a row, but I have *always* known where my next meal is coming from.

Paidion: Well sure, but *that's*—

Aneer: Maybe everybody you know has that privilege, but a great many people in the world do not.

Paidion: That may be, but I still want abundance.

Aneer: May I suggest that you are reaching for abundance on a higher plane?

Paidion: Like what? What is this larger world?

Aneer: When you have the blast shield down over your eyes, what you receive is part of a life of communion with God. When you don't see where your next meal is coming from, and God still feeds you, you get a gift covered with God's fingerprints. You're living part of a dance and you are beckoned to reach for much deeper treasures. If you are asked to let go of treasures on earth, it is so your hands can open all the wider to grasp treasures in Heaven.

Paidion: Maybe for super-spiritual people like you, but when I've tried anything like that, I've only met disappointments.

Aneer: I've had a lot of disappointments. Like marriage, for instance.

Paidion: *You?* You've always seemed—

Aneer: My wife and I are very happily married. We've been married for years, and as the years turn into decades we are more happily married—more in love. But our marriage has been a disappointment on any number of counts.

G.K. Chesterton said, "The marriage succeeds because the honeymoon fails." Part of our marriage is that it's not just a honeymoon; my wife is not some bit of putty I can inflate to the contours of my fantasies about the perfect wife; she is a real person with real desires and real needs and real virtues and real flaws and a real story. She is infinitely more than some figment of my imagination. She has disappointed me time and time again—thank God!—and God has given me something much better in her than if she was some piece of putty that somehow fit my imagination perfectly. By giving me a real woman—what a woman!—God is challenging me to dig deeper into being a real man.

Paidion: So all disappointments make for a happy marriage? Because...

Aneer: I'm not completely sure how to answer that. We miss something about life if we think we can only have a happy marriage when we don't get any disappointments. Read the Gospel and it seems that Christ himself dealt with disappointments; his life on earth built to the disappointment of the Cross which he could not escape no matter how hard he prayed. But the Apostle Paul wrote about this disappointment:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

It is part of his glory.

If you have a disappointment, you have one problem. If you have a disappointment and you think that with such a disappointment you can't really be where you should be, you have two problems. Disappointments sting like ninety, but they can be drawn into something deeper and a richer life.

Paidion: So you'd rather be disappointed in life than get your way.

Aneer: Yes.

When I haven't gotten my way, that has been a stepping stone for a refinement on more than one level, a refinement in what I sought and what I wanted. I've gotten better things than if I always had a magic key that gave me what I thought I wanted. St. Paul said, "When I became a man, I put childish things behind me."

Paidion: Am I being childish if I wish the Law of Attraction could get me what I want? If I dream?

Aneer: What the Law of Attraction is, is a way to satisfy the kind of things childish people set their hearts on. Always getting your way is not an unattainable dream. Always getting your way is not a dream at all. Always getting your way is a nightmare. It is the nightmare of succeeding at being a spoiled brat where others have grown up in all the disappointments you hope to dodge.

Paidion: Is virtue its own reward?

Or is it just the consolation prize when you do the right thing even if you don't get a real reward?

Aneer: Let us return to Plato again.

Elsewhere in the *Republic*, some people say some questionable things about goodness. Someone says, for instance, that what is good is whatever the stronger group wants, or something like that. And so someone asks if there's anything a good man has that the evil man does not.

Actually, the question is put much more strongly than that. We are asked to suppose that an evil man has every worldly benefit—a good name, wealth, good children, everything in life going his way. And let us suppose that the good man gets quite the opposite: he is slandered and betrayed, loses everything, is tortured, and is finally crucified. Can we still say that the good man has anything the evil one does not?

Paidion: If *that* is the case, it's hard to see that the good man has *anything* valuable that the evil man does not.

Aneer: He has goodness.

Paidion: Well, yes, but *besides*—

Aneer: Paidion, how would you like to have all of the wealth in the world and the health with which to spend it?

Paidion: No thanks!

Aneer: Meaning that on *those* terms, no man in his right mind would choose *any* amount of wealth!

Paidion: Sure, if you have to spend all the money on doctor bills...

Aneer: All right.

Let's suppose you don't have to spend any of it on doctor bills. Suppose you're a billionaire with all kinds of free medical care, and with your billions of dollars comes the worst of health and the most atrocious suffering for the rest of your mercifully short life. Billions of dollars must be worth *that*, right?

Paidion: Does this relate to Plato?

Aneer: Yes—

Paidion: Are you saying that the evil man had bad health? You didn't mention that at first.

Aneer: Well, that depends on what you mean by health. Externally, he had the best of health, I suppose, and the good man had terrible diseases. But the condition of being evil is the spiritual condition of being diseased, twisted, and shrunken. Even our English words like "twisted" and "sick" are signs of ancient recognition of evil as a spiritual disease. The evil man with worldly glory is the man who has all of the wealth in the world and the health with which to spend it—and the good man is the man who has nothing but his health. He has the one thing the evil man does not: his *health!*

Paidion: Is this about Heaven and Hell? Because however impressive they may be, we aren't there yet.

Aneer: Wrong. Heaven and Hell begin in this life. The eternal tree that forever stands in Heaven or Hell is planted and nourished in this life. The connection between this life and the next is a closer connection than you can imagine.

Paidion: All this sounds very wonderful, and I could wish it were true. For people like you who have faith, at least. I don't...

Aneer: Paidion, there was something that happened in *The Magician's Nephew*, before Queen Jadis attracted to her the deathless strength that she desired. Something happened before then. Do you remember what?

Paidion: I'm not sure what.

Aneer: It's quite memorable, and it has quite a lot to do with the Law of Attraction.

Paidion: I am afraid to ask.

Aneer: Let me quote the Queen, then.

...That was the secret of secrets. It had long been known to the great kings of our race that there was a word which, if spoken with the proper ceremonies, would destroy all living things except the one who spoke it. But the ancient kings were weak and soft-hearted and bound themselves and all who should come after them with great oaths never even to seek after the knowledge of

that word. But I learned it in a secret place and paid a terrible price to learn it. I did not use it until she forced me to it. I fought to overcome her by every other means. I poured out the blood of my armies like water...

The last great battle raged for three days here in Charn itself. For three days I looked down upon it from this very spot. I did not use my power till the last of my soldiers had fallen, and the accursed woman, my sister, at the head of her rebels was halfway up those great stairs that led up from the city to the terrace. Then I waited till we were so close that we could not see one another's faces. She flashed her horrible, wicked eyes upon me and said, "Victory." "Yes," said I, "Victory, but not yours." Then I spoke the Deplorable Word. A moment later I was the only living thing beneath the sun.

Paidion: Are you saying that the Law of Attraction is like the Deplorable Word?

Aneer: The Law of Attraction is described in glowing terms but what is described so glowingly is that there's you, your thoughts, and a giant mirror called the universe... and that's it. Everything else is killed. Not literally, perhaps, but in a still very real sense. The reason you have not succeeded at getting what you want *couldn't* be because a powerful man, with his own thoughts and motives, is refusing something you want, much less that God loves you and knows that what you want isn't *really* in your best interests. The powerful man is just part of the great mirror, as is God, if there is anything to God besides you. The only possible reason for you to not have something, the only thing that is not killed, is your thoughts.

And how I wish you could enter a vast, vast world which is not a mirror focused on you, where even the people who meet and know you have many other concerns besides thinking about you, who have their own thoughts and wishes and which is ruled by an infinitely transcendent God who is infinitely more than you even if you were made for the entire purpose of becoming divine, and perhaps even more divine than if you are the only thing you do not lump into the great mirror reflecting your thoughts.

Paidion: But how shall I then live? It seemed, for a moment, like things got better when I paid attention to my thoughts, and things in my life—

Aneer: If you think it seems like your thoughts matter, perhaps that's because your thoughts really *are* important, possibly more important than you can even dream of. Perhaps there are other things going on in the world, but it is your thoughts that stand at the root of everything you contribute to the tree that will stand eternally in Heaven or as Hell. I don't know how to tell you how important it is to attend to your thoughts, nor how to tell you that what you think of as morality is something which all the wise go upstream and deal with at the source, in the unseen warfare of vigilant attention to one's thoughts. Little thoughts build to big thoughts and big thoughts build to actions, and spiritual discipline or "asceticism" moves from the hard battle of actions to the harder battle of thoughts. And thoughts aren't just about concepts; when I've had trouble getting a thought of doing something I shouldn't out of my head, sometimes I've reminded myself that what is not truly desired doesn't really last long. *The Philokalia* there, my point is that it is a lifetime's endeavor to learn how to pay proper attention to one's thoughts.

Paidion: Um... uh... did you say I was made to be divine? Did you *mean* it?

Aneer: Paidion, if being divine just means that there isn't anything that much bigger than us, then that's a rather pathetic idea of the divine, and I wouldn't give twopence for it. But if we really and truly understand how utterly God dwarfs us, if we understand what it means that God is the Creator and we are his creatures, and the infinite chasm between Creator and creature is then transcended so that we his creatures can become by grace what God is by nature—then that is really something and I would give my life for that way of being divine!

There is a hymn, of ancient age, that says, "Adam, wanting to be divine, failed to be divine. Christ became man that he might make Adam divine." Christ's life is an example of what it means to be divine: as a child he was a refugee, then grew up as a blue-collar worker, then lived as a homeless man, and died a slave's death so vile its name was a curse word. This is a tremendous clue-by-four about what true glory is. This is a divine clue-by-four about what Adam missed when he decided that reigning as immortal king and lord of paradise and following only one simple rule wasn't good enough for him.

And it is in this messy life we live, with so many situations beyond our control and so many things we would not choose, that God can transform us so that we become by grace what he is by nature.

Paidion: Aneer, can I ever enter the vast world you live in? It seems I have, well...

Aneer: Well?

Paidion: Chosen to live in an awfully small world, thinking I was doing something big.

Aneer: *All* of us have. It's called *sin*. Not a popular word today, but realizing you are in sin is Heaven's best-kept secret. Before you repent, you are afraid to let go of something that seems, like the Ring to Gollum, "my precious." Afterwards you find that what you dropped was torment and Hell, and you are awakening to a larger world.

Paidion: But when can I do something this deep? My schedule this week is pretty full, and little of it meshes well with—

Aneer: The only time you can ever repent is *now*.

Lesser Icons: Reflections on Faith, Icons, and Art

C.S. Lewis's *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* opens with a chapter called "The Picture in the Bedroom," which begins, "There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it." Not long into the chapter, we read:

They were in Lucy's room, sitting on the edge of her bed and looking at a picture on the opposite wall. It was the only picture in the house that they liked. Aunt Alberta didn't like it at all (that was why it was put away in a little back room upstairs), but she couldn't get rid of it because it had been a wedding present from someone she did not want to offend.

It was a picture of a ship—a ship sailing straight towards you. Her prow was gilded and shaped like the head of a dragon with a wide-open mouth. She had only one mast and one large, square sail which was a rich purple. The sides of the ship—what you could see of them where the gilded wings of the dragon ended—were green. She had just run up to the top of one glorious blue wave, and the nearer slope of that wave came down towards you, with streaks and bubbles on it. She was obviously running fast before a gay wind, listing over a little on her port side. (By the way, if you are going to read this story at all, and if you don't know already, you had better get it into your head that the left of a ship when you are looking ahead is *port*, and the right

is *starboard*.) All of the sunlight fell on her from that side, and the water on that side was full of greens and purples. On the other, it was darker blue from the shadow of the ship.

"The question is," said Edmund, "whether it doesn't make things worse, *looking* at a Narnian ship when you can't get there."

"Even looking is better than nothing," said Lucy. "And she is such a very Narnian ship."

"Still playing your old game?" said Eustace Clarence, who had been listening outside the door and now came grinning into the room. Last year, when he had been staying with the Pevensies, he had managed to hear them all talking of Narnia and he loved teasing them about it. He thought of course that they were making it all up; and as he was far too stupid to make anything up himself, he did not approve of that.

"You're not wanted here," said Edmund curtly.

"I'm trying to think of a limerick," said Eustace. "Something like this:

Some kids who played games about Narnia
Got gradually balmier and balmier—"

"Well, *Narnia* and *balmier* don't rhyme, to begin with," said Lucy.

"It's an assonance," said Eustace.

"Don't ask him what an assy-thingummy is," said Edmund. "He's only longing to be asked. Say nothing and perhaps he'll go away."

Most boys, on meeting a reception like this, would have either cleared out or flared up. Eustace did neither. He just hung about grinning, and presently began talking again.

"Do you like that picture?" he asked.

"For Heaven's sake don't let him get started about Art and all that," said Edmund hurriedly, but Lucy, who was very truthful, had already said, "Yes, I do. I like it very much."

"It's a rotten picture," said Eustace.

"You won't see it if you step outside," said Edmund.

"Why do you like it?" said Eustace to Lucy.

"Well, for one thing," said Lucy, "I like it because the ship looks as if it were really moving. And the water looks as if it were really wet. And the waves look as if they were really going up and down."

Of course Eustace knew lots of answers to this, but he didn't say anything. The reason was that at that very moment he looked at the waves and saw that they did look very much indeed as if they were going up and

down. He had only once been in a ship (and then only so far as the Isle of Wight) and had been horribly seasick. The look of the waves in the picture made him feel sick again. He turned rather green and tried another look. And then all three children were staring with open mouths.

What they were seeing may be hard to believe when you read it in print, but it was almost as hard to believe when you saw it happening. The things in the picture were moving. It didn't look at all like a cinema either; the colours were too real and clean and out-of-doors for that. Down went the prow of the ship into the wave and up went a great shock of spray. And then up went the wave behind her, and her stern and her deck became visible for the first time, and then disappeared as the next wave came to meet her and her bows went up again. At the same moment an exercise book which had been lying beside Edmund on the bed flapped, rose and sailed through the air to the wall behind him, and Lucy felt all her hair whipping round her face as it does on a windy day. And this was a windy day; but the wind was blowing out of the picture towards them. And suddenly with the wind came the noises—the swishing of waves and the slap of water against the ship's sides and the creaking and the overall high steady roar of air and water. But it was the smell, the wild, briny smell, which really convinced Lucy that she was not dreaming.

"Stop it," came Eustace's voice, squeaky with fright and bad temper. "It's some silly trick you two are playing. Stop it. I'll tell Alberta—Ow!"

The other two were much more accustomed to adventures but, just exactly as Eustace Clarence said, "Ow," they both said, "Ow" too. The reason was that a great cold, salt splash had broken right out of the frame and they were breathless from the smack of it, besides being wet through.

"I'll smash the rotten thing," cried Eustace; and then several things happened at the same time. Eustace rushed towards the picture. Edmund, who knew something about magic, sprang after him, warning him to look out and not be a fool. Lucy grabbed at him from the other side and was dragged forward. And by this time either they had grown much smaller or the picture had grown bigger. Eustace jumped to try to pull it off the wall and found himself standing on the frame; in front of him was not glass but real sea, and wind and waves rushing up to the frame as they might to a rock. There was a second of struggling and shouting, and just as they thought they had got their balance a great blue roller surged up round them, swept them off their feet, and drew them down into the sea. Eustace's despairing cry suddenly ended as the water got into his mouth.

I don't know that C.S. Lewis was thinking about icons or Orthodoxy when he wrote this, and I am reluctant to assume that C.S. Lewis was doing what would be convenient for the claims I want to make at icons. Perhaps there are other caveats that should also be made: but the caveats are not the whole truth.

I am not aware of a better image of what an icon is and what an icon does than this passage in Lewis. Michel Quenot's *The Icon: A Window on the Kingdom* is excellent and there are probably more out there, but I haven't come across as much of an evocative image as the opening to *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

I don't mean that the first time you see an icon, you will be swept off your feet. There was a long time where I found them to be clumsy art that was awkward to look at. I needed to warm to them, and appreciate something that works very differently from Western art. I know that other people have had these immediate piercing experiences with icons, but appreciating icons has been a process of coming alive for me. But much the same could be said of my learning French or Greek, where I had to struggle at first and then slowly began to appreciate what is there. This isn't something Orthodoxy has a complete monopoly on; some of the time Roman Catholic piety can have something much in the same vein. But even if it's hard to say that there's something in icons that is nowhere else, there is something in icons that I had to learn to appreciate.



Icon of the Holy Transfiguration, Anonymous

A cradle Orthodox believer at my parish explained that when she looks at an icon of the Transfiguration, she is there. The Orthodox understanding of presence and memory is not Western and not just concerned with neurons firing in the brain; it means that icons are portals that bring the spiritual presence of the saint or archetypal event that they portray. An icon can be alive, some more than others, and some people can sense this spiritually.

Icons are called windows of Heaven. Fundamental to icon and to symbol is that when the Orthodox Church proclaims that we are the image of God, it doesn't mean that we are a sort of detached miniature copy of God. It doesn't mean that we are a

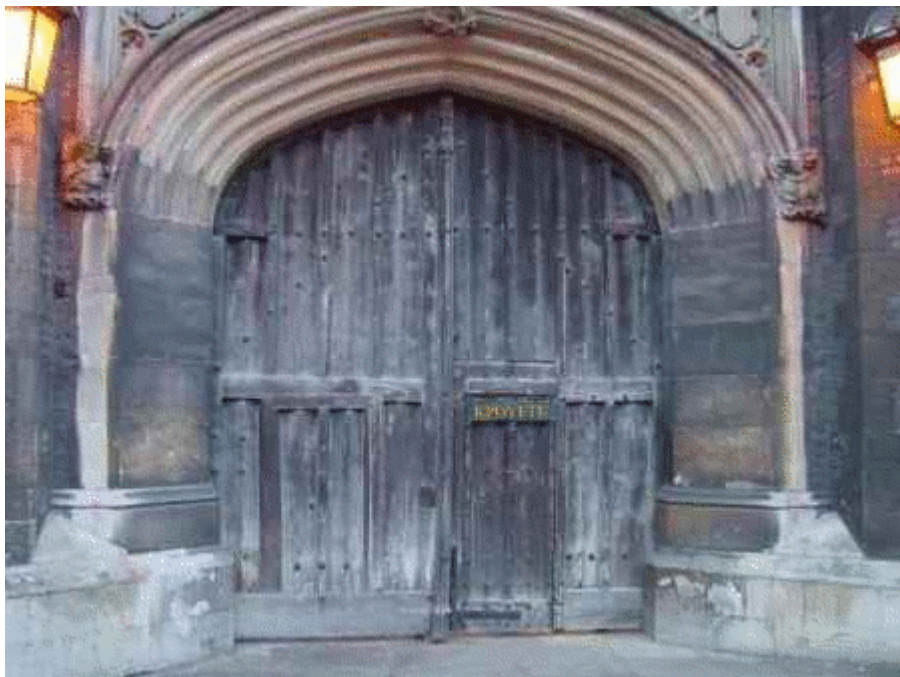
detached anything. It is a claim that to be human is to be in relation to God. It is a claim that we manifest God's presence and that the breath we breathe is the breath of God. What this means for icons is that when the cradle Orthodox woman I just mentioned says that she is there at the Transfiguration, then that icon is like the picture of the Narnian ship. If we ask her, "Where are you?" then saying "Staring at painted wood" is like saying that someone is "talking to an electronic device" when that person is using a cell phone to talk with a friend. In fact the error is deeper.



Icon of the Glykophilousa (Sweetly-Kissing) Mother of God, Anonymous

An icon of a saint is not intended to inform the viewer what a saint looked like. Its purpose is to connect the viewer with Christ, or Mary the Theotokos, or one of the saints or a moment we commemorate, like the Annunciation when Gabriel told humble Mary that she would bear God, or the Transfiguration, when for a moment Heaven shone through and Christ shone as Christians will shine and as saints sometimes shine even in this life. I don't know all of the details of how the art is put together—although it is art—but the perspective lines vanish not in the depths of the picture but behind the viewer because the viewer is part of the picture. The viewer is invited to cross himself, bow before, and kiss the icon in veneration: the rule is not "Look, but don't touch." any more than the rule in our father's house is "Look, but don't touch." The gold background is there because it is the metal of light; these windows of Heaven are not simply for people to look into them and see the saint radiant with Heaven's light, but Heaven looks in and sees us. When I approach icons I have less the sense that I am looking at these saints, and Heaven, than that they are looking at me. The icon's purpose is not, as C.S. Lewis's picture, to connect people with Narnia, but to draw people into Heaven, which in the Orthodox understanding must begin in this life. It is less theatrical, but in the end the icon offers something that the Narnian picture does not.

It is with this theological mindset that Bishop KALLISTOS Ware is fond, in his lectures, of holding up a photograph of something obviously secular—such as a traffic intersection—and saying, "In Greece, this is an icon. It's not a holy icon, but it's an icon."



Door (KPOYETE), CJS Hayward
(Not a holy icon, but an icon)

That, I believe, provides as good a departure as any for an Orthodox view of art. I would never say that icons are inferior art, and I would be extremely hesitant to say that art is equal to icons. But they're connected. Perhaps artwork is lesser icons. Perhaps it is indistinct icons. But art is connected to iconography, and even if that link is severed so that art becomes non-iconic, it dies.

Another illustration may shed light on the relation between iconography and other art. The Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ to Orthodox. It is not simply a sacrament, but the sacrament of sacraments, and the sacrament which all other sacraments are related. And there are ways the Orthodox Church requires that this Holy Communion be respected: it is to be prepared for with prayer and fasting, and under normal circumstances it is only received by people who are of one mind as the early Church. It encompasses, inseparably, mystic communion with God and communion with the full brothers and sisters of the Orthodox Church.

How does an ordinary meal around a table with family compare? In one sense, it doesn't. But to say that and stop is to miss something fundamental. Eating a meal around a table with friends and family is communion. It is not Holy Communion, but it is communion.

A shared meal is a rite that is part of the human heritage. It persists across times, cultures, and religions. This is recognized more clearly in some cultures than others, but i.e. Orthodox Jewish culture says that to break bread is only something you do when you are willing to become real friends. The term "breaking of bread" in the New Testament carries a double meaning; it can mean either the Eucharist or a common meal. A common meal may not have Orthodox making the same astounding claims we make about the Eucharist, but it is a real communion. This may be why a theologian made repeatedly singled out the common meal in the Saint Vladimir's Seminary Education Day publication to answer questions of what we should do today when technology is changing our lives, sometimes for the better but quite often not. I myself have not made that effort much, and I can say that there is a difference between merely eating and filling my animal needs, and engaging in the precious ritual, the real communion, of a common meal around a table.

If we compare a common meal with the Eucharist, it seems very small. But if we look at a common meal and the community and communion around that meal (common, community, and *communion* all being words that are related to each other and stem from the same root), next to merely eating to serve our animal needs, then all of the sudden we see things that can be missed if we only look at what separates the Eucharist from lesser communions. A common meal is communion. It is not Holy Communion, but it is communion.

In the same sense, art is not the equal of sacred iconography. My best art, even my best religious art, does not merit the treatment of holy icons. But neither is art, or at least good art, a separate sort of thing from iconography, and if that divorce is ever effected (it has been, but I'll wait on that for how), then it generates from being art as a meal that merely fills animal, bodily needs without being communion degenerates from what a common meal should be. And in that sense I would assert that art is lesser iconography. And the word "lesser" should be given less weight than "iconography." I may not create holy icons, but I work to create icons in all of my art, from writing to painting to other creations.

In my American culture—this may be different in other areas of the world, even if American culture has a strong influence—there are two great obstacles to connecting with art. These obstacles to understanding need to be denounced. These two obstacles can be concisely described as:

- The typical secular approach to art.
- The typical Christian approach to art.

If I'm going to denounce those two, it's not clear how much wiggle room I am left over to affirm—and my goal is not merely to affirm but embrace an understanding of art. Let me begin to explain myself.

Let's start with a red flag that provides just a glimpse of the mainstream Christian view of art. In college, when I thought it was cool to be a cynic and use my mind to uncover a host of hidden evils, I defined "Christian Contemporary Music" in *Hayward's Unabridged Dictionary* to be "A genre of song designed primarily to impart sound teaching, such as the doctrine that we are sanctified by faith and not by good taste in music."

May God be praised, that was not the whole truth in Christian art then, and it is even further from being the whole truth today—I heartily applaud the "Wow!" music videos, and there is a rich stream of exceptions. But this doesn't change the fact that the #1 selling Christian series today is the *Left Behind* series, which with apologies to Dorothy Parker, does not have a *single* book that is to be set aside lightly. (They are all to be hurled with great force!)

If I want to explain what I would object to instead of simply making incendiary remarks about Christian arts, let me give a concrete example. I would like to discuss something that I discussed with a filmmaker at a Mennonite convention a couple of years I converted to Orthodoxy. I did not set out to criticize, and I kept my mouth shut about certain things.

What I did do was to outline a film idea for a film that would start out indistinguishably from an action-adventure movie. It would have one of the hero's

friends held captive by some cardboard-cutout villains. There is a big operation to sneak in and deftly rescue him, and when that fails, all Hell breaks loose and there is a terrific action-adventure style firefight. There is a dramatic buildup to the hero getting in the helicopter, and as they are leaving, one of the villain's henchmen comes running with a shotgun. Before he can aim, the hero blasts away his knee with a hollow-nosed .45.

The camera surprisingly does not follow the helicopter in its rush to glory, but instead focuses on the henchman for five or ten excruciating minutes as he curses and writhes in agony. Then the film slows down to explore what that one single gunshot means to the henchman for the remaining forty years of his life, as he nursed a spiritual wound of lust for vengeance that was infinitely more tragic than his devastating physical wound.

The filmmaker liked the idea, or at least that's what he thought. He saw a different and better ending than what I envisioned. It would be the tale of the henchman's journey of forgiveness, building to a dramatic scene where he is capable of killing the hero and beautifully lets go of revenge. And as much as I believe in forgiveness and letting go of revenge, this "happy ending" (roughly speaking) bespoke an incommensurable gulf between us.

The difference amounts to a difference of love. Not that art has to cram in as much love, or message about love or forgiveness, as it can. If that happens, it is fundamentally a failure on the part of the artist, and more specifically it is a failure of a creator to have proper love for his creation. My story would not show much love in action, and it is specifically meant to leave audiences not only disturbed but shell shocked and (perhaps) sickened at how violence is typically shown by Hollywood. The heartblood of cinematic craft in this film would be an effort to take a character who in a normal action-adventure movie is faceless, and which the movie takes pains to prevent us from seeing or loving as human when he is torn up by the hero's cool weapon, and give him a human face so that the audience feels the pain not only of his wounded body but the grievous spiritual wound that creates its deepest tragedy. That is to say that the heartblood of cinematic craft would be to look lovingly at a man, unloving as he may be, and give him a face instead of letting him be a faceless henchman whose only purpose is to provide conflict so we can enjoy him being slaughtered. And more to the point, it would not violate his freedom or his character by giving him a healing he would despise, and announce that after his knee has been blasted away he comes to the point of forgiving the man who killed his friends and crippled him for life.

Which is to say that I saw the film as art, and he saw it as a container he could cram more message into. That is why I was disturbed when he wanted to tack a happy ending on. There is a much bigger problem here than ending a story the wrong way.

I don't mean to say that art shouldn't say anything, or that it is a sin to have a moral. This film idea is not only a story that has a moral somewhere; its entire force is

driven by the desire to give a face, a human face, to faceless villains whose suffering and destruction is something we rejoice in other words. In other words, it has a big moral, it doesn't mince words, and it makes absolutely no apologies for being driven by its moral.

Then what's the difference? It amounts to love. In the version of the story I created, the people, including the henchmen, are people. What the filmmaker saw was a question of whether there's a better way to use tools to drive home message. And he made the henchman be loving enough to forgive by failing to love him enough.

When I was talking with one professor at Wheaton about how I was extremely disappointed with a Franklin Peretti novel despite seeing how well the plot fit together, I said that I couldn't put my finger on what it was. He rather bluntly interrupted me and simply said that Peretti didn't love his characters. And he is right. In *This Present Darkness*, Franklin Peretti makes a carefully calculated use of tools at his disposal (such as characters) to provide maximum effect in driving home his point. He does that better than art does. But he does not love his characters into being; he does not breathe into them and let them move. It's not a failure of technique; it's a failure of something much deeper. In this sense, the difference between good and bad art, between *A Wind in the Door* and *Left Behind*, is that in *A Wind in the Door* there are characters who not only have been loved into being but have a spark of life that has been not only created into them but loved into them, and in *Left Behind* there are tools which are used to drive home "message" but are not in the same sense *loved*.

There is an obvious objection which I would like to pause to consider: "Well, I understand that elevated, smart people like you can appreciate high art, and that's probably better. But can't we be practical and look at popular art that will reach ordinary people?" My response to that is, "Are you sure? Are you *really* sure of what you're assuming?"

Perhaps I am putting my point too strongly, but let me ask the last time you saw someone who wasn't Christian and not religious listening to Amy Grant-style music, or watching the *Left Behind* movie? *If it is relevant, is it reaching non-Christians?* (And isn't that what "relevant" stuff is supposed to do?) The impression I've gotten, the strong impression, is that the only people who find that art relevant to their lives are Evangelicals who are trying to be relevant. But isn't the world being anti-Christian? My answer to that is that people who watch *The Chronicles of Narnia* and people who watch *Star Wars* movies are largely watching them for the same reason: they are good art. The heavy Christian force behind *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which Disney to its credit did not edit out, has not driven away enough people to stop the film from being a major success. *The Chronicles of Narnia* is relevant, and it is relevant not because people calculated how to cram in the most message, but because not only C.S. Lewis but the people making the film loved their creation. Now, there are other factors; both *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Star Wars* have commercial tie-in's. And there is more

commercial muscle behind those two than the *Left Behind* movie. But to only observe these things is to miss the point. The stories I hear about the girl who played Lucy walking onto the set and being so excited she couldn't stop her hands from shaking, are not stories of an opportunistic actress who found a way to get the paycheck she wanted. They are stories of people who loved what they were working on. *That* is what makes art powerful, not budget.

There's something I'd like to say about love and work. There are some jobs—maybe all—that you really can't do unless you really love them. How? Speaking as a programmer, there's a *lot* of stress and aggravation in this job. Even if you have no difficulties with your boss, or co-workers, the computer has a sort of perverse parody of intelligence that means that you do your best to do something clearly, and the computer does the strangest things.

It might crash; it might eat your work; it might crash and eat your work; it might show something weird that plays a perverted game of hide and seek and always dodge your efforts to find out what exactly is going wrong so you can fix it. Novices' blood is boiling before they manage to figure out basic errors that won't even let you run your program at all. So programmers will be fond of definitions of "**Programming**, *n.* A hobby similar to banging your head against a wall, but with fewer opportunities for reward."

Let me ask: What is programming like if you do not love it? There are many people who love programming. They don't get there unless they go through the stress and aggravation. There's enough stress and aggravation that you can't be a good programmer, and maybe you can't be a programmer at all, unless you love it.

I've made remarks about programming; there are similar remarks to be made about carpentry, or being a mother (even if being a mother is a bigger kind of thing than programming or carpentry). This is something that is true of art—with its stress and aggravation—precisely because art is work, and work can have stress and aggravation that become unbearable if there is no love. Or, in many cases, you can work, but your work suffers. Love may need to get dirty and do a lot of grimy work—you can't love something into being simply by feeling something, even if love can sometimes transfigure the grimy work—but there absolutely *must* be love behind the workgloves. It doesn't take psychic powers to tell if something was made with love.

I would agree with Franky Schaeffer's remark in *Addicted to Mediocrity: 20th Century Christians and the Arts*, when he pauses to address the question "How can I as a Christian support the arts?" the first thing he says is to avoid Christian art. I would temper that remark now, as some Christian art has gotten a lot better. But he encouraged people to patronize good art, and to the question, "How can I afford to buy original paintings?" he suggests that a painting costs much less than a TV. But Schaeffer

should be set aside another work which influenced his father, and which suggests that if Christian art is problematic, that doesn't mean that secular art is doing everything well.



Penny, Edward the Confessor (1042-1066)

An example of coinage that shows icon-like medieval *figures*, instead of photograph-style modern *portraits*. Other ancient and medieval examples abound.

When I was preparing for a job interview with an auction house that deals with coins and stamps, I looked through the 2003(?) *Spink's Catalogue of British Coins*. (Mainly I studied the pictures of coins to see what I could learn.) When I did that, a disturbing story unfolded.

The Spink's catalogue takes coins from Celtic and Roman times through medieval times right up through the present day. While there are exceptions in other parts of the world, the ancient and early medieval coins all had simple figures that were not portraits, in much the way that a drawing in a comic strip like *Foxtrot* differs from Mark Trail or some other comic strip where the author is trying to emulate a photograph. Then, rather suddenly, something changes, and people start cramming in as much detail as they could. The detail reaches a peak in the so-called "gold penny", in which there is not a square millimeter of blank space, and then things settle down as people realize that it's not a sin to have blank space as well as a detailed portrait. (On both contemporary British and U.S. coinage, the face of the coin has a bas-relief portrait of a person, and then there is a blank space, and a partial ring of text around the edge, with a couple more details such as the year of coinage. The portrait may be detailed, but the coinmakers are perfectly willing to leave blank space in without cramming in more detail than fits their design. In the other world coinage I've seen, there can be some differences in the portrait (it may be of an animal), but there is a similar use of portrait, text, and blank space.

This is what happened when people's understanding of symbol disintegrated. The effort to cram in detail which became an effort to be photorealistic is precisely an effort to cram some reality into coins when they lost their reality as symbols. There are things about coins then that even numismatists (people who study coins) do not often understand today. In the Bible, the backdrop to the question in Luke 20 that Jesus answered, "Show me a coin. Whose likeness is it, and whose inscription? ... Give what is Caesar's to Caesar, and what is God's to God," is on the surface a question about taxes

but is not a modern gripe about "*Must I pay my hard-earned money to the Infernal Revenue Service?*", It is not the question some Anabaptists ask today about whether it is OK for Christians' taxes to support things they believe are unconscionable, and lead one pastor to suggest that people earn less money so they will pay less taxes that will end up supporting violence. It's not a question about anything most Christians would recognize in money today.

It so happens that in traditional fashion quarters in the U.S. today have a picture of George Washington, which is to say not only a picture but an authority figure. There is no real cultural reason today why this tradition has to be maintained. If the government mint started turning out coins with a geometric design, a blank surface, or some motto or trivia snippet, there would be no real backlash and people would buy and sell with the new quarters as well as the traditional ones. The fact that the quarter, like all commonly circulated coins before the dollar coin, has the image of not simply a-man-instead-of-a-woman but specifically the man who once held supreme political authority within the U.S., is a quaint tradition that has lost its meaning and is now little more than a habit. But it has been otherwise.

The Roman denarius was an idol in the eyes of many Jewish rabbis. It was stamped with the imprint of the Roman emperor, which is to say that it was stamped with the imprint of a pagan god and was therefore an idol. And good Jews shouldn't have had a denarius with them when they asked Jesus that trapped question. For them to have a denarius with them was worse on some accounts than if Jesus asked them, "Show me a slab of bacon," and they had one with them. The Jewish question of conscience is "Must one pay tax with an idol?" and the question had nothing to do with any economic hardship involved in paying that tax (even though most Jews then were quite poor).

Jesus appealed to another principle. The coin had Caesar's image and inscription: this was the one thing he asked them to tell him besides producing the coin. In the ancient world people took as axiomatic that the authority who produced coinage had the authority to tax that coinage, and Jesus used that as a lever: "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God's the thing that are God's."

This last bit of leverage was used to make a much deeper point. The implication is that if a coin has Caesar's image and we owe it to Caesar, what has God's image—you and I—are God's and are owed to God. This image means something deep. If it turns out that we owe a tax to Caesar, how much more do we owe our very selves to God?

Augustine uses the image of "God's coins" to describe us. He develops it further. In the ancient world, when coins were often made of precious and soft metals instead of the much harder coins today, coins could be "defaced" by much use: they would be rubbed down so far that the image on the coin would be worn away. Then defaced coins, which had lost their image, could be restruck. Augustine not only claims that we are

owed to God; he claims that the image in us can be defaced by sin, and then re-struck with a new image by grace. This isn't his whole theology for sin and grace, but it says something significant about what coins meant not just to him but to his audience.

During the Iconoclastic Controversy, not only in the East but before the overcrowded "gold penny", one monk, who believed in showing reverence to icons, was brought before the emperor, who was trying to suppress reverence to icons. The emperor asked the monk, "Don't you know that you can walk on an icon of Christ without showing disrespect to him?" and the monk asked if he could walk on "your face", meaning "your face as present in this coin," without showing the emperor disrespect. He threw down a coin, and started to walk on it. The emperor's guards caught him in the act, and he was brutally assaulted.

These varying snapshots of coins before a certain period in the West are snapshots of coins that are icons. They aren't holy icons, but they are understood as icons before people's understanding of icons disintegrated.

When I explained this to one friend, he said that he had said almost exactly the same thing when observing the development or anti-development of Western art. The story I was told of Western art, at least until a couple of centuries ago, was a story of progress from cruder and more chaotic art. Medieval art was sloppy, and when perspective came along, it was improved and made clearer. But this has a very different light if you understood the older art's reality as symbol. In *A Glimpse of Eastern Orthodoxy*, I wrote:

Good Orthodox icons don't even pretend to be photorealistic, but this is not simply because Orthodox iconography has failed to learn from Western perspective. As it turns out, Orthodox icons use a reverse perspective that is designed to include the viewer in the picture. Someone who has become a part of the tradition is drawn into the picture, and in that sense an icon is like a door, even if it's more common to call icons "windows of Heaven." But it's not helpful to simply say "Icons don't use Renaissance perspective, but reverse perspective that includes the viewer," because even if the reverse perspective is there, reverse perspective is simply not the point. There are some iconographers who are excellent artists, and artistry does matter, but the point of an icon is to have something more than artistry, as much as the point of visiting a friend is more than seeing the scenery along the way, even if the scenery is quite beautiful and adds to the pleasure of a visit. Cramming in photorealism is a way of making more involved excursions and dredging up more exotic or historic or whatever destinations that go well beyond a scenic route, after you have lost the ability to visit a friend. The Western claim is "Look at how much more extravagant and novel my trip are than

driving along the same roads to see a friend!"—and the Orthodox response shows a different set of priorities: "Look how lonely you are now that you no longer visit friends!"

Photorealistic perspective is not new life but an extravagance once symbol has decayed. That may be one problem, or one thing that I think is a problem. But in the centuries after perspective, something else began to shift.



The Prophet Elias, Anonymous
Before photorealistic perspective.

There is rich detail and artistry in this icon of the Prophet Elias. To those making their first contacts with Orthodox iconography, it may seem hard to appreciate—the perspective and proportions are surprising—but the things that make it something you need to learn are precisely the gateway to what an icon like this can do that mere photographs can never do.



The Dream of Joachim, Giotto

Medieval art is beginning to become photorealistic.

In Giotto's painting of the dream of Joachim, one can see something probably that looks like an old icon to someone used to photorealistic art and probably looks photorealistic to someone used to icons. Not all medieval art is like this, but this specific piece of medieval art is at once a contact point, a bridge, and a hinge.

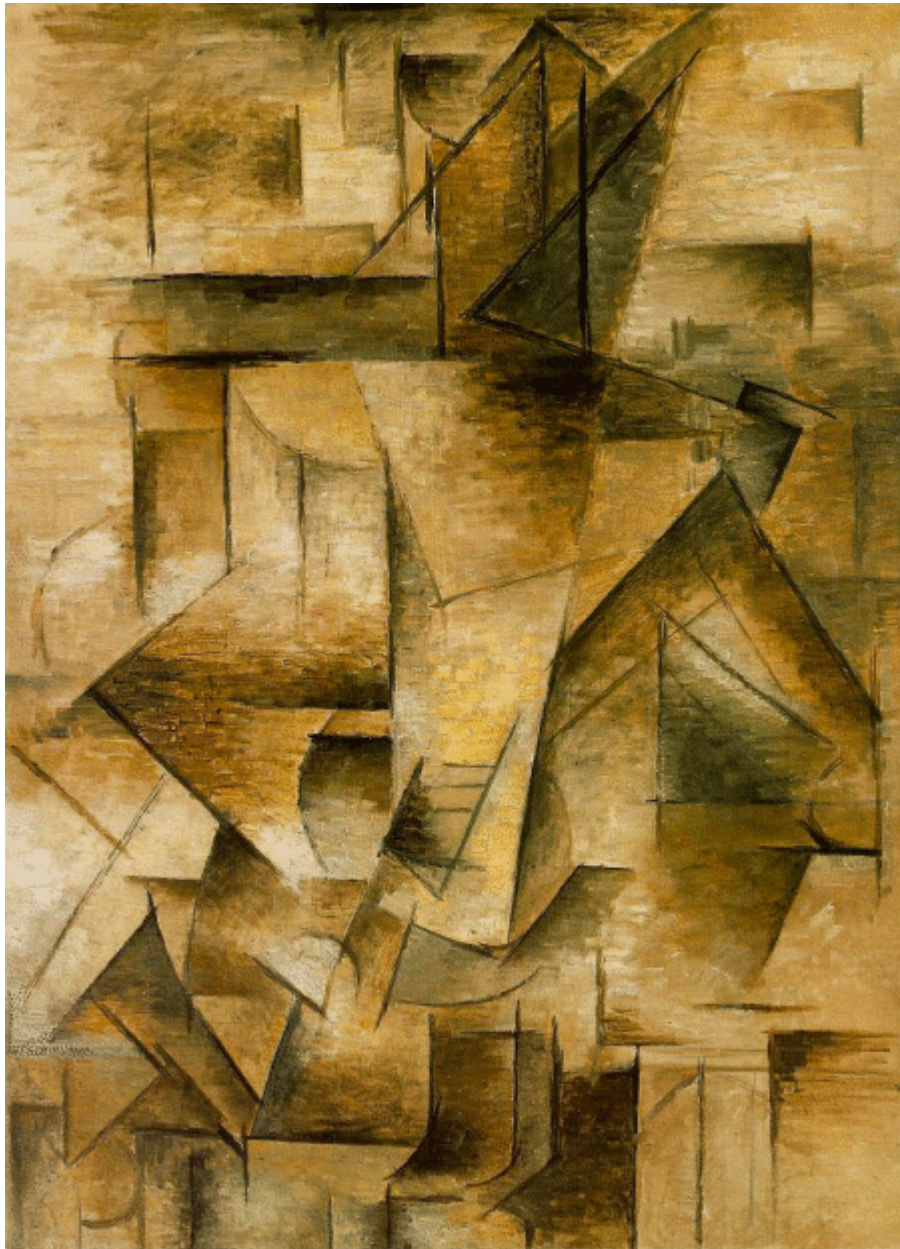


Madonna of the Rocks, Leonardo da Vinci
Renaissance photorealism.

Leonardo da Vinci's art is beginning to look very different from medieval art. In some ways Leonardo da Vinci's art is almost more like a photograph than a camera

would take—Leonardo da Vinci's perspective is all the more powerful for the fact that he doesn't wear his grids on the outside, and in this picture Leonardo da Vinci makes powerful use of what is called "atmospheric perspective", giving the faroff place and above the Madonna of the Rocks' shoulder the blue haze that one gets by looking through a lot of air. Hence Leonardo da Vinci's perspective is not just a precise method of making things that are further away look smaller.

When Renaissance artists experimented with more photorealistic perspective, maybe they can be criticized, but they were experimenting to communicate better. Perspective was a tool to communicate better. Light and shadow were used to communicate better. It's a closer call with impressionism, but there is a strong argument that their departure from tradition and even photorealism was to better communicate how the outsides of things looked in different lighting conditions and at different times of day. But then something dreadful happened: not only artists but the community of people studying art learned a lesson from history. They learned that the greatest art, from the Renaissance onwards, experimented with tradition and could decisively break from tradition. They did not learn that this was always to improve communicate with the rest of us. And so what art tried to do was break from tradition, whether or not this meant communicating better to "the rest of us".



The Guitar Player, Pablo Picasso

Art that has disintegrated from photorealism.

In at least some of Pablo Picasso's art, the photorealistic has vanished. Not that all Pablo Picasso art looks this way: some looks like a regular or perhaps flattened image. But this, along with Picasso's other cubist art, tries to transcend perspective, and the effect is such that one is told as a curiosity the story of a museumgoer recognizing someone from the (cubist) picture Picasso painted of him. Of all the pictures I've both studied and seem live, this kind of Pablo Picasso art is the one where I have the most

respect for the responses of people considered not to be sophisticated enough to appreciate Pablo Picasso's achievement.

Some brave souls go to modern art museums, and look at paintings that look nothing like anything they can connect with, and walk away humbled, thinking that they're stupid, or not good enough to appreciate the "elevated" art that better people are able to connect with. There's something to be said for learning to appreciate art, but with most of these people the problem is not that they're not "elevated" enough. The problem is that the art is not trying to communicate with the world as a whole. Innovation is no longer to better communicate; innovation at times sneers at communication in a fashion people can recognize.



The Oaths of the Horatii, Jacques Louis David
"High" art that communicates to ordinary people.

In an age before television, Jacques Louis David's depiction of the oaths of the Horatii was extraordinarily powerful political communication, even political propaganda. Jacques Louis David combines two things that are separate today: elevated things from classical antiquity, and a message that is meant to communicate to ordinary people. A painting like one of Jacques Louis David's was the political equivalent of a number of television news commentaries in terms of moving people to action.

The Franky Schaeffer title I gave earlier was Addicted to Mediocrity: 20th Century Christians and the Arts; the title I did not give is Modern Art and the Death of a Culture, which has disturbing lettering and a picture of a man screaming on its cover art. If there

is a deep problem with the typical Christian approach to arts (and it is not a universal rule), there is a deep problem with the typical secular Western approach to arts (even if that is not a universal rule either). A painting like "The Oaths of the Horatii" is no more intended to be a private remark among a few elite souls than Calvin and Hobbes; Calvin and Hobbes may attract the kind of people who like other good art, but this is never because, as Calvin tells Hobbes about his snowman art which he wants lowbrows to have to subsidize, "I'm trying to criticize the lowbrows who can't appreciate this."

The concept of an artist is also deeply problematic. When I was taking an art history class at Wheaton, the professor asked people a question about their idea of an artist, and my reaction was, "I don't have any preconceptions." Then he started talking, and I realized that I did have preconceptions about the matter.

If we look at the word "genius" across the centuries, it has changed. Originally your "genius" was your guardian angel, more or less; it wasn't connected with great art. Then it became a muse that inspired art and literature from the outside. Then "genius" referred to artistic and literary giftedness, and as the last step in the process of internalization, "genius" came to refer to the author or artist himself.

The concepts of the artist and the genius are not the same, but they have crossed paths, and their interaction is significant. Partly from other sources, some artists take flak today because they lead morally straight lives. Why is this? Well, given the kind of superior creature an artist is supposed to be, it's unworthy of an artist to act as if they were bound by the moral codes that the common herd can't get rid of. The figure of the artist is put up on a pedestal that reaches higher than human stature; like other figures, the artist is expected to have an enlightened vision about how to reform society, and be a vanguard who is above certain rules.

That understanding of artists has to come down in the Christian community. Artists have a valuable contribution; when St. Paul is discussing the Spirit's power in the Church, he writes (I Cor 12:7-30, RSV):

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of

one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

I would suggest that the secular idea of an artisan is closer to an Orthodox understanding of an artist than the secular idea of artist itself. Even if an artisan is not thought of in terms of being a member of a body, the idea of an artisan is one that people can accept being one member of an organism in which all are needed.

An artisan can show loving craftsmanship, can show a personal touch, can have a creative spark, and should be seen as pursuing honorable work; however, the idea of an artisan carries less bad freight than the idea of an artist. They're also not too far apart: in the Middle Ages, the sculptors who worked on cathedrals were closer to what we would consider artisans who produced sculptures than being seen as today's artists. Art is or should be connected to iconography; it should also be connected to the artisan's craft, and people are more likely to give an artisan a place as a contributing member who is part of a community than artists.

If we look at technical documentation, then there are a number of believable compliments you could give if you bumped into the author. It would be believable to say that the documentation was a helpful reference met your need; that it was clear, concise,

and well-written; or that it let you find exactly what you needed and get back to work. But it would sound odd to say that the technical writer had very distinctive insights, and even odder to say that you liked the author's personal self-expression about what the technology could do. Technical writing is not glorified self-expression, and if we venerate art that is glorified self-expression, then maybe we have something to learn from how we treat technical writing.

If this essay seems like a collection of distinctive (or less politely, idiosyncratic) personal insights I had, or my own personal self-expression in Orthodoxy, theology, and faith, then that is a red flag. It falls short of the mark of what art, or Orthodox writing, should be. (And it is intended as art: maybe it's minor art, but it's meant as art.) It's not just that most or all of the insights owe a debt to people who have gone before me, and I may have collated but contributed nothing to the best insights, serving much more to paraphrase than think things up from scratch. Michel Quenot's *The Icon: A Window on the Kingdom*, and, for much longer, Madeleine l'Engle's *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art* have both given me a grounding. But even aside from that, art has existed for long before me and will exist for long after me, and I am not the sole creator of an Orthodox or Christian approach to the arts any more than a technical writer has trailblazed a particular technique of creating such-and-such type of business report. Good art is freedom and does bear its human creator's fingerprints. Even iconography, with its traditional canons, gives substantial areas of freedom to the iconographer and never specify each detail. Part of being an iconographer is using that freedom well. However, if this essay is simply self-expression, that is a defect, not a merit. As an artist and writer, I am trying to offer more than glorified self-expression.

This Sunday after liturgy, people listened to a lecture taped from Bp. KALLISTOS Ware. He talked about the great encounter at the burning bush, when God revealed himself to Moses by giving his name. At the beginning of the encounter, Moses was told, "Take off your shoes, for the place you are standing is holy ground." Bp. KALLISTOS went on to talk about how in those days, as of the days of the Fathers, people's shoes were something dead, something made from leather. The Fathers talked about this passage as meaning by implication that we should take off our dead familiarity to be able to encounter God freshly.

I was surprised, because I had reinvented that removal of familiarity, and I had no idea it was a teaching of the Orthodox Church. Perhaps my approach to trying to see past the deadness of familiarity—which you can see in *Game Review: Meatspace*—was not exactly the same as what Bp. KALLISTOS was saying to begin a discussion about receiving Holy Communion properly. Yet I found out that something I could think of as my own private invention was in fact a rediscovery. I had reinvented one of the treasures of Orthodoxy. Part of Orthodoxy is surrender, and that acknowledgment that anything and everything we hold, no matter how dear, must be offered to God's

Lordship for him to do with as we please. Orthodoxy is inescapably a slow road of pain and loss. But there is another truth, that things we think are a private heresy (I am thinking of G.K. Chesterton's discussion) are in fact a reinvention, perhaps a crude reinvention, of an Orthodox treasure and perhaps an Orthodox treasure which meets its best footing, deepest meaning, and fullest expression when that jewel is set in its Orthodox bezel.

There are times when I've wanted to be an iconographer (in the usual sense). I don't know if that grace will ever be granted me, but there was one point when I had access to an icon painting class. When I came to it and realized what was going on, I shied away. Perhaps I wanted to learn to write icons (Orthodox speak of writing icons rather than painting them), but there was something I wasn't comfortable with.

Parishes have, or at least should have, a meal together after worship, even if people think of it as "coffee hour" instead of thinking of it as the communion of a common meal. The purpose is less to distribute coffee, which coffee drinkers have enough of in their homes, than to provide an opportunity (perhaps with a social lubricant) for people to meet and talk. That meeting and talking is beautiful. Furthermore, a parish may have various events when people paint, seasonally decorate, or maintain the premises, and in my experience there can be, and perhaps should be, an air of lighthearted social gathering about it all.

But this iconography class had lots of chatter, where people gathered and learned the skill of icon painting that began and ended with a prayer but in between had the atmosphere of a casual secular gathering that didn't involve any particularly spiritual endeavor or skill. Now setting my personal opinions aside, the classical canons require that icons be written in prayer, concentration, and quiet. There are reasons for this, and I reacted as I did, not so much because I had heard people were breaking such-and-such ancient rule, but more because I was affronted by something that broke the rule's spirit even more than its letter, and I sensed that there was something askew. The reason is that icons are written in silence is that you cannot make a healthy, full, and spiritual icon simply by the motions of your body. An icon is first and foremost created through the iconographer's spirit to write what priests and canons have defined, and although the iconographer is the copyist or implementor and not original author, we believe that the icon is written by the soul of the iconographer—if you understand it as a particular (secular) painting technique, you don't understand it. That class, like that iconographer, have produced some of the dreariest and most opaque icons, or "windows of Heaven", that I have seen. I didn't join that class because however much I wanted to be an iconographer, I didn't want to become an iconographer like that, and in the Orthodox tradition you become an iconographer by becoming a specific iconographer's disciple and becoming steeped in that iconographer's spiritual characteristics.

Years ago, I stopped watching television, or at least started making a conscious effort to avoid it. I like and furthermore love music, but I don't put something on in the background. And, even though I love the world wide web, I observe careful limits, and not just because (as many warn) it is easy to get into porn. The web can be used to provide "noise" to keep us from coming face to face with the silence. The web (substitute "television"/"music"/"newspapers"/"movies"/for that matter, "Church Fathers" for how this temptation appears to you) can be used to anesthetize the boredom that comes when we face silence, and keep us from ever coming to the place on the other side of boredom. When I have made decisions about television, I wasn't thinking, on conscious terms, about being more moral and spiritual by so doing. I believe that television is a pack of cigarettes for the heart and mind, and I have found that I can be creative in more interesting ways, and live better, when I am cautious about the amount of noise in my life, even if you don't have to be the strictest "quiet person" in the world to reap benefits. Quiet is one spiritual discipline of the Orthodox Church (if perhaps a lesser spiritual discipline), and the spiritual atmosphere I pursued is a reinvention, perhaps lesser and incomplete, of something the Orthodox Church wants her iconographers to profitably live. There is a deep enough connection between icons and other art that it's relevant to her artists.

When I write what I would never call (or wish to call) my best work, I have the freedom to be arbitrary. If I'm writing something of no value, I can impose my will however I want. I can decide what I want to include and what I want to exclude, what I am going to go into detail about what I don't want to elaborate on, and what analogies I want to draw. It can be as much dictated by "Me! Me! Me!" as I want. When I am creating something I value, however, that version of freedom hardly applies. I am not free, if I am going to create fiction that will resonate and ring true, to steamroll over my characters' wishes. If I do I diminish my creation. What I am doing is loving and serving my creations. I can't say that I never act on selfish reasons, but if I am doing anything of a good job my focus is on loving my creation into being and taking care of what it needs, which is simultaneously a process of wrestling with it, and listening to it with the goal of getting myself out of the way so I can shape it as it needs to be shaped.

There is a relationship that places the artist as head and lord of his creation, but if we reach for some of the most readily available ideas of headship and lordship, that claim makes an awful lot of confusion. Until I began preparing to write this essay, it didn't even occur to me to look at the human creator-creation connection in terms of headship or lordship. I saw a place where I let go of arbitrary authority and any insistence on my freedoms to love my creation, to listen to and then serve it, and care for all the little details involved in creating it (and, in my case, publishing it on the web). All of this describes the very heart of how Christians are to understand headship, and my attitude is hardly unique: Christian artists who do not think consciously about headship

at all create out of the core of the headship relation. They give their works not just any kind of love, but the particular and specific love which a head has for a body. If art ends by bearing the artist's fingerprints, this should not be because the artist has decided, "My art must tell of my glory," but because loved art, art that has been served and developed and educed and drawn into manifest being, cannot but be the image, and bear the imprint, of its creator. That is how art responds to its head and lord.

To return to spiritual discipline: Spiritual discipline is the safeguard and the shadow of love. This applies first and foremost to the Orthodox Way as a whole, but also specifically to art. Quiet is a lesser discipline, and may not make the front page. Fasting from certain foods can have value, but it is only good if saying no to yourself in food prepares you to love other people even when it means saying no to yourself. There are harsh warnings about people who fast and look down on others who are less careful about fasting or don't fast at all and judging them as "less spiritual". Perhaps fasting can have great value, but it is better not to fast than to fast and look down.

Prayer is the flagship, the core, and the crowning jewel of spiritual discipline. The deepest love for our neighbor made in God's image is to pray and act out of that prayer. Prayer may be enriched when it is connected with other spiritual disciplines, but the goal of spiritual discipline and the central discipline in creating art is prayer.

There is a passage in George MacDonald where a little girl stands before an old man and looks around an exquisite mansion in wonder. After a while the old man asks her, "Are you done saying your prayers?" The surprised child responds, "I wasn't saying my prayers." The old man said, "Yes you were. You just didn't realize it."

If I say that prayer drives art, I don't just mean that I say little prayers as I create art (although that should be true). I mean that when I am doing my best work, part of why it is my best work is that the process itself is an act of prayer. However many arbitrary freedoms I would not dare to exercise and deface my own creation, I am at my freest and most alive when I am listening to God and a creation about how to love it into being. It is not the same contemplation as the Divine Liturgy, but it is connected, part of the same organism. The freedom I taste when I create, the freedom of service and the freedom of love, is freedom at so deep a level that a merely arbitrary freedom to manipulate or make dictatorial insistences on a creation pales in comparison to the freedom to listen and do a thousand services to art that is waiting for me to create it.

"He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." (I Jn 4:20, RSV). If an artist does not love God and the neighbors whom he can see and who manifest the glory of the invisible God, he is in a terrible position to healthily love a creation which—at the moment, exists in God's mind and partially in its human creator, but nowhere else. This is another way of saying that character matters. I have mentioned some off-the-beaten-track glimpses of spiritual discipline; this leaves out more obvious and important aspects of love like honesty and chastity. The character

of an artist who can love his works into being should be an overflow of a Christian life of love. Not to say that you must be an artist to love! Goodness is many-sided. This is true of what Paul wrote (quoted above) about the eye, hand, and foot all belonging to the body. Paul also wrote the scintillating words (I Cor 15:35-49, RSV):

But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

These are words of resurrection, but the promise of the glorious and incorruptible resurrection body hinge on words where "star differs from star in glory". An artist's love is the glory of one star. It is no more the only star than the eye is the only part of the body. It is part of a scintillating spectrum—but not the whole spectrum itself!

I would like to also pause to respond to an objection which careful scholars would raise, and which some devout Orthodox would sense even if they might not put it in words. I have fairly uncritically used a typically Western conception of art. I have lumped together visual arts, literature, music, film, etc. and seem to assume that showing something in one case applied to every case. I would acknowledge that a more careful treatment would pay attention to their differences, and that some stick out more than others.

I am not sure that a better treatment would criticize this assumption. However, let's look at one distinctive of Orthodoxy. One thinks of why Western Christians talk about how the superficial legend goes that the leaders of (what would become) Russia went religion-shopping, and they saw that the Orthodox worship looked impressive, and instead of deciding based on a good reason, they went with the worship they liked best. Eastern Christians tend to agree about the details of what people believe happened, but we do not believe the aesthetic judgments were something superficial that wasn't a good reason. We believe that something of Heaven shone through, and if that affected the decision, people weren't making a superficial decision but something connected with Truth and the Light of Heaven and of God. We believe that worship, and houses of worship, are to be beautiful and reflect not only the love but the Light and beauty of Heaven, and a beautiful house of worship is no more superfluous to light than good manners are superfluous to love. The "beauty connection" has not meant that we have to choose between good homilies, music, liturgy, and icons. A proper Orthodox listing of what constituted real, iconic art may differ from a Western listing, and there's more than being sticks in the mud behind the fact that Orthodox Churches, by and large, do not project lyrics with PowerPoint. Part of what I have said about icons is crystallized in a goal of "transparency", that the goal of a window of Heaven is to be transparent to Heaven's light and love. Not just icons can be, or fail to be, transparent. Liturgical music can be transparent or fail to be transparent. Homilies can be transparent or fail to be transparent.

I've heard just enough bad homilies, that is opaque homilies that left me thinking about the homilist instead of God—to appreciate how iconically translucent most of the homilies I've heard are, and to realize that this is a privilege and not a right that will automatically be satisfied. The opaque Orthodox homilies don't (usually) get details wrong; they get the details right but don't go any further. But this is not the whole truth about homilies. A homily that is written like an icon—not necessarily written out but drawn into being first and foremost by the spirit, out of love, prayer, and spiritual discipline, can be not only transparent but luminous and let Heaven's light shine through.

Some wag said, "A sermon is something I wouldn't go across the street to hear, but something I'd go across the country to deliver." I do not mean by saying this to compete with, or replace, the view of homilies as guidance which God has provided for our good, but a successful homily does more than inform. It edifies, and the best homilies are luminously transparent. They don't leave the faithful thinking about the preacher—even about how good he is—but about the glory of God. When icons, liturgy, and homilies rise to transparency, they draw us beyond themselves to worship God.

My denser and more inaccessible musings might be worth reading, but they should never be read as a homily; the photographs in my slideshow of Cambridge might

capture real beauty but should never be mounted on an icon stand for people to venerate; my best cooking experiments may be much more than edible but simply do not belong in the Eucharist—but my cooking can belong at coffee hour. The Divine Liturgy at its best builds up to Holy Communion and then flows into a common meal (in my culture, coffee hour) that may not be Holy Communion but is communion, and just as my more edible cooking may not be fit for the Eucharist but belongs in a common meal, I am delighted to tell people I have a literature and art website at CJS Hayward which has both short and long fiction, musings and essays, poetry, visual art, and (perhaps I mention) computer software that's more artistic than practical. I have put a lot of love into my website, and it gives me great pleasure to share it. If its contents should not usurp the place of holy icons or the Divine Liturgy, I believe they do belong in the fellowship hall and sacred life beyond the sanctuary. Worshipping life is head and lord to the everyday life of the worshipping faithful, but that does not mean a denigration of the faithful living as lesser priests. The sacramental priesthood exists precisely as the crystallization and ornament of our priestly life in the world. As I write, I am returning from the Eucharist and the ordination of more than one clergy. Orthodox clergy insist that unless people say "Amen!" to the consecration of the bread and wine which become the holy body and the holy blood of Christ, and unless they say, "Axios!" ("He is worthy!") to the ordination, then the consecration or the ordination doesn't happen. Unlike in Catholicism, a priest cannot celebrate the Divine Liturgy by himself in principle, because the Divine Liturgy is in principle the work of God accomplished through the cooperation of priest and faithful, and to say that a priest does this himself is as odd as saying that the priest has a hug or a conversation by himself. The priest is head and even lord of the parish, but under a richer, Christian understanding of headship and lordship, which means that as the artist in his care he must listen to the faithful God has entrusted to his inadequate care, listening to God about who God and not the priest wants them to become, and both serve them and love them into richer being. (And, just as it is wrong for an artist to domineer his creation, it is even more toxic for a priest to domineer, ahem, work to improve the faithful in his parish. The sharpest warning I've heard a bishop give to newly ordained clergy is about a priest who decided he was the best thing to happen to the parish in his care, and immediately set about improving all the faithful according to his enlightened vision. It was a much more bluntly delivered warning than I've said about doing that to art.) The priest is ordained as the crystallization and crown of the faithful's priestly call. The liturgy which priest (and faithful) is not to be cut off when the ceremony ends; it is to flow out and imprint its glory on the faithful's life and work. Not only the liturgical but the iconic is to flow out and set the pace for life.

Art is to be the broader expression of the iconic.



Icon of the Trinity, Rublev

One of the greatest icons in the Orthodox treasury

The Luddite's Guide to Technology

Since the Bridegroom was taken from the disciples, it has been a part of the Orthodox Church's practice to fast. What is expected in the ideal has undergone changes, and one's own practice is done in submission to one's priest. The priest may work on how to best relax rules in many cases so that your fasting is a load you can shoulder. There is something of a saying, "As always, ask your priest," and that goes for fasting from technology too. Meaning, specifically, that if you read this article and want to start fasting from technologies, and your priest says that it won't be helpful, leave this article alone and follow your priest's guidance.

From ancient times there has been a sense that we need to transcend ourselves. When we fast, we choose to set limits and master our belly, at least partly. "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food—maybe, but God will destroy them both." So the Apostle answered the hedonists of his day. The teaching of fasting is that you are more than the sum of your appetites, and we can grow by giving something up in days and seasons. And really fasting from foods is not saying, "I choose to be greater than this particular luxury," but "I choose to be greater than this necessity." Over ninety-nine percent of all humans who have ever lived never saw a piece of modern technology: Christ and his disciples reached far and wide without the benefit of even the most obsolete of electronic communication technologies. And monks have often turned back on what luxuries were available to them: hence in works like the *Philokalia* or the *Ladder* extol the virtue of sleeping on the floor. If we fast from technologies, we do not abstain from basic nourishment, but what Emperors and kings never heard of. At

one monastery where monks lived in cells without running water or electricity, a monk commented that peasants and for that matter kings lived their whole lives without tasting these, or finding them a necessity. (Even Solomon in all his splendor did not have a Facebook page.)

In Orthodoxy, if a person is not able to handle the quasi-vegan diet in fasting periods, a priest may relax the fast, not giving *carte blanche* to eat anything the parishioner wants, but suggesting that the parishioner relax the fast to some degree, eating some fish or an egg. This basic principle of fasting is applicable to technology: rather than immediately go cold turkey on certain technologies, use "some fish or an egg" in terms of older technologies. Instead of texting for a conversation, drive over to a nearby friend.

(Have you ever noticed that during Lent many Orthodox Christians cut down or eliminate their use of Facebook?)

As mentioned in *Technonomicon*, what we call space-conquering technologies might slightly more appropriately be called body-conquering technologies, because they neutralize some of the limitations of our embodied state. The old wave of space-conquering technologies moves people faster or farther than they could move themselves, and older science fiction and space opera often portrays bigger and better versions of this kind of space conquering technologies: personal jet packs, cars that levitate (think Luke Skywalker's land speeder), or airplanes that function as spacecraft (his X-Wing). What is interesting to me here is that they serve as bigger and better versions of the older paradigm of space-conquering technologies, even if Luke remains in radio contact with the Rebel base. That is the older paradigm. The newer paradigm is technologies that make one's physical location irrelevant, or almost irrelevant: cell phones, texting, Facebook, and remote work, are all not bigger and better ways to move your body, but bigger and better ways to do things in a mind-based context where the location of your body may be collected as in Google Plus, but your actual, physical location is really neither here nor there.

My own technology choices

I purchased a MacBook Pro laptop, and its specs are really impressive. Eight cores, eight gigabytes of RAM, a 1920x1200 17" display, and gracefully runs Ubuntu Linux, Windows XP, Windows 7, and Windows 8 as guest OS'es. And it is really obsolete in one respect: it doesn't have the hot new Retina display that has been migrated to newer MacBook Pros. I want to keep it for a long time; but my point in mentioning it here is that I did not purchase it as the hot, coolest new thing, but as a last hurrah of an old guard. The top two applications I use are Google Chrome and the Mac's Unix terminal, and the old-fashioned laptop lets me take advantage of the full power of the Unix command line, and lets me exercise root privilege without voiding the warranty.

For a Unix wizard, that's a lot of power. And the one major thing which I did not "upgrade" was replacing the old-fashioned spindle drives with newer, faster solid state drives. The reason? Old-fashioned spindle drives can potentially work indefinitely, while spindle drives wear out after a certain number of times saving data: saving data slowly uses the drive up. And I realized this might be my only opportunity in a while to purchase a tool I want to use for a long while.

Laptops might continue to be around for a while, and desktops for that matter, but their place is a bit like landline phones. If you have a desk job, you will probably have a desktop computer and a landline, but the wave of the future is smartphones and tablets; the hot, coolest new thing is not a bulky, heavy MacBook, but whatever the current generation of iPad or Android-based tablet is. One youngster said, "Email is for old people," and perhaps the same is to be said of laptops.

I also have an iPhone, which I upgraded from one of the original iPhones to an iPhone 4, not because I needed to have the latest new thing, but because my iPhone was necessarily on an AT&T contract, and however much they may advertise that the EDGE network my iPhone was on was "twice the speed of dialup," I found when jobhunting that a simple, short "thank you" letter after an interview took amazingly many minutes for my phone to send, at well below the speed of obsolete dial-up speeds I had growing up: AT&T throttled the bandwidth to an incredibly slow rate and I got a newer iPhone with Verizon which I want to hold on to, even though there is a newer and hotter model available. But I am making conscious adult decisions about using the iPhone: I have sent perhaps a dozen texts, and have not used the iPod functionality. I use it, but I draw lines. My point is not exactly that you should adopt the exact same conscious adult decisions as I do about how to use a smartphone, but that you make a conscious adult decision in the first place.

And lastly, I have another piece of older technology: a *SwissChamp XLT*, the smallest Swiss Army Knife that includes all the functionality of a *SwissChamp* while also having the functionality of a *Cybertool*. It has, in order, a large blade, small blade, metal saw, nail file, metal file, custom metal-cutting blade, wood saw, fish scaler, ruler in centimeters and inches, hook remover, scissors, hooked blade, straight blade with concave curved mini-blade, pharmacist's spatula, cybertool (Phillips screwdrivers in three sizes, Torx screwdrivers in three sizes, hexagonal bit, and a slotted screwdriver), pliers, magnifying glass, larger Phillips screwdriver, large slotted screwdriver, can opener, wire stripper, small slotted screwdriver, can opener, corkscrew, jeweller's screwdriver, pin, wood chisel, hook, smaller slotted screwdriver, and reamer. It's somewhat smaller than two iPhones stacked on top of each other, and while it's wider than I like, it is also something of a last hurrah. It is a useful piece of older technology.

I mention these technologies not to sanction what may or may not be owned—I tried to get as good a computer as I could partly because I am an IT professional, and I

am quite grateful that my employer let me use it for the present contract. I also drive a white 2001 Saturn, whose front now looks a bit ugly after cosmetic damage. I could get it fixed fairly easily, but it hasn't yet been a priority. (But this car has also transported the Kursk Root icon.) But with this as with other technologies, I haven't laid the reins on the horse's neck. I only use a well-chosen fragment of my iPhone's capabilities, and I try not to use it too much: I like to be able to use the web without speed being much of an issue, but I'm not on the web all the time. And I have never thought "My wheels are my freedom;" I try to drive insofar as it advances some particular goal.

And there are some things when I'm not aware of the brands too much. I don't really know what brands my clothing are, with one exception, Hanes, which I am aware of predominantly because the brand name is sewed in large, hard-to-miss letters at the top.

And I observe that technologies are becoming increasingly "capture-proof". Put simply, all technologies can be taken away from us physically, but technologies are increasingly becoming something that FEMA can shut off from far away in a heartbeat. All network functionality on smartphones and tablets are at the mercy of network providers and whoever has control over them; more broadly, "The network is the computer," as Sun announced slightly prematurely in its introduction of Java; my own Unix-centric use of my Mac on train rides, without having or wanting it to have internet access during the train ride, may not be much more than a historical curiosity.

But the principle of fasting from technology is fine, and if we can abstain from foods on certain days, we can also abstain from or limit technologies on certain days. Furthermore, there is real merit in knowing how to use older technologies. GPS devices can fail to pick up a signal. A trucker's atlas works fine even if there's no GPS signal available.

The point of this soliloquy

The reason I am writing this up is that I am not aware of too many works on how to use technology ascetically. St. Paul wrote, There is great gain in godliness with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world; but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content.. This statement of necessities does not include shelter, let alone "a rising standard of living" (meaning more things that one uses). Perhaps it is OK to have a car; it is what is called "socially mandated", meaning that there are many who one cannot buy groceries or get to their jobs without a car. Perhaps a best rule of thumb here is, to repeat another author, "Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need." It is a measure by which I have real failings. And don't ask, "Can we afford what we need?", but "Do we need what we can afford?" If we only purchase things that have real ascetical justification, there's

something better than investing for the left-over money: we can give to the poor as an offering to Christ. Christ will receive our offering as a loan.

Some years ago I wanted to write *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, and stopped because I realized I wasn't writing anything good or worthy of the title. But the attitude of the Church Fathers given the technology of the day: monasticism renounces all property, and the faithful are called to renounce property in their hearts even if they have possessions. Monastic literature warns the monk of seeking out old company, where "old company" does not mean enticement to sexual sin exactly, but one's very own kin. The solitary and coenobetic alike cut ties to an outside world, even ties one would think were sacrosanct (and the Bible has much to say about caring for one's elders). If a monk's desire to see his father or brother is considered a temptation to sin that will dissipate monastic energy, what do we have to make of social media? The friendships that are formed are of a different character from face-to-face relationships. If monks are forbidden to return to their own kin as shining example, in what light do we see texting, email, IM's, and discussion forums? If monks are forbidden to look at women's faces for fear of sexual temptation, what do we make of an internet where the greatest assault on manhood, porn, comes out to seek you even if you avoid it? It's a bit like a store that sells food, household supplies, and cocaine: and did I mention that the people driving you to sample a little bit of cocaine are much pushier than those offering a biscuit and dip sample?

The modern Athonite tradition at least has Luddite leanings; Athos warns against national identification numbers and possibly computers, and one saint wrote apocalyptically about people eating eight times as much as people used to eat (has anyone read "The Supersizing of America"?) and of "wisdom" being found that would allow people to swim like fish deep into the sea (we have two technologies that can do that: SCUBA gear and submarines), and let one person speak and be heard on the other side of the world (how many technologies do we have to do that? Quite a lot).

All of this is to say that Orthodoxy has room to handle technologies carefully, and I would suggest that not all technologies are created equal.

The Luddite's Guide to Technology

For the different technologies presented my goal is not exactly to point to a course of action as to suggest a conscious adult decision to make, perhaps after consulting with one's priest or spiritual father. And as is usual in Orthodoxy, the temptation at least for converts is to try to do way too much, too fast, at first, and then backslide when that doesn't work.

It is better to keep on stretching yourself a little.

Sometimes, perhaps most of the time, using technology in an ascetical way will be countercultural and constitute outlier usage.

Advertising

Advertising is kin to manipulation, propaganda, and pornography.

Advertising answers the question, "Was economic wealth made for man, or man for economic wealth?" by decisively saying, "Man was made for economic wealth." It leads people to buy things that are not in their best interest. If you see someone using a technology as part of a *form of life* that is unhelpful, the kind of thing that makes you glad to be a Luddite, you have advertising to thank for that.

Advertising stirs discontent, which is already a problem, and leads people to ever higher desires, much like the trap of pornography. The sin is covetousness and lust, but the core structure is the same. Advertising and pornography are closely related kin.

Advertising doesn't really sell product functionality; it sells a mystique. And we may have legitimate reason to buy the product, but not the mystique. And maybe back off on a useful purchase until we are really buying the product and not the mystique.

Alcohol

Alcohol is not exactly a new technology, although people have found ways of making stronger and stronger drinks as time goes on. However, there is a lesson to learn with alcohol that applies to technology.

One article read outlined a few positions on Christian use of alcohol, ending with a position that said, in essence, "Using alcohol appropriately is a spiritual challenge and there is more productive spiritual work in drinking responsibly than just not drinking." I don't think the authors would have imposed this position on people who know they have particular dangers in using alcohol, but they took a sympathetic look at positions of Christians who don't drink, and then said "The best course of all is not from trying to cut off the danger by not drinking, but rising to the spiritual lesson."

Yet an assumption behind all of the positions presented is that alcohol is something where you cannot safely lay the reins on the horse's neck. You need to be in command, or to put it differently ceaselessly domineer alcohol if you use it. This domineering is easy for some people and harder for others, and some people may be wisest to avoid the challenge.

Something of the same need exists in our use of technology. We may use certain technologies or may not, but it is still a disaster to let the

technology go wherever it wills. Sometimes and with some technologies, we may abstain. Other technologies we may domineer, even if we may find if we are faithful that "my yoke is easy and my burden is light:" establishing dominion and holding the reins may be easier when it becomes a habit. But the question with a technology we use is not, "May we use it as much as we want, or not at all?", any more than the question about wine would be, "May we use it as much as we want, or not at all?" Proper use is disciplined. Proper use is domineering. And we do not always have it spelled out what is like having one or two drinks a day, and what is like having five or ten. Nor do we have other rules of thumb spelled out, like, "Think carefully about drinking when you have a bad mood, and don't drink in order to fix a bad mood."

The descriptions of various "technologies and other things" are meant to provide some sense of what the contours of technologies are, and what is like drinking one or two drinks, and what is like drinking five or ten drinks a day.

Anti-aging medicine

The Christian teaching is that life begins at conception and ends at natural death, *and not* that life begins at 18 and ends at 30.

The saddest moment in *The Chronicles of Narnia* comes when we hear that Her Majesty Queen Susan the Gentle is "no longer a friend of Narnia;" she is rushing as quickly as possible to the silliest age of her life, and will spend the rest of her life trying to remain at that age, which besides being absolutely impossible, is absolutely undesirable.

Quite a lot of us are afflicted by the Queen Susan syndrome, but there is a shift in anti-aging medicine and hormone replacement therapy. Part of the shift in assistive technologies discussed below is that assistive technologies are not just intended to do what a non-disabled person can do, so for instance a reader can read a page of a book, giving visually impaired people equivalent access to a what a sighted person could have, to pushing as far what they think is an improvement, so that scanning a barcode may not just pull up identification of the product bearing the barcode, but have augmented reality features of pulling a webpage that says much more than what a sighted person could see on the tab. One of the big tools of anti-aging medicine is hormone replacement therapy, with ads showing a grey-haired man doing pushups with a caption of, "My only regret about hormone replacement therapy is that I didn't start it sooner," where the goal is not to restore functionality but improve it as much as possible. And the definition

of improvement may be infantile; here it appears to mean that a man who might be a member of the AARP has the same hormone levels as he did when he was 17.

There was one professor I had who was covering French philosophy, discussed Utopian dreams like turning the seas to lemonade, and called these ideas "a Utopia of spoiled children." Anti-aging medicine is not about having people better fulfill the God-ordained role of an elder, but be a virtual youth. Now I have used nutraceuticals to bring more energy and be able to create things where before I was not, and perhaps that is like anti-aging medicine that has me holding on to youthful creativity when God summons me to go further up and further in! But everything I know about anti-aging is that it is not about helping people function gracefully in the role of an elder, but about making any things about aging optional.

In my self-absorbed Seven-Sided Gem, I talked about one cover to the AARP's magazine, then called My Generation, which I originally mistook for something GenX. In the AARP's official magazine as I have seen it, the marketing proposition is the good news, not that it is not that bad to be old, but it is not that old to be old. The women portrayed look maybe GenX in age, and on the cover I pulled out, the person portrayed, in haircut, clothing, and posture, looked like a teenager. "Fifty and better people" may see political and other advice telling them what they can do to fight high prescription prices, but nothing I have seen gives the impression that they can give to their community, as elders, out of a life's wealth of experience.

Not that there are not proper elders out there. I visited a family as they celebrated their son's graduation, and had long conversations with my friend's mother, and with an elderly gentleman (I've forgotten how he was related). She wanted to hear all about what I had to say about subjects that were of mutual interest, and he talked about the wealth of stories he had as a sailor and veterinarian. In both cases I had the subtle sense of a younger person being handled masterfully by an elder, and the conversation was unequal—unequal but entirely fitting, and part of the "entirely fitting" was that neither of them was trying to say, "We are equal—I might as well be as young as you."

Anti-aging medicine is not about aging well, but trying to be a virtual young person when one should be doing the serious, weight, and profoundly important function as elders.

Assistive technologies

This, at least, will seem politically incorrect: unless they have an inordinate monetary or moral cost, assistive technologies allow disabled people to function at a much higher level than otherwise. And I am not going to exactly say that people with disabilities who have access to assistive technologies should turn them down, but I am going to say that there is something I am wary of in the case of assistive technologies.

There is the same question as with other technologies: "Is this really necessary? Does this help?" A blind friend said,

I was recently interviewed for a student's project about assistive technology and shopping, and I told her that I wouldn't use it in many circumstances. First of all, I think some of what is available has more 'new toy' appeal and is linked to advertising. Secondly, I think some things, though they may be convenient, are dehumanising. Why use a barcode scanner thingummy to tell what's in a tin when I can ask someone and relate to someone?

Now to be clear, this friend does use assistive technologies and is at a high level of functioning: "to whom much is given, much is required." I get the impression that the assistive technologies she has concerns about, bleed into *augmented reality*. And though she is absolutely willing to use assistive technologies, particularly when they help her serve others, she is more than willing to ask as I am asking of many technologies, "What's the use? Does this help? *Really help?*"

But there is another, more disturbing question about assistive technologies. The question is not whether individual assistive technologies are helpful when used in individual ways, but whether a society that is always inventing higher standards for accessibility and assistive technology has its deepest priorities straight. And since I cannot answer that out of what my friend has said, let me explain and talk about the Saint and the Activist and then talk about how similar things have played out in my own life.

I write this without regrets about my own efforts and money spent in creating assistive technologies, and with the knowledge that in societies without assistive technologies many disabled people have no secular success. There are notable examples of disabled people functioning at a high level of secular success, such as the noted French Cabalist Isaac the Blind, but the much more common case was for blind people to be beggars. The blind

people met by Christ in the Gospel were without exception beggars. And there are blind beggars in first world countries today.

So what objection would I have to assistive technologies which, if they may not be able to create sight, none the less make the hurdles much smaller and less significant. So, perhaps, medicine cannot allow some patients to read a paper book. Assistive technologies make a way for them to access the book about as well as if they could see the book with their eyes. What is there to object in making disabled people more able to function in society as equal contributors?

The answer boils down to the distinction between the Saint and the Activist as I have discussed them in *An Open Letter to Catholics on Orthodoxy and Ecumenism* and *The Most Politically Incorrect Sermon in History: A commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*. The society that is patterned after the Saint is ordered towards such things as faith and contemplation. The society patterned after the Activist is the one that seeks to ensure the maximum secular success of its members. And if the Activist says, "Isn't it wonderful how much progress we have made? Many disabled people are functioning at a high level!", the Saint says, "There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your Activism. We have bigger fish to fry." And they do.

Now to be clear, I am not saying that you should not use assistive technologies to help give back to society. Nor do I regret any of the time I've spent on assistive technologies. The first idea I wanted to patent was an assistive technology. But we have bigger fish to fry.

There is a way in which I am a little like the blind beggar in many societies that took the Saint for their pattern. It's on a much lesser scale, but I tried my hardest to earn a Ph.D. in theology. At Cambridge University in England the faculty made me switch thesis topic completely, from a topic I had set at the beginning of the year, when two thirds of the year had passed and I had spent most of my time on my thesis. My grades were two points out of a hundred less than the cutoff for Ph.D. continuation, and Cambridge very clearly refused for me to continue beyond my master's. So then I applied to other programs, and Fordham offered an assistantship, and I honestly found cancer easier than some of the things that went wrong there. I showed a writeup to one friend and he wrote, "I already knew all the things you had written up, and I was still shocked when I read it." All of which to say is that the goal I had of earning a doctorate, and using that degree to teach at a seminary, seemed shattered. With all that happened, the door to earning a Ph.D. was decisively closed.

Now I know that it is possible to teach at a seminary on a master's; it may be a handicap, but it certainly does not make such a goal impossible. But more broadly God's hand was at work. For starters, I survived. I believe that a doctor would look at what happened and say, "There were a couple of places where what happened could have killed you. Be glad you're alive." And beyond that, there is something of God's stern mercy: academic writing takes a lot more work than being easy to read, and only a few people can easily read it. I still have lessons to learn about work that is easy to read, and this piece may be the least readable thing I've written in a while. But all the same, there is a severe mercy in what God has given. I have a successful website largely due to chance, or rather God's providence; I was in the right place at the right time and for all my skill in web work happened to have successes I had no right to expect.

And God works through assistive technologies and medicine. When I was in middle school, I had an ankle that got sorer and sorer until my parents went to ask a doctor if hospitalization was justified. The doctor's response, after taking a sample of the infection, said, "Don't swing by home; go straight to the hospital and I'll take care of the paperwork on this end for his admission." And I was hospitalized for a week or so—the bed rest day and night being the first time ever that I managed to get bored teaching myself from my father's calculus textbook—and after I was discharged I still needed antibiotic injections every four hours. That involved medical treatment is just as activist as assistive technology, and without it I would not have written any the pieces on this website besides the Apple][BASIC four dimensional maze.

I am rather glad to be alive now.

So I am in a sense both a Ph.D. person who was lost on Activist terms, but met with something fitting on a Saint's terms, and a person who was found on Activist terms. God works both ways. But still, there are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamed of in Activism.

Augmented Reality

When I was working at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, one part of the introduction I received to the CAVE and Infinity Wall virtual reality was to say that virtual reality "is a superset of reality," where you could put a screen in front of a wall and see, X-ray-style, wires and other things inside the wall.

Virtual reality does exist, and is popularized by Second Life among many others, but that may not be the main niche carved out. The initial thought was virtual reality, and when the dust has started to settle, the niche carved out is more a matter of augmented reality. Augmented reality includes, on a more humble level, GPS devices and iPhone apps that let you scan a barcode or QR code and pull up web information on the product you have scanned. But these are not the full extent of augmented reality; it's just an early installment. It is an opportunity to have more and more of our experience rewritten by computers and technology. Augmented technology is probably best taken at a lower dose and domineered.

Big Brother

Big Brother is a collection of technologies, but not a collection of technologies you choose because they will deliver a Big Brother who is watching you. Everything we do electronically is being monitored; for the moment the U.S. government is only using it for squeaky-clean apparent uses, and has been hiding its use. Even the Amish now are being monitored; they have decided not to hook up to a grid, such as electricity or landline phones, but cell phones can be used if they find them expedient to their series of conscious decisions about whether to adopt technologies. Amish use the horse and buggy but not the car, not because the horse is older, but because the horse and buggy provide some limited mobility without tearing apart the local community. The car is rejected not because it is newer, but because it frees people from the tightly bound community they have. And because they carry cell phones, the NSA tracks where they go. They might not do anything about it, but almost everything about us is in control of Big Brother. And though I know at least one person who has decided carrying a cell phone and having an iPass transponder is not worth being tracked, you have to be more Luddite than the Luddites, and know enough of what you are doing that you are already on file, if you are to escape observation.

Big Brother has been introduced step by step, bit by bit. First there were rumors that the NSA was recording all Internet traffic. Then it came out in the open that the NSA was indeed recording all Internet traffic and other electronic communications, and perhaps (as portrayed on one TV program) we should feel sorry for the poor NSA which has to deal with all this data. That's not the end. Now Big Brother is officially mainly about national security, but this is not an outer limit either. Big Brother will probably appear a godsend in dealing with local crime before an open hand manipulating the

common citizen appears. But Big Brother is here already, and Big Brother is growing.

Books and ebooks

I was speaking with one friend who said in reference to *Harry Potter* that the *Harry Potter* series got people to read, and anything that gets people to read is good. My response (a tacit response, not a spoken one) is that reading is not in and of itself good. If computers are to be used in an ascetically discriminating fashion, so is the library; if you will recall my earlier writing about slightly inappropriate things at Cambridge and worse at Fordham, every single person I had trouble with was someone who read a lot, and presumably read much more than someone caught up in Harry Potter mania.

Orthodoxy is at heart an oral, or oral-like culture, and while it uses books, it was extremely pejorative when one friend said of a Protestant priest in Orthodox clothes, "I know what book he got that [pastoral practice] from." The first degree of priesthood is called a 'Reader', and when one is tonsured a Reader, the bishop urges the Reader to read the Scriptures. The assumption is not that the laity should be reading but need not read the Scriptures, but that the laity can be doing the job of laity without being literate. Or something like that. Even where there is reading, the transmission of the most important things is oral in character, and the shaping of the laity (and presumably clergy) is through the transmission of oral tradition through oral means. In that sense, I as an author stand of something exceptional among Orthodox, and "exceptional" does not mean "exceptionally good." Most of the Orthodox authors now came to Orthodoxy from the West, and their output may well be appropriate and a fitting offering from what they have. However, the natural, consistent result of formation in Orthodoxy does not usually make a non-author into an author.

As far as books versus ebooks, books (meaning codices) are a technology, albeit a technology that has been around for a long time and will not likely disappear. Ebooks in particular have a long tail effect. The barriers to put an ebook out are much more than to put a traditional book out. It has been said that ebooks are killing Mom and Pop bookstores, and perhaps it is worth taking opportunities to patronize local businesses. But there is another consideration in regards to books versus cheaper Kindle editions. The Kindle may be tiny in comparison to what it holds, and far more convenient than traditional books.

But it is much more *capture proof*.

"Capture proof"

In military history, the term "capture proof" refers to a weapon that is delicate and exacting in its maintenance needs, so that if it is captured by the enemy, it will rather quickly become useless in enemy soldier's hands.

The principle can be transposed to technology, except that possessing this kind of "capture proof" technology does not mean that it is an advantage that "we" can use against "them." It comes much closer to say that FEMA can shut down its usefulness at the flick of a switch. As time has passed, hot technologies become increasingly delicate and capture proof: a laptop is clunkier than a cool tablet, but the list of things one can do with a tablet without network access is much shorter than the list of things can do with a laptop without network access. Or, to take the example of financial instruments, the movement has been towards more and more abstract derivatives, and these are fragile compared to an investment in an indexed mutual fund, which is in turn fragile compared to old-fashioned money.

"Cool," "fragile," and "capture proof" are intricately woven into each other.

Einstein said, "I do not know what weapons World War III will be fought with, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones." We might not have to wait until World War IV. Much of World War III may be fought with sticks and stones.

Cars

Perhaps the most striking Luddite horror of cars that I have seen is in C.S. Lewis. He talked about how they were called "space-conquering devices," while they should have been called "space-annihilating devices," because he experienced future shock that cars could make long distances very close. (And someone has said, "The problem with the English is that they think a hundred miles is a long distance, and the problem with the U.S. is that they think a hundred years is a long time.") The "compromise solution" he offered was that it was OK to use cars to go further as a special solution on weekend, but go with other modes of transport for the bread-and-butter of weekdays. (And this is more or less how Europeans lean.)

Cars are one of many technologies that, when introduced, caused future shock. It's taken as normal by subsequent generations, but there is a real sense of "This new technology is depriving us of something

basically human," and that pattern repeats. And perhaps, in a sense, this shock is the pain we experience as we are being lessened by degrees and slowly turning from man to machine-dominated.

CFLs and incandescent bulbs

There is something striking about CFL's. American society has a long history of technology migrations, and a thorough enough "out with the old, in with the new" that working 16mm film projectors, for instance, now fetch a price because we have so thoroughly gotten rid of them in favor of video. And people who use them now aren't using them as the normal way to see video; they may want to see old film canisters and maybe even digitize them (so they can be seen without the use of a film projector).

Compare with other countries such as Lebanon which have no real concept of being obsolete; they have a mix of old and new technologies and they get rid of an old piece of technology, not because it is old, but because it is worn out.

The fact that we are transitioning to CFL's for most purposes is not striking; transitions happen all the time. One could trace "If you have a phone, it's a landline," to "You can have a two pound car phone, but it's expensive," to "You can have a cell phone that fits in your hand, but it's expensive," to "You can have a cell phone, which is much cheaper now," to "You can have a cell phone that does really painful Internet access," to "You can have a cell phone with graceful Internet access." And there have been many successions like this, all because the adopters thought the new technology was an improvement on the old.

CFL's are striking and disturbing because, while there may be a few people who think that slightly reduced electricity usage (much smaller than a major household appliance) justifies the public handling fragile mercury containers, by and large the adoption is not of a snazzier successor to incandescent bulbs. Not only must they be handled like live grenades, but the light is inferior. The human race grew up on full-spectrum light, such as the sun provides. Edison may not have been aiming for a full-spectrum light, but his light bulb does provide light across the spectrum; that is an effect of an incandescent light that produces light that looks at all near. This is a strange technology migration, and a rather ominous omen.

Given that most bulbs available now are CFL's, there are better and worse choices. Some bulbs have been made with a filter outside the glass so they give off light that looks yellow rather than blue. I wouldn't look for that

in and of itself. But some give a full spectrum, even if it is a bluish full spectrum, and that is better. There are also lights sold that are slightly more shatter resistant, which is commendable, and there are some bulbs that are both full spectrum and shatter resistant. I'd buy the last kind if possible, or else a full spectrum CFL, at a hardware store if possible and online if not.

But I would momentarily like to turn attention from the extinction of regular use of incandescent bulbs to their introduction. Candles have been used since time immemorial, but they're not a dimmer version of a light bulb. Even if you have candlesticks and candles lit, the candle is something of a snooze button or a minor concession: societies that used candles still had people active more or less during daylight hours. (Daylight Saving Time was an attempt to enable people to use productive daylight hours which they were effectively losing.) People who used candles were still effectively tied to the cycle of day and night. Light bulbs caused a shock because they let you operate as early or as late as you wanted. Candles allowed you to wrap up a few loose ends when night had really fallen. Light bulbs made nighttime optional. And it caused people future shock.

I have mentioned a couple of different responses to CFL's: the first is to buy full spectrum and preferably shatter resistant (and even then handle the mercury containers like a live grenade), the second is turning to the rhythm of day and light and getting sunlight where you can. Note that inside most buildings, even with windows, sunlight is not nearly as strong as what the human person optimally needs. Let me mention one other possibility.

There is a medical diagnosis called 'SAD' for 'Seasonal Affective Disorder', whose patients have lower mood during the winter months when we see very little light. The diagnosis seems to me a bit like the fad diagnosis of YTD, or Youthful Tendency Disorder, discussed in *The Onion*. If you read about it and are half-asleep it sounds like a description of a frightening syndrome. If you are awake you will recognize a description of perfectly normal human tendencies. And the SAD diagnosis of some degree of depression when one is consistently deprived of bright light sounds rather normal to me. And for that reason I think that some of the best lighting you can get is with something from the same manufacturer of the Sunbox DL SAD Light Box Light Therapy Desk Lamp. That manufacturer is one I trust; I am a little wary of some of their cheaper competitors. There is one cheaper alternative that provides LED light. Which brings me to a problem with LED's. Basically, LEDs emit light of a single color. While you can choose what that color may be, white represents a difficult balancing act. If you've purchased one of those LED flashlights, it has what is called "lunar white",

which is basically a way of cheating at white light. (If you've ever gone to a dark closet and tried to pick out clothing by a lunar white flashlight, this may be why you had trouble telling what color your clothing was.) Expensive as they may be, a Sunbox light box may fit in to your best shot at taking in a healthy level of light.

Children's toys

Charles Baudelaire, in his "la Morale du Joujou" ("the moral of the toy") talks about toys and the fact that the best toys leave something to the imagination. Children at play will imagine that a bar of soap is a car; girls playing with dolls will play the same imagined drama with rag dolls as they will with dolls worth hundreds of dollars. There has been a shift, where Lego sets have shifted from providing raw material to being a specific model, made of specilized pieces, that the child is not supposed to imagine, only to assemble. Lego sets are perhaps the preferred childhood toy of professional engineers everywhere; some of them may have patronized Lego's competitors, but the interesting thing about Legos that are not "you assemble it" models is that you have to supply something to what you're building. Lego the company might make pieces of different sizes and shapes and made them able to stick together without an adhesive; I wouldn't downplay that achievement on the part of the manufacturer, but the child playing with Legos supplies half of the end result. But this is not just in assembly; with older models, the Legos didn't look exactly like what they were supposed to be. There was one time when I saw commercials for a miniature track where some kind of car or truck would transport a payload (a ball bearing, perhaps), until it came to a certain point and the payload fell through the car/track through a chute to a car below. And when I asked my parents to buy it for me and they refused, I built it out of Legos. Of course it did not look anything like what I was emulating, but I had several tracks on several levels and a boxy square of a vehicle would carry a marble along the track until it dropped its payload onto a car in the level below. With a bit of imagination it was a consolation for my parents not getting the (probably expensive) toy I had asked for, and with a bit of imagination a short broom is a horse you can ride, a taut cord with a sheet hung over it is an outdoor tent, and a shaky box assembled from sofa cushions is a fort. Not, perhaps, that children should be given no toys, or a square peg should be pounded into a round hole by giving everyone old-style Lego kits, but half of a children's toy normally resides in the imagination, and the present fashion in toys is to do all the imagining for the child.

And there is a second issue in what is imagined for children. I have not looked at toys recently, but from what I understand dragons and monsters are offered to them. I have looked rather deeply into what is offered to children for reading. The more innocuous part is bookstores clearing the classics section of the children's area for Disney Princess books. The more serious matter is with *Dealing with Dragons* and other Unman's Tales.

The Cloud

Cloud computing is powerful, and it originated as a power tool in supercomputing, and has now come down to personal use in software like Evernote, a note-taking software system that synchronizes across all computers and devices which have it installed.

Essentially, besides being powerful, cloud computing, besides being very powerful, is one more step in abstraction in the world of computing. It means that you use computers you have never even seen. Not that this is new; it is a rare use case for someone using the Web to own any of the servers for the sites he is visiting. But none the less the older pattern is for people to have their own computers, with programs they have downloaded and/or purchased, and their own documents. The present trend to offload more and more of our work to the cloud is a step in the direction of vulnerability to the damned backswing. The more stuff you have in the cloud, the more of your computer investment can be taken away at the flick of a switch, or collapse because some intervening piece of the puzzle has failed. Not that computers are self-sufficient, but the move to the cloud is a way of being less self-sufficient.

My website is hosted on a cloud virtual private server, with one or two "hot spares" that I have direct physical access to. There are some reasons the physical machine, which has been flaky for far longer than a computer should be allowed to be flaky (and which keeps not getting fixed), is one I keep as a hot spare.

Contraception and Splenda

There was one mostly Catholic mailing list where I was getting annoyed at the degree of attention given to one particular topic: I wrote,

Number of posts in this past month about faith: 6

Number of posts in this past month about the Bible: 8

Number of posts in this past month about the Eucharist: 9

Number of posts in this past month extolling the many wonders of Natural Family Planning: 13

The Catholic Church's teaching on Natural Family Planning is not, "Natural Family Planning, done correctly, is a 97% effective way to simulate contraception." The Catholic Church's teaching on children is that they are the crown and glory of sexual love, and way down on page 509 there is a footnote saying that Natural Family Planning can be permissible under certain circumstances.

And if I had known it, I would have used a quotation from Augustine I cited in *Contraception, Orthodoxy, and Spin Doctoring: A look at an influential but disturbing article*:

Is it not you who used to counsel us to observe as much as possible the time when a woman, after her purification, is most likely to conceive, and to abstain from cohabitation at that time, lest the soul should be entangled in flesh? This proves that you approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children. Therefore whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage, and makes the woman not a wife, but a mistress, who for some gifts presented to her is joined to the man to gratify his passion. Where there is a wife there must be marriage. But there is no marriage where motherhood is not in view; therefore neither is there a wife. In this way you forbid marriage. Nor can you defend yourselves successfully from this charge, long ago brought against you prophetically by the Holy Spirit (the Blessed Augustine is referring to I Tim 4:1-3).

Thus spoke the Catholic Church's favorite ancient theologian on contraception; and to this it may be added that the term 'Natural Family Planning' is deceptive and perhaps treacherous in how it frames things. There is nothing particularly natural about artificially abstaining from sexual intercourse precisely when a woman is capable of the greatest desire, pleasure, and response.

The chief good of the marriage act is that it brings in to being new images of God; "a baby is God's vote that the world should go on." The chief good of eating is that it nourishes the body. Now there are also pleasures, but it is an act of confusion to see them as pleasure delivery systems and an act of greater confusions to frustrate the greater purpose of sex or eating so that one may, as much as possible, use them just as pleasure delivery systems.

There are other strange effects of this approach: for starters, Splenda use correlates to increased weight gain. Perhaps this is not strange: if you teach someone, "You can eat as much candy and drink as many soft drinks as you like," the lesson is "You can consume more without worrying about your waistline," and you will consume more: not only more foods containing Splenda, but more foods not containing Splenda.

There is an interesting history, as far as "Natural" Family Planning goes, about how in ancient times Church Fathers were skeptical at best of the appropriateness of sex during the infertile period, then people came to allow sex during the infertile period despite the fact that it was shooting blanks, and then the West came to a point where priests hearing confessions were to insinuate "Natural" Family Planning to couples who were using more perverse methods to have sex without children, and finally the adulation that can say that Natural Family Planning is the gateway to the culture of life.

Contraception and Splenda are twins, and with Splenda I include not only other artificial sweeteners, but so-called "natural" sweeteners like Agave and Stevia which happen not to be manufactured in a chemical factory, but whose entire use is to do Splenda's job of adding sweetness without calories. What exists in the case of contraception and Splenda alike is neutralizing a greater good in order to have as much of the pleasure associated with that good as possible. It says that the primary purpose of food and sex, important enough to justify neutralizing other effects as a detriment to focusing on the pleasure, is to be a pleasure delivery system.

About pleasure delivery systems, I would refer you to:

The Pleasure-Pain Syndrome

The dialectic between pleasure and pain is a recurrent theme among the Fathers and it is something of a philosophical error to pursue pleasure and hope that no pain will come. If you want to see real discontent with one's sexual experiences, look for those who are using Viagra and its kin to try to find the ultimate sexual thrill. What they will find is that sex becomes a disappointment: first sex without drugged enhancement becomes

underwhelming, and then Viagra or Cialis fail to deliver the evanescent ultimate sexual thrill.

The Damned Backswing

There is a phenomenon where something appears to offer great improvements, but it has a damned backswing. For one example in economics, in the 1950's the U.S. had an unprecedentedly high standard of living (meaning more appliances in houses—not really the best measure of living), and for decades it just seemed like, *It's Getting Better All the Time*. But now the U.S. economy is being destroyed, and even with another regime, we would still have all the debts we incurred making things better all the time.

Another instance of the damned backswing is how medieval belief in the rationality of God gave rise to the heroic labors of science under the belief that a rational God would create a rational and ordered world, which gave way to modernism and positivism which might as well have put science on steroids, which in turn is giving way to a postmodernism and subjectivism that, even as some of it arose from the philosophy of science, is fundamentally toxic to objectivist science.

Email, texting, and IM's

"Email is for old people," one youngster said, and email is largely the wave of the past. Like landlines and desktop computers, it will probably not disappear completely; it will probably remain the communication channel of corporate notifications and organizational official remarks. But social communication via email is the wave of the past: an article in *A List Apart* said that the website had originated as a mailing list, and added, "Kids, go ask your parents."

When texting first caught on it was neither on the iPhone nor the Droid. If you wanted to say, "hello", you would probably have to key in, "443355555666". But even then texting was a sticky technology, and so far it is the only common technology I know of that is illegal to use when driving. It draws attention in a dangerous way and is treated like alcohol in terms of something that can impair driving. It is a strong technological drug.

The marketing proposition of texting is an intravenous drip of noise. IM's are similar, if not always as mobile as cell phones, and email

is a weaker form of the drug that youth are abandoning for a stronger version. Now, it should also be said that they are useful, and the proper ascetical use is to take advantage of them because they are useful (or not; I have a phone plan without texting and I text rarely enough that the default \$.20 per text makes sense and is probably cheaper than the basic plan.

Fasting and fasting from technologies

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

The healing of this comes in partly by eating, in the Holy Mysteries where we eat from the Tree of Life. But this is no imitation of Eve's sin, or Adam's. They lived in the garden of paradise, and there is no record of them fasting before taking from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Before we take communion, we answer the question "Where are you?", the question in which God invited Adam and Eve to come clean and expose their wound to the Healer, and we prepare for confession and answer the question Adam and Eve dodged: "Where are you?" We do not live in a garden of delights, but our own surroundings, and we turn away from sensual pleasures. Adam and Eve hid from God; we pray to him and do not stop praying because of our own sordid unworthiness. And, having prepared, we eat from the Tree of Life.

You shall not surely die. and Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, are some of the oldest marketing propositions, but they are remarkably alive in the realm of technology. Witness the triumph of hope over experience in the artificial intelligence project. Witness a society like the meticulously groomed technology of a Buddha who saw an old man, a sick man, and a dead man, and wondered whatever on earth they can mean. Mortality may be as total in our generation as any other, but we've done a good job of hiding it. Perhaps doctors might feel inadequate in the face of real suffering, but modern medicine can do a lot. In many areas of the third world, it might be painful, but it is not surprising to play with a child who was doing well two weeks ago and be told that he is dead. Death is not something one expects in homes; it is out of sight and half out of mind in hospitals and hospices. All of this is to say that those of us in the first world

have a death-denying society, and if we have not ultimately falsified "You will surely die," we've done a pretty good job of being in denial about it. And "You shall be as gods" is the marketing proposition of luxury cars, computers, smartphones, and ten thousand other propositions. My aunt on discovering Facebook said, "It feels like I am walking on water," and Facebook offers at least a tacit marketing proposition of, "You shall be as gods." Information technology in general, and particularly the more "sexy" forms of information technology, offer the marketing proposition of, Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods.

There was one time as an undergraduate when I tried to see what it would be like to live as blind for a day, and so I was blindfolded and had a fascinating day which I wrote up for my psychology class. Now I would be careful in saying based on one day's experience would let me understand the life experience of being blind, any more than a few days spent in Ontario entitle me to say that I understand Canadian culture. However, the experience was an interesting challenge, and it had something to do with fasting, even if it was more adventuresome than fasting normally is.

Fasting is first and foremost fasting from food, but there are other things one can fast from. Some Orthodox bid Facebook a temporary farewell for fasting seasons. On fasting days, we are bidden to cut back on sensory pleasures, which can mean cutting back on luxury technologies that give us pleasure.

I'm not sure how much fasting from technologies should form a part of one's rule; it is commonplace to discuss with one's priest or spiritual father how one will keep one's fast, and with what *oikonomia* if such is needed. But one of the rules of fasting is that one attempts a greater and greater challenge. Far from being a spiritual backwater, Lent is the central season of the Christian year. And so I will present twenty-three things you might do to fast from technology. (Or might not.)

1. Sleep in a sleeping bag on the floor. (Monks mention sleeping on the floor as a discipline; the attenuated fast of sleeping on a sleeping bag on the floor may help.)
2. Leave your smartphone at home for a day.
3. Leave all consumer electronics at home for a day.
4. Only check for email, Facebook, etc. once every hour, instead of all the time.
5. Don't check your email; just write letters with a pen or lead pencil.

6. Camp out in your back yard.
7. Read a book outside, using sunscreen if appropriate.
8. Organize some outdoor activity with your friends or family.
9. Don't use your computer or smartphone while you are preparing for the Eucharist.
10. Basic: If you have games and entertainment apps or application, don't play them when you are fasting.
11. Harder: If you have games and entertainment applications, delete them.
12. Basic: Spend an hour outside with a book or an ebook Kindle, doing nothing but read and observe the trees, the wind, and the grass growing. (You are welcome to use my ebooks.)
13. Harder: Spend an hour outside, but not with a book, just observing the trees, the wind, and the grass growing.
14. Don't use your car for a week. It's OK to get rides, and it may be a pleasure speaking with your friends, but experience being, in part, dependent, and you may be surprised how some of your driving suddenly seems superfluous.
15. Shut off power for an hour. If you keep your fridge and freezer doors shut, you shouldn't lose food, and sometimes power loss has meant adventure.
16. Turn off your computer's network access but still see what you can do with it for a day. (The Luddite's Guide to Technology is written largely on a computer that doesn't have internet access for the majority of the time it is being used to write this.)
17. Especially if you have a beautiful screensaver, set your computer to just display a blank screen, and have a single color or otherwise dull wallpaper for a time, perhaps for a fasting season.
18. Switch your computer's resolution to 800x600 or the tiniest it can go. That will take away much of its status as a luxury.
19. Make a list of interesting things to do that do not involve a computer, tablet, or smartphone.
20. Do some of the vibrant things on the list that do not involve a computer, tablet, or smartphone.

21. Use computers or whatever other technologies, not for what you can get from them, but what you can give through them.
22. Bear a little more pain. If pain is bearable, don't take pain medication. If you can deal with a slightly warmer room in the summer, turn down the air conditioning. If you can deal with a slightly cooler room in the winter, turn down the heat.
23. Visit a monastery. A monastery is not thought of in terms of being Luddite, but monasteries tend to be lower in level than technology, and a good monastery shows the vibrancy of life not centered about technology. And this suggestion is different. All the other suggestions say, "I would suggest." The suggestion about the monastery says, "God has given."

Food

There is some ambiguity, or better yet a double meaning, when the New Testament uses the term "breaking bread." On one level, breaking bread means a shared meal around the table. On another, it means celebrating the Eucharist.

You can say that there is one sacrament, or that there are seven, or that there are a million sacraments. A great many things in life have a sacramental dimension, even if the man on the street would not consider these to be religious matters. There is something sacramental about friendship. And there is something sacramental about a meal around a table. Even if the sacramental character of a meal is vanishing.

Proverbs said, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it." Today one may draw forth an implication: "Better is a dinner of really bad fast food than the most exquisite Weston A. Price Foundation meal where there is hatred."

However, there are ways that the sacramental character of meals is falling away. Many foods are not intended to be eaten around a table with family or friends: think of microwave dinners and the 100 calorie snack pack. Read *Nourishing Traditions*, which tells how far our industrial diet has diverged from meals that taste delicious precisely because they are nutritionally solid.

But besides the plastic-like foods of the industrial diet, there is another concern with munching or inhaling. The Holy Eucharist can legitimately be served, in an extreme case, with plastic-like foods. For that matter it is normal for it to be made with white flour, and white flour is high on the list of foods that should be limited. And it would be a mistake to

insist on whole wheat flour because it is overall healthier. But with extreme exceptions such as grave illness, the Holy Mysteries are not to be consumed by oneself off in a corner. They are part of the unhurried unfolding of the Divine Liturgy, which ideally unfolds rather naturally into the unhurried unfolding of a common meal.

Both eating snacks continually to always have the pleasure of the palate, and the solo meal that is inhaled so it can be crammed into an over-busy schedule, fall short of the (broadly) sacramental quality of a common meal around a table.

In Alaska there are many people but not so many priests, and therefore many parishes rarely celebrate the Divine Liturgy. And a bishop, giving advice, gave two pastoral directions to the faithful: first that they should pray together, and second that they should eat together.

Let us try harder to eat with others.

"Forms of life" (Wittgenstein)

I'm not Wittgenstein's biggest fan, and I wince when people speak of "after Wittgenstein." But his concept of "forms of life" is relevant here. A form of life is something that is structural to how people live, and normally tacit; a professor was searching for an example of "forms of life" to give to the class, and after a couple of minutes of silence I said, "You are trying to a difficult thing. You are trying to find something that is basically tacit and not consciously realized, but that people will recognize once it is pointed out. I guess that you have thought of a few possibilities and rejected them because they fall around on one of those criteria." And he searched a bit more, and gave the example of, "It used to be that procreation was seen as necessary for human flourishing. Now people think that limiting procreation is seen as necessary for human flourishing."

Arguably a *Luddite's Guide to Forms of Life* would be more useful than *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, but in the discussion of different technologies there is always a concern for what Wittgenstein would call forms of life. It is possible to turn on the television for 10 minutes a day for weather information, and that retains the same form of life as not using television at all. Watching television for hours a day is, and shapes, a distinct form of life. And in some sense the basic question addressed in this work is not, "What technologies are you using?" but "What forms of life do you have given your technology usage?"

Future shock

Some people have said that Americans are in a constant state of "future shock," "future shock" being understood by analogy to "culture shock", which is a profoundly challenging state when you are in a culture that tramples assumptions you didn't know you had. Not all of future shock is in relation to technology, but much of it is.

We think of a "rising standard of living," meaning more unfamiliar possessions in many cases, and even if the economy itself is not a rising standard of living now, we have accepted the train of new technology adoption as progress, but there has been something in us that says, "This is choking something human." And in a sense this has always been right, the older technologies as the new, for movies as much as augmented reality.

One author said, "The future is here. It's just unevenly distributed."

GPS

GPS is in general an example of something that has a double effect. Traditionally advertising in an overall effect helps people to covet what a company has to offer, and the behavior stimulated by the advertising is to advance the company's interest, even though the company never says "We are making this so that we will acquire more money or market share." As in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, the prime actor is attempting to pursue his or her own interests, while it is presented entirely as being to the advantage of the other party on the other party's terms.

Apple didn't just change the game by making the first smartphone done right, in which regard the iPhone is commonly considered more significant than the Macintosh. The company that invented and still sells the Macintosh has established something more important than owning a Macintosh: owning an iPhone or iPad, which unlike the Macintosh generate a steady subscription income stream. The price for my MacBook was 100% up front: now that I've made the one-time purchase, I do not have any further financial obligations that will filter to Apple. My iPhone, on the other hand, has a subscription and contract; part of my hefty baseline phone bill goes to Apple. And if I were to purchase an iPad, I would have two subscriptions. (The main reason I have not seriously moved towards buying an iPad is not what I would pay up front; it is adding another subscription.)

The GPS also has a double effect. It is what science fiction writers called a "tracking device." Now it is a terrifically useful traffic advice; part of the marketing proposition offered for Sila on the iPhone 4 S is that it makes terrifically resourceful use of a GPS. ("I feel like a latte."—and it is the GPS that Sila uses to find nearby locations where one might find a latte.) On a more pedestrian level GPS for driving (or biking, or walking) has become so entrenched that people don't know what they'd do without it to reach unfamiliar locations. I have never heard someone question the utility of a GPS for this or other purposes, and I've heard of interesting-sounding hobbies like geocaching where you navigate to specified coordinates and then search out and find some hidden attraction in the area indicated by the GPS.

But for all of these things, GPSes, as well as cell phones in general, provide one more means for Big Brother (and possibly more than one Big Brother) to know exactly where you go, when you go there, what the patterns are, and other things where Big Brother will keep closer tabs on your whereabouts and activities than your spouse or parent. IBM published a book on "Why IBM for Big Data?" and made it very clear that Big Brother analysis of data isn't just for No Such Agency. It's also for the corporate world. One author told the seemingly attractive story of having made repeated negative posts on his FaceBook wall, slamming an airline after repeated problems, and the airline reached out to him and gave him a service upgrade. This was presented in the most positive light, but it was very clear that business were being invited to use IBM's expertise to do ~~Big Data~~ Big Brother analysis on social networks.

Guns and modern weapons (for fantasy swords, see Teleporters)

Let me give a perhaps controversial preamble before directly talking about weapons.

I have spoken both with NRA types and anti-gun advocates, and there is a telling difference. The anti-gun advocates point to hard-hitting, emotional news stories where a walking arsenal opens fire in a school and kills many people. The NRA types may briefly talk about selective truth-telling and mention an incident where someone walked into a church armed to kill a bear, and an off-duty security guard who was carrying a gun legally and with the explicit permission of church leadership, "stopped the crime." But that is something of a tit-for-tat sideline to the main NRA argument, which is to appeal to statistical studies that show that legal gun ownership does not increase crime.

I have a strong math background and I am usually wary of statistics. However, I find it very striking that anti-gun advocates have never in my experience appealed to statistics to show that legal gun ownership increases crime, but only give hard-hitting emotional images, while the bread-and-butter of NRA argument is an appeal to research and statistics. I've never personally investigated those statistics, but there is something suspicious and fishy when only one side of a debate seriously appeals to research and statistics.

With that preamble mentioned, learning to really use a gun is a form of discipline and stillness, and I tried to capture it in the telescope scene in *Within the Steel Orb*. Hunting can be a way to be close to your food, and I approve of hunting for meat but not hunting for taxidermy. However, sacramental shopping for weapons is as bad as any other sacramental shopping. I would tentatively say that if you want skill with a weapon, and will train to the point that it becomes something of a spiritual discipline, then buying a weapon makes sense. If you want to buy a gun because all the cool guys in action-adventure movies have one, or you are not thinking of the work it takes to handle a gun safely and use it accurately, I would question the appropriateness of buying a gun.

(Owning a gun because that is part of your culture is one thing; buying a gun because they are glamorized in movies is another thing entirely.)

And that is without investigating the question of whether it is appropriate to use violence in the first place. St. George the soldier and the passion-bearers Ss. Boris and Gleb are both honored by the Church; yet the better path is the one set forth in the Sermon on the Mount.

Heating and air conditioning

A college roommate commented that middle class Americans had basically as much creature comforts were available. Not that they can buy everything one would want; but there is a certain point beyond which money cannot purchase necessities, only luxuries, and then a certain point after that where money cannot purchase luxuries, only status symbols, and a point beyond that where money cannot purchase any more meaningful status symbols, only power. And middle class Americans may well not be able to purchase every status symbol they want, but really there is not much more creature comfort that would come with ten times one's salary.

Heating and air conditioning are one such area, and monastics wear pretty much the same clothing in summer and winter. One Athonite monk

talked about a story about how several Russian sailors made a fire and stood close, and still did not feel warm, while islanders who were barely clad stood some distance off and were wincing because of the heat. We lose some degree of spiritual strength if we insist on having cool buildings in the summer and warm buildings in the winter. Even just cutting back a bit, so that buildings are warm but not hot in the summer and cool but not cold in the winter would constitute a spiritual victory. Usually this sort of thing is argued for environmental reasons; I am not making the argument that the lowered utility usage is good for the environment but that the lowered utility usage is constructive and, in the old phrase, "builds character." Indoor tracks exist, but in the summer I see bicyclists and runners exercising hard in the summer. These people are not super-heroes, and exercising in the heat really does not seem to be much of a deterrent to getting one's artificially added exercise. The human body and spirit together are capable of a great deal more sturdiness, when instead of always seeking comfort we learn that we can function perfectly well after adjusting to discomfort. (And this is not just with heating and air conditioning; it is true with a lot of things.)

Hospitality

There is an ancient code of hospitality that recently has been influenced by consumer culture. What commercial marketing does, or at least did, to make a gesture of friendship and welcome was by offering a selection of choices carefully fitted to the demographics being targeted. Starbucks not only established that you could market an experience that would command a much higher price than a bottomless cup of coffee at a regular diner; they sold not one coffee but many coffees. You had a broad selection of consumer choices. Starbucks was doubtlessly more successful than some frozen yoghurt places I visited in grad school, which offered something like fifty or more flavors and varieties of yoghurts and had staff who were mystified when customers said, "But I just want some frozen yoghurt!" As a nuance, Starbucks offers guidance and suggestions for the undecided—and a large number of choices for the decided.

And in light of the hospitality industry, hosts offer guests choices and sometimes mystify them by the offering: a guest, according to the older (unwritten) code, did not have the responsibility of choosing what would be offered. Now perhaps I need to clarify, or maybe don't need to clarify, that if you have a severe peanut allergy and your host offers you a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you are not duty bound to accept it. But even then, social

graces come to play. I remembered one time, at a feast although not strictly a host/guest relationship, when I offered a friend a glass of port and he kindly reminded me that he was a recovering alcoholic. I apologized profusely, and he stopped me and said, "I appreciate the offer, I just can't drink it." So then I offered him something he could consume, and he took it and thanked me for it. Social graces apply.

But this is something of a footnote. There is a story of a staretz or monastic spiritual father who was going with one of a monk's disciples, and they visited a monastery that was feasting with bread, and the elder and disciple both shared in that informal communion, and then the two of them resumed their journey. The disciple asked the master if he could drink water, and to his astonishment was told no. The master, in answering his question, said, "That was love's bread. But let us keep the fast." The Fathers are very clear: as one priest said, "Hospitality trumps fasting." And the assumption there is that fasting is important enough. This piece originated with the title, "Fasting from technologies." But hospitality is even more important.

The ancient rule of hospitality, although this is never thought of in these terms with today's understanding of authority, is that the host has a profound authority over the guest which the guest will obey, even to the point of trumping fasting. But this is not what we may think of as despotism: the entire purpose and focus of the host's role in hospitality is to extend the warmest welcome to the guest. I remember one time when a friend visited from Nigeria, and although I set some choices before them, when I said, "We can do A, B, and C; I would recommend B," in keeping with hospitality they seemed to always treat my pick as tacit authority and went along with me. It was a wonderful visit; my friend made a comment about being treated like royalty, but my thought was not about how well I was treating them. My thought was that this would probably be the last time I saw my friend and her immediate family face to face, and I'd better make it count.

I might comment that this is tied to our inability today to understand a husband's authority over his wife and the wife's submission. The role is somewhat like that of host and guest. A liberal source speaking on the Ephesians haustafel as it dealt with husbands and wives said that it did not portray marriage in terms of the husband's authority, while a conservative source understood authority at a deeper level: it said that nowhere here (or anywhere else in the Bible) are husbands urged, "Exercise your authority!", but the text that says, Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, also says, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it. If the wife's role is to submit herself to her

husband as to the Lord, the husband's role is to give up his life as Christ was crucified for the Church.

And all of this seems dead to us as we have grown dead to it. The role of hospitality, including authority, is infinitely less important than marriage, yet we see a husband's authority as external and domineering, when it is less external than the host's authority. And I am drawn to memories of visiting one very traditional couple where both of them exuded freedom and comfort and dealing with them felt like a foot sliding into a well-fitting shoe. But if we see a husband having authority over a wife as a foreign imposition and nothing like the implicit authority we do not even recognize between host and guest (where the host's authority consists in making every decision to show as much kindness as possible to the guest), this is not a defect in marriage but in our deafened ears.

An intravenous drip of noise

"Silence is the language of the age to come," as others have said. Hesychasm is a discipline of stillness, of silence, of Be still and know that I am God. Whether spiritual silence is greater than other virtues, I do not wish to treat here; suffice it to say that all virtues are great health, and all vices are serious spiritual diseases, and all are worth attention.

There are a number of technologies whose marketing proposition is as a noise delivery system. The humble radio offers itself as a source of noise. True, there are other uses, such as listening to a news radio station for weather and traffic, but just having a radio on in the background is noise. Other sources of noise include television, iPods, smartphones, the web, and top sites like FaceBook, Google Plus, and the like. Right use of these tends to be going in and out for a task, even if the task lasts five hours, versus having noise as a drone in the background.

In terms of social appropriateness, there is such a thing as politely handling something that is basically rude. For one example, I was visiting a friend's house and wanted to fix his printer, and apologetically said I was going to call my brother and called him to ask his opinion as a computer troubleshooter. I handled the call as something that was basically rude even though the express purpose was to help with something he had asked about and it was a short call. And it was handled politely because I handled it as something that is basically rude. And other people I know with good manners do sometimes make or receive a cell phone call when you otherwise have their attention, but they do so apologetically, which suggests that just

ignoring the other person and making a phone call is rude. In other words, they politely handle the interruption by treating it as something that is basically rude, even if (as in the case I mentioned) the entire intention of the call was to help me help the friend I was visiting.

Something like this applies to our use of technology. There are things that are entirely appropriate if we handle them as something that is basically "rude." Or, perhaps, "noisy." The equivalent of making a long phone call when you are with someone, without offering any apology or otherwise treating it as basically rude, is laying the reins on the horse's neck and allowing technologies to function as a noise delivery system. And what we need is to unplug our intravenous drip of noise.

Silence can be uncomfortable if you are used to the ersatz companionship of noise. If you have been in a building and step outside into the sunlight at noon, you may be dazzled. Most spiritual disciplines stretch us into something that is uncomfortable at first: the point is to be stretched more each time. The Philokalia talks about how people hold on to sin because they think it adorns them: to this may be added that after you repent and fear a shining part of you may be lost forever, you realize, "I was holding on to a piece of Hell." Silence is like this; we want a noise delivery system as a drone, and once we begin to get used to its absence, there is a deeper joy. It may take time; it takes something like a year for a recovering alcoholic's brain chemistry to reset. But once we have got rid of the drug, once we have repented and sought to bear fruit worthy of repentance, we may find ourselves (to adapt the title of a book) blindsided by joy.

Killing time

"You cannot kill time," the saying goes, "without injuring eternity."

At least one breakdown of mobile users has said that they fall into three groups: "Urgent now," people who have some degree of emergency and need directions, advice, contingency plans, and the like, "Repeat now," people who are monitoring information like whether or how their stocks are doing, and "Bored now," people who are caught and have some time to kill, and look for a diversion.

"Bored now" use of cell phones is simply not constructive spiritually; it offers a virtual escape for the here and now God has given us, and it is the exact opposite of the saying, "Your cell [as a monk] will teach you everything you need to know."

The lead pencil

The lead pencil is a symbol of an alternative to an overly technologized world; one organization of people who have made a conscious decision to avoid the encroachment of technology chose the lead pencil as their emblem and formed the Lead Pencil Club.

But the lead pencil is a work of technology, and one that 99% of humans who ever lived have never seen any more than a cuneiform stylus or any other writing implement. And even such a seemingly humble technology comes about in an impressive fashion; one economist wrote a compelling case that only God knows how pencils are made.

Sitting down and writing letters is a valuable discipline, but the norm that has been lived by 99% of the human race is oral culture; anthropologists have increasingly realized that the opposite of "written" culture is not "illiterate" culture but "oral" culture. And the weapon that slides through the chink in oral culture's armor is the writing implement, such as the lead pencil. It is not the computer, but the lead pencil and its kin, that serve as a disease vector to destroy age-old orality of culture.

This is not to say that you can't try to use computer keyboards less and pens and pencils more. But understand that you're not turning the clock all the way back by writing handwritten letters, however commendable the love in handwritten letters may be. The lead pencil is a technology and to those societies that embrace it, it is the death knell to an old way.

The long tail

The long tail can be your best friend, or an insidious enemy.

Let me briefly outline the long tail. A retail bookstore needs to sell one copy of a book in a year's time, or else it is losing them money: shelf space is an expensive commodity. And all of this leads to a form of implicit censorship, not because bookstores want to stamp out certain books, but because if it's not a quick seller or a safe bet it's a liability.

By contrast, Amazon has large volumes of shelf space; their warehouses might comfortably store a city. And it costs them some money to acquire books, but the price of keeping books available is insignificant compared to a brick-and-mortar bookstore. And what that means, and not just on Amazon, that the economic censorship is lifted. People used to wonder who would be able to fill hundreds or more cable channels; now Youtube would be hard pressed to reduce itself down to a thousand channels. And so a much larger

portion of Amazon's profits comes from having an enormous inventory of items that occasionally make a sale.

There is specialization implicit in the long tail; if you want to know how to make something, chances are pretty good that some blog explains how. And the proper ascetical use of technology, or Luddite if you prefer, uses things differently than the mainstream. Nobody in a phone store is going to tell you that an intravenous drip of noise in terms of text messages that go on even when you are trying to sleep does not make you happier than if you use texting when there is a special need. Some of the best resources you will find for ascetical use of technology are to be found in the long tail.

But there is something else that comes with it. The temptation is to be off in our own customized worlds, with everything around our interests. And that is a form of spiritual poverty. Part of an age-old ascesis has been learning how to deal with the people who are around you, localist style, instead of pursuing your own nooks and crannies. The monoculture of retail stores in America was first a problem, not because it had no long tail effects, but because it supplanted at least an implicit localism. Local cultures gave way to plastic commercial culture.

And we can use the long tail to our profit, if we don't lay the reins on the horse's neck. Shopping on the Internet for things that won't be local stores is one thing; shopping on the Internet so you don't have to get out of your pyjamas is another.

The long tail can be a gold mine, but it is subject to the damned backswing.

Marketing proposition

There was one CIA official who said, being interviewed by a journalist, that he would never knowingly hire someone who was attracted by the romance of cloak and dagger work. Now this was quite obviously someone who did want to hire people who would be a good fit, but someone who wants to join a cloak and dagger agency as a gateway to have life feel like a James Bond movie is off on the wrong foot.

I doubt if any major intelligence agency has promoted James Bond movies because they think it's a good way to draw the right recruits, but James Bond movies function as highly effective advertisements. They may not lead people to be able to stick out the daily grind and level of bureaucracy in a three-letter government agency, but they give a strong sense that spying is

cool, and cool in a way that probably has only the most accidental resemblance to life in one of those bureaucratic organizations.

Cop shows likewise show police officers pulling their guns out much more than in real life; it is a frequent occurrence on the cop shows I've seen, while the last figure I heard was that real, live, flesh and blood police officers draw a gun on the job (apart from training) once every few years if even that.

Advertisement is produced as a service to the companies whose goods and services are being advertised, but the real message they sell is if anything further from the truth than the "accidental advertisement" of James Bond movies advertising a romantic version of bureaucratic intelligence agencies and cop shows making a dramaticization that effectively ignores the day-to-day work of police officers because it just doesn't make good drama. (What would happen to the ratings of a cop show if they accurately portrayed the proportion of time that police officers spend filling out paperwork?)

Advertising sells claims that are further out. Two examples discussed in a class showed a family that moved, and what was juxtaposed as cementing this bonding time was a vacuum cleaner. In another commercial, racial harmony was achieved by eating a hamburger. The commercials that stuck with me from childhood were in one case kids jumping around with rotating camera angles because they were wearing a particular brand of shoes: When I asked my parents for those shoes, they explained to me that the commercial was made to make me want them, and I took a marker and colored the patterns on the bottom of the shoes on the add on to my shoes. Another one showed a game of Laser Tag that was end to end acrobatics. Now I have never played Laser Tag, and I get the impression people like it, but I doubt that its gear confers the ability to do theatrically delivered acrobatics.

Marketing is usually more subtle and seductive than I have portrayed it here. The vacuum cleaner did not offer any words connecting the appliance with family connectedness; it's just that this family was going through a major experience and the vacuum cleaner appeared with perfect timing just at the center of that memory. The marketing message that is portrayed is seductive and false, and it is never the right basis to judge the product on. The product may be the right thing to buy and it may well be worth buying, but only after one has rejected the mystique so masterfully built up in the marketing proposition. If it is right for me to study ninjutsu, it will only be right after I have rejected the ninja mystique, something which the nearest dojo does in fact do: they refer to the martial art they teach as "toshindo", nor "ninjutsu", even though they refer to essentially the same thing in Japanese.

I have said earlier, or rather repeated, the words, "Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need." They bear repeating, but is there anything else to add? I would add three things:

1. Reject sacramental shopping.
2. Reject the mystique advertising has sold you this product on.
3. Wait until your heart becomes clear about what is the best choice, and then make the best choice.

The best choice, in the third world, may be to buy a Mercedes-Benz instead of a Ford because you cannot afford to replace a Ford in six years. But take care of the spiritual housecleaning first.

Martial arts

There have been two times in my life that I have studied martial arts, and both of them have been times of exceptional spiritual dryness. I have not felt any particular dryness when learning how to use a bow and arrow—or a .22—but there is something different about at least internal Asian martial arts. Practicing them, like Orthodoxy, is walking along a way. And it would seem somewhat confused to try to pursue one of these ways along with the Orthodox way.

I am careful of declaring this in the absolute; the literature is ambivalent but there are soldiers who bear the cross of St. George, and many of them have training in Asian martial arts. That looks to me grey, as outlined in the timeless way of relating.

I am tempted to train in ninjutsu: partly for technique, partly because the whole of the training includes stealth, and partly for practical self-defense. But I am treating that desire as a temptation, on the understanding that God can impress things on my conscience if he wants me to enter training.

MMO's (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games, like World of Warcraft)

"Do You Want to Date My Avatar?" was designed and created as a viral video, and something about it really stuck.

There are common threads between many of the things there, and an MMO is a cross between the MUDs I played in high school, and SecondLife.

The MUDs were handled from pure text, leaving imagery in the player's imagination; MMO's provide their own imagery. Another form of escape.

Money and financial instruments

The Fathers commenting on St. Job also illustrate another principle of such wealth as existed then. St. Job is reported as having thousands of herd animals and thousands of beasts of burden, the wealthiest of the men of the East. But there are somewhat pointed remarks that wealthy Job is not reported to possess gold or silver. His wealth was productive wealth, living wealth, not a vault of dead metal coins. In modern terms he did not live off an endowment of stocks and bonds, but owned and ran a productive business.

Endowments are a means of being independently wealthy, and this ultimately means "independent from God." Now the wealthiest are really as dependent on God as the poorest; let us remember the parable of the rich fool, in which a man congratulates himself for amassing everything he would need and that night the angels demanded his soul from him. The ending is much sadder than St. Job's story.

Those of us in the world usually possess some amount of money, but there is something that makes me uncomfortable about the stock market overall, even moreso for the more abstract financial instruments. What one attempts to do is gain the most money from one's existing money as much as possible, given the amount of risk you want and possibly including such outliers as ethical index funds which only index stocks deemed to meet an ethical standard. The question I have is, "What are we producing for what we get out of the stock market?" Working in a job delivers tangible value, or at least can. Investing in the stock market may be connected with helping businesses to function, but more and more abstract forms of wealth have the foul smell that heralds the coming of the damned backswing.

I would suggest as a right use of wealth acquiring tools that help you work, and being generous even or especially if money is tight. And explicitly depending on God.

Movies

When movies had arrived on the scene and were starting to have a societal effect, at least one Luddite portrayed a character moving from one movie to another in escapism. The premise may seem quaint now, but a little bit of that keeps on happening with new technologies.

One fellow parishioner talked about how in Japan, anime shows aired with a certain animation technique, and all of the sudden emergency rooms were asking why they were being inundated with people having epileptic seizures. And when they saw the connection, Japan stopped cold in its use of that animation technique. He said that that underscored to him the power of television and movies.

I don't quite agree with him, any more than I would agree with using findings that extremely high levels of artificial light—fluorescent or incandescent—cause problems, and we should therefore be very wary of lighting. For most sedentary people, even with artificial light (fluorescent or incandescent), the level of exposure to light is materially lower than natural exposure to the sun, and people who spend their time indoors tend to see less light (significantly less light) than people living outdoors. I didn't accept his conclusion, but he followed with another insight that I can less easily contest.

He asked if I saw movies infrequently (we had not discussed the topic, but he knew me well enough to guess where I might stand), and I told him that I usually don't watch movies. He asked me if I had ever observed that an hour after seeing a movie, I felt depressed. I had not made any connection of that sort, even if now it seems predictable from the pleasure-pain syndrome. And now I very rarely see movies, precisely because the special effects and other such tweaks are stronger than I am accustomed to seeing; they go like a stiff drink to the head of the teetotaler. And on this score I would rather not be the person who has a stiff drink every so often, and whose body tolerates alcohol better, but the person whose system hasn't had to make such an adjustment, an adjustment that includes losses. The little pleasures of life are lost on someone used to a rising standard of special effects, and the little pleasures of life are more wholesome than special effects.

Multitasking

As I discussed in *Religion And Science Is Not Just Intelligent Design Vs. Evolution*, one of the forms of name-dropping in academic theology is to misuse "a term from science": the claim to represent "a term from science" is endemic in academic theology, but I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times I've read "a term from science" that was used correctly.

One book said it was going to introduce "a term from computer science," *toggling*, which meant switching rapidly between several

applications. The moral of this story was that we should switch rapidly between multiple activities in our daily lives.

What I would have said earlier is, "While that moral might be true, what it is not is a lesson from computer science." What I would say now is, "Never mind if that is a lesson from computer science. The moral is fundamentally flawed."

In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:22, Christ says, "If your eye be," and then a word that doesn't come across in translation very well. It is rendered "healthy" (NIV), "clear" (NASB), "sound" (RSV), and "good" (NKJV, NLT), Only the King James Version properly renders the primary sense of *haplous* as "single." This may be a less user-friendly translation but it captures something the other translations miss. The context of the discussion of the eye as the lamp of the body is about choosing whether to have a single focus in serving God, or try to multitask between serving God and money. *Haplous* does have "healthy", "clear", "sound", and "good" as secondary meanings, but the primary meaning is the less accessible one that I have only found in the Greek and in the King James. If the eye is the lamp of the body, and it is important that the eye be single, then by extension the whole person is to be single, and as one aspect of this single eye, give a whole and single attention to one thing at a time. Now this is not necessarily a central, foreground focus in the Sermon on the Mount, but as its logic unfurls, even as spiritual silence unfurls, a single eye gives its whole and undivided attention to one thing at a time. (And study after study has shown that increased productivity through multitasking is an illusion; divided attention is divided attention and hurts all manner of actions.)

Nutriceuticals

The term "nutriceuticals is itself an ambiguous and ambivalent term.

On the one hand, 'nutriceuticals' can refer to the diet advanced by the *Nourishing Traditions* school, and while nutrition should not be considered on its own without reference to the big picture of exercise, work, light, almsgiving, fasting, prayer, and the Holy Mysteries, there is something to the recipes and type of diet advocated in *Nourishing Traditions*.

There are also the different, and differently excellent, nutriceuticals of a company that combines absolutely top-notch supplements with a pushy, multi-lev—I mean, a unique opportunity to become CEO of your own company. (I am formally a distributor; please contact me if you want to be a customer or possibly distributor without being pushed to drink Kool-Aid.)

However, it seems that everybody selling certain things wants to be selling "nutriceuticals", and there are people selling "synthetic testosterone" as a "nutriceutical." Friends, I really hope that the offer of "synthetic testosterone" is false advertising, because if it is false advertising they are probably delivering a better product than if it's truth in advertising. Testosterone is a steroid, the chief of the anabolic steroids used to get muscles so big they gross girls out. Now testosterone does have legitimate medical uses, but using steroids to build disgustingly huge muscles can use up to a hundred times what legitimate medical use prescribes, and it does really nasty things to body, mind, and soul.

I get the impression that most things sold as nutriceuticals are shady; to authorities, illegal nutriceuticals are probably like a water balloon, where you step on it one place and it just slides over a bit to the side. It used to be that there were perhaps a dozen major street drugs on the scene; now there is a vast bazaar where some "nutriceuticals" are squeaky-clean, and some "nutriceuticals" are similar in effect to illegal narcotics but not technically illegal, and some of them are selling testosterone without medical supervision or worse.

So buyer beware. There's some good stuff out there (I haven't talked about goji berries), but if you want a healthy diet to go with healthy living, read and cook from *Nourishing Traditions*, and if you want another kind of good nutriceutical supplement without being pushed to drink Kool-Aid, contact me and you might be my first customer. (No, I don't have dreams of striking it rich through, um, "my business." I am satisfied enough with my job.)

Old Technologies

There is a Foxtrot cartoon where the mother is standing outside with Jason and saying something like, "This is how you throw a frisbee."—"This is how you play catch."—"This is how you play tennis." And Jason answers, "Enough with the historical re-enactments. I want to play some games!" (And there is another time when he and Marcus had been thrown out of the house and were looking at a frisbee and saying, "This is a scratch on the Linux RAID drive.")

Old technologies are usually things that caused changes and moved people away from what might be called more natural forms of life. However, they represent a lower drug dose than newer technologies. The humble lead pencil may be historically be the kind of technology that converted cultures away from being oral; however, a handwritten letter to an old friend is

profoundly different from a stream of texts. And in my technological soliloquy above, two out of the three technologies I mentioned represent an old tradition. Being familiar with some of the best of older technologies may be helpful, and in general they do not have the layers on layers of fragile character that have been baked into new technologies. A Swiss Army Knife is still a portable toolchest if something messes up with the Internet. Bicycles are not a replacement for cars—you can't go as fast or as far, or stock up on groceries—but many people prefer bicycles when they are a live option, and a good bicycle has far fewer points of failure than a new car.

I noted when I was growing up that a power failure meant, "Office work stops." Now more recently an internet or network failure means, "Office work stops," and there is someone who said, "Systems integration is when your computer doesn't work because of a problem on a computer you never knew existed." Older technologies are in general not so fragile, and have more of a buffer zone before you get in to the damned backswing.

Online forums

Online forums are something of a mixed blessing. They can allow discussion of obscure topics, and have many of the benefits of the the long tail. I happily referred someone who was learning Linux to unix.stackexchange.com. But the blessing is mixed, and when I talked with my priest about rough stuff on an Orthodox forum, he said, "People love to talk about Orthodoxy. The real challenge is to do it."

Online forums may be more wisely used to consult for information and knowhow, but maybe not the best place to find friends, or perhaps a good place to find friends, but not a good place to use for friendship.

Planned obsolescence, fashion, and being built NOT to last

When I made one visit to the Dominican Republic, one thing that surprised me was that a substantial number of the vehicles I saw were Mercedes-Benz or other luxury brands by U.S. standards, while there were no or almost no U.S. cars. The reason I was given to this by my youth pastor is that you can keep a German engineered car up and running for 30 years if you take care of it; with a U.S. car you are doing well to have a car still running after 10 years. German cars, among others, are engineered and built to last; U.S. cars are engineered and built NOT to last. And in the Dominican Republic economy, buying a car that may well run for 30 years is something people can afford;

buying a car that may only last 5-7 years is a luxury people cannot afford. An old but well-cared-for Mercedes Benz, Saab, Volvo, or BMW will probably last longer than a new car which is "imported from Detroit."

One of the features of an industrial economy is that the economy needs to have machines in production and people buying things. If we ask the question, "Was economic wealth made for man, or man for economic wealth," the decisive answer of industrial economy is, "Man was made for economic wealth." There are artificial measures taken to manipulate culture so as to maximize production and consumption of economic wealth, three of which are planned obsolescence, fashion, and being built NOT to last.

Planned obsolescence socially enforces repeat purchases by making goods that will have a better version available soon; in computers relatively little exploration is done to make a computer that will last a long time, because computers usually only need to last until they're obsolete, and that level of quality is "good enough for government work." I have an iPhone 4 and am glad not to be using my needlessly snail-like AT&T-serviced iPhone 1, but I am bombarded by advertisements telling me that I need an iPhone 4S, implying that my iPhone 4 just doesn't cut it any more. As a matter of fact, my iPhone 4 works quite nicely, and I ignored a link advertising a free port of the iPhone 4's distinctive feature Sila. I'm sure that if I forked out and bought an iPhone 4S, it would not be long before I saw advertisements breeding discontent about my spiffy iPhone 4S, and giving me a next hot feature to covet.

In the Middle Ages, fashion changed in clothing about once per generation. In our culture, we have shifting fashions that create a manufactured social need to purchase new clothing frequently, more like once per year. People do not buy clothing nearly so often because it is worn out and too threadbare to keep using, but because fashion shifted and such-and-such is in. Now people may be spending less on fashion-driven purchases than before, but it is still not a mainstream practice to throw a garment out because further attempts to mend it will not really help.

And lastly, there is the factor of things being made to break down. There are exceptions; it is possible for things to be built to last. I kept one Swiss Army Knife for twenty years, with few repairs beyond WD-40 and the like—and at the end of those twenty years, I gave it as a fully functional hand-me-down to someone who appreciated it. There is a wide stripe of products where engineers tried to engineer something to last and last, and not just German engineers. However, this is an exception and not the rule in the U.S. economy. I was incredulous when a teacher told me that the engineering positions some

of us would occupy would have an assignment to make something that would last for a while and then break down. But it's true. Clothing, for instance, can be built to last. However, if you buy expensive new clothing, it will probably wear out. Goodwill and other second-hand stores sometimes have things that are old enough to be built to last, but I haven't found things to be that much sturdier: your mileage may vary. And culturally speaking, at least before present economic difficulties, when an appliance breaks you do not *really* take it in for repairs. You replace it with a newer model.

All of these things keep purchases coming so the gears of factories will continue. Dorothy Sayers' "The Other Six Deadly Sins" talks about how a craftsman will want to make as good an article as possible, while mechanized industry will want to make whatever will keep the machines' gears turning. And that means goods that are made to break down, even when it is technologically entirely feasible for factories to turn out things that are built to last.

All of these answer the question, "Was economic wealth made for man, or man for economic wealth?" with a resounding, "Man was made for economic wealth."

Porn and things connected to porn

There is a story about a philosopher who was standing in a river when someone came to him. The philosopher asked the visitor, "What do you want?" The visitor answered, "Truth!" Then the philosopher held the visitor under the water for a little while, and asked him the second time, "What do you want?" The visitor answered, "Truth!" Then the philosopher held the visitor under water for what seemed an interminable time, and let him up and asked, "What do you want?" The visitor gasped and said, "Air!" The philosopher said, "When you want Truth the way you want air, you will find it."

The same thing goes for freedom from the ever-darker chain called pornography, along with masturbation and the use of "ED" drugs to heighten thrills (which can cause nasty street drug-like effects even in marriage). To quote the Sermon on the Mount (RSV):

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

The Church Fathers are clear enough that this must not be taken literally; canon law forbids self-castration. But if you want to be free from addiction to pornography, if you want such freedom the way you want air, then you will do whatever it takes to remove the addiction.

What are your options? I'm not going to imitate the Dilbert strip's mentioning, "How to lose weight by eating less food," but there are some real and concrete steps you can take. If you shut off your internet service, and only check email and conduct internet business in public places with libraries, that might be the price for purity. If you are married, you might use one of many internet filters, set up with a password that is only known to your wife. You could join a men's sexual addiction support group: that may be the price of freedom from porn, and it is entirely worth it. The general rule of thumb in confession is not to go into too much detail in confessing sexual sins, but going to confession (perhaps frequently, if your priest or spiritual father allows it) can have a powerful "I don't want to confess this sin" effect. Another way to use the Internet is only go to use it when you have a defined purpose, and avoid free association browsing which often goes downhill. You could ask prayers of the saints, especially St. Mary of Egypt and St. John the Long-Suffering of the Kiev Near Caves. You could read and pray "The Canon of Repentance to Our Lord Jesus Christ" in the Jordanville prayer book and St. Nectarios Press's Prayers for Purity, if your priest so blesses.

Lust is the disenchantment of the entire universe: first it drains wonder and beauty out of everything else, and then it drains wonder and beauty out of itself: the only goal of lust is more lust. It works like a street drug. St. Basil the Great compared lust to a dog licking a saw: the dog keeps licking it because it likes the taste it produces, but it does not know that it is tasting its own woundedness, and the longer it keeps up at this, the deeper the wounds become.

Furthermore, an account of fighting sexual sin is incomplete if we do not discuss gluttony. What is above the belt is very close to what is below the belt, and the Fathers saw a tight connection between gluttony and lust. Gluttony is the gateway drug to lust. "Sear your loins with fasting," the

Fathers in the Philokalia tells us; the demon of lust goes out with prayer and fasting.

Sacramental shopping

I remember when I had one great struggle before surrendering, letting go of buying a computer for my studies, and then an instant later feeling compelled to buy it. The only difference was that one was sacramental shopping to get something I really needed, and the other was just getting what I needed with the "sacramental shopping" taken out.

In American culture and perhaps others, the whole advertising industry and the shape of the economy gives a great place to "sacramental shopping", or shopping as an ersatz sacrament that one purchases not because it is useful or any other legitimate concern, but because it delivers a sense of well-being. Like Starbucks, for instance. *Some have argued that today's brand economy is doing the job of spiritual disciplines: hence a teacher asks students, "Imagine your future successful self. With what brands do you imagine yourself associating?" and getting no puzzled looks or other body language indicating that students found the question strange.* I've mentioned brands I consume both prestigious and otherwise; perhaps this piece would be better if I omitted mention of brands. But even if one rejects the ersatz spirituality of brands, not all brands are created equal; my previous laptop was an IBM Thinkpad I used for years before it stopped working, and the one before that was an Acer that demonstrated "You get what you pay for." Investing in something good—paid for in cash, without incurring further debt—can be appropriate. Buying for the mystique is spiritual junk food. (And in telling about my iPhone, I didn't mention that I tried migrating to a Droid, before realizing its user interface didn't stack up to the iPhone's.)

"Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need," is a rejection of brand economy as a spiritual discipline. Buy things on their merits and not because of the prestige of the brand. And learn to ignore the mystique that fuels a culture of discontent. Buy new clothes because your older clothing is wearing out, not because it is out of fashion. (It makes sense to buy classic rather than trendy.)

SecondLife

Most of the other technologies mentioned here are technologies I have dealt with myself, most often at some length. SecondLife by contrast is the one and

only of the technologies on this list I haven't even installed due to overwhelming bad intuitions when I tried to convince myself it was something I should be doing.

It may be, some time later, that SecondLife is no longer called SecondWife, and it is a routine communication technology, used as an audio/visual successor to (purely audio) phone conversations. The web was once escape, one better than the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, and now it can be explored but it is quite often used for common nuts and bolts. No technology is permanently exotic: perhaps sometime the world of SecondLife will seem ordinary. But for now at least, it is an escape into building an alternative reality, and almost might as well be occult, as the foundations of modern science, for the degree of creating a new alternate reality it involves.

Smartphones, tablets, netbooks, laptops, and desktop computers

Jakob Nielsen made a distinction between computers that are *movable*, meaning laptops and netbooks which can be moved with far less difficulty and hassle than a desktop system, and *mobile*, meaning that they are the sort of thing a person can easily carry. Netbooks cross an important line compared to full-sized laptops; a regular laptop weighs enough on the shoulder that you are most likely to take a laptop in its carrying case for a reason, not just carry it like one more thing in a pocket. Netbooks, which weigh in at something like two pounds, are much lighter on the shoulder and they lend themselves more readily to keeping in a backpack, large purse, or bag of holding, without stopping to consider, "Do I really want to carry this extra weight?" Not that this is unique to netbooks; tablets are also light enough to just carry with you. Smartphones cross another important line: they are small enough to keep tucked in your pocket (or on your belt).

I was first astonished when I read that one iPhone user had completely displaced her use of the desktop computer. It surprised me for at least three reasons. First, the iPhone's screen is tiny compared to even a small desktop screen; one thing programmers tend to learn is the more screen space they have, the better, and if they have any say in the matter, or if they have savvy management, programmers have two screens or one huge screen. Second, especially when I had an iPhone 1 that came with painfully slow and artificially limited bandwidth, the niche for it that I saw was as an emergency surrogate for a real computer that you use when, say, you're driving to meet someone and something goes wrong. A bandwidth-throttled iPhone 1 may be painfully slow, but it is much better than nothing. And lastly, for someone

used to high-speed touch typing on a regular keyboard, the iPhone, as the original Droid commercials stomped on the sore spot, "iDon't have a real keyboard." You don't get better over time at touch typing an iPhone keyboard because the keyboard is one you have to look at; you cannot by touch move over two keys to the left to type your next letter. What I did not appreciate then was that you give the iPhone keyboard more focus and attention than touch typing a regular keyboard calls for; the "virtual keyboard" is amazing and it works well when you are looking at it and typing with both thumbs. And once that conceptual jolt is past, it works well.

But what I didn't appreciate when that woman said she had stopped using her computer was that the desktop computer is wherever you have to go to use the desktop computer, while the iPhone is in one's pocket or purse. And there is an incumbency advantage to the iPhone that is in one's pocket or purse. It's not just that you can only use your home computer when you are at home; if you are in one room and the computer is in another, it is less effort to jot a brief email from the phone than go to the other room and use the computer.

Laziness is a factor here; I have used my iPhone over my computer due to laziness. But more broadly a desktop or even laptop computer is in something of a sanctuary, with fewer distractions; the smartphone is wherever you are, and that may be a place with very few distractions, and it may be a place with many distractions.

Smartphones, tablets, netbooks, laptops, and desktops are all computers. The difference between them is how anchored or how portable they work out to be in practice. And the more mobile a computer is, the more effectively it will be as a noise delivery system. The ascetical challenge they represent, and the need to see that we and not the technologies hold the reins, is sharper for the newer and more mobile models.

Social networks

I personally tend not to get sucked in to Facebook; I will go to a social networking site for a very particular reason, and tend not to linger even if I want something to do. There is a reason for this; I had an inoculation. While in high school I served as a student system administrator, on a system whose primary function in actual use was a social network, with messages, chatting, forums, and so on and so forth. I drank my fill of that, so to speak, and while it was nowhere near so user-friendly as Facebook, it was a drug from the same family.

Having been through that, I would say that this is not what friendship is meant to be. It may be that friends who become physically separated will maintain correspondence, and in that case a thoughtful email is not much different from a handwritten letter. As I wrote in "Technonomicon: Technology, Nature, Asceticism:"

- "Social networking" is indeed about people, but there is something about social networking's promise that is like an ambitious program to provide a tofu "virtual chicken" in every pot: there is something unambiguously social about social media, but there is also something as different from what "social" has meant for well over 99% of people as a chunk of tofu is from real chicken's meat.
- There is a timeless way of relating to other people, and this timeless way is a large part of . This is a way of relating to people in which one learns to relate primarily to people one did not choose, in friendship had more permanency than many today now give marriage, in which one was dependent on others (that is, interdependent with others), in which people did not by choice say goodbye to everyone they knew at once, as one does by moving in America, and a social interaction was largely through giving one's immediate presence.
- "Social networking" is a very different beast. You choose whom to relate to, and you can set the terms; it is both easy and common to block users, nor is this considered a drastic measure. Anonymity is possible and largely encouraged; relationships can be transactional, which is one step beyond disposable, and many people never meet others they communicate with face-to-face, and for that matter arranging such a meeting is special because of its exceptional character.
- Social networking can have a place. Tofu can have a place. However, we would do well to take a cue to attend to cultures that have found a proper traditional place for tofu. Asian cuisines may be unashamed about using tofu, but they consume it in moderation—and *never* use it to replace meat.

- We need traditional social "meat." The members of the youngest generation who have the most tofu in their diet may need meat the most.

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"Teleporters"

I use the term "teleporters" because I do not know of a standard name, besides perhaps the name of one of the eight capital vices, for a class of technologies and other things that are in ways very different from each other but all have the same marketing proposition: *escape*. Not that one needs technologies to do this; metaphysics in the occult sense is another means to the same end. But all of them deliver escape.

A collection of swords is not usually amassed for defense: the owner may be delighted at the chance to learn how to handle a medieval sword, but even if the swords are "battle ready" the point is not self-defense. It's a little bit of something that transports us to another place. Same thing for movies and video games. Same thing for historical re-enactments. Same thing, for that matter, for romances that teach women to covet a relationship with a man that could never happen, and spurn men and possibilities where a genuinely happy marriage can happen. And, for that matter, ten thousand things.

There are many things whose marketing proposition is escape, and they all peter out and leave us coveting more. They are spiritual poison if they are used for escape. There may be other uses and legitimate reasons—iPhones are, besides being "avoid spiritual work" systems, incredibly useful—but the right use of these things is not found in the marketing proposition they offer you.

Television

Television has partly been ousted with Facebook; TV is stickier than ever, but it still can't compete with the web's stickiest sites.

However, a couple of *Far Side* cartoons on television are worth pondering; if they were written today, they might mention more than TV.

In one cartoon, the caption reads, "In the days before television," and a whole family is staring blankly at a blank spot on a wall, curled around it as if it were a television. The irony, of course, is that this is not what things were like before television began sucking the life out of everything. The days before television were that much more dynamic and vibrant; Gary Larson's

caption, with a cartoon that simply subtracts television from the eighties, is dripping with ironic clarity about precisely what the days before television were not.

In the other cartoon, an aboriginal tribesman stands at the edge of a chasm, a vine bridge having just been cut and fallen into the chasm and making the chasm impassible. On the other side were a group of angry middle-class suburbanites, and the tribesman was holding a television. The caption read, "And so Mbogo stood, the angry suburbanites standing on the other side of the chasm. Their idol was now his, as well as its curse."

Some years back, an advertising executive wrote, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (one friend reacted, "The author could only think of four?"), and though the book is decades old it speaks today. All of the other technologies that have been stealing television's audiences do what television did, only more effectively and with more power.

I said at one point that the television is the most expensive appliance you can own. The reasoning was simple. For a toaster or a vacuum cleaner, if it doesn't break, it costs you the up front purchase price, along with electricity, gas, or any other utilities it uses. And beyond those two, there is no further cost as long as it works. But with television, there was the most powerful propaganda engine yet running, advertising that will leave you keeping up with the Joneses (or, as some have argued after comparing 1950's kitchen appliances with 1990's kitchen appliances, keeping up with the Trumps). In this ongoing stream, the programming is the packaging and the advertising is the real content. And the packaging is designed not to steal the show from the content. Today television rules less vast of a realm, but megasites deliver the same principle: the reason you go to the website is a bit of wrapping, and the product being sold is you.

Our economy is in a rough state, but welcome to keeping up with the Trumps version 2.0. The subscription fees for smartphones and tablets are just the beginning.

The timeless way of relating

Christopher Alexander saw that computers were going to be the next building, and he was the champion who introduced computer-aided design to the field of architecture. Then he came to a second realization, that computer-aided design may make some things easier and faster, but it does not automatically make a building better: computer aided design makes it easier to architect

good and bad buildings alike, and if you ask computers to make better buildings, you're barking up the wrong fire hydrant.

But this time his work, *A Timeless Way of Building*, fell on deaf ears in the architectural community... only to be picked up by software developers and be considered an important part of object-oriented software design. The overused term MVC ("model-view-controller"), which appears in job descriptions when people need a candidate who solves problems well whether or not that meant using MVC, is part of the outflow of object-oriented programming seeing something deep in patterns, and some programmers have taken a profound lesson from *A Timeless Way of Building* even if good programmers in an interview have to conceal an allergic reaction when MVC is presented as a core competency for almost *any* kind of project.

There really is *A Timeless Way of Building*, and Alexander finds it in some of ancient and recent architecture alike. And in the same vein there is a timeless way of relating. In part we may see it as one more piece of it is dismantled by one more technology migration. But there is a real and live timeless relating, and not just through rejecting technologies.

C.S. Lewis, in a passage in *That Hideous Strength* which has great romantic appeal if nothing else, talks about how everything is coming to a clearer and sharper point. Abraham was not wrong for his polygamy as we would be for polygamy, but there is some sense that he didn't profit from it. Merlin was not something from the sixth century, but the last survival in the sixth century of something much older when the dividing line between matter and spirit was not so sharp as it is today. Things that have been gray, perhaps not beneficial even if they are not forbidden, are more starkly turning to black or white.

This is one of the least convincing passages for Lewis's effort to speak of "mere Christianity." I am inclined to think that something of the exact opposite is true, that things that have been black and white in ages past have more leniency, more grey. Not necessarily that leniency equals confusion; Orthodoxy has two seemingly antithetical but both necessary principles of *akgravia* (striving for strict excellence) and *oikonomia* (the principle of mercifully relaxing the letter of the law). We seem to live in a time of *oikonomia* from the custom which has the weight of canon law, where (for instance) the ancient upper class did far less physical exertion than the ancient lower class and slaves, but middle class fitness nuts today exercise less than the ancient upper class. Three hours of aerobic exercise is a lot. While we pride ourselves on abolishing legal slavery, we wear not only clothing from sweatshops made at the expense of preventable human misery, but large

wardrobes and appliances and other consumer goods that bear a price tag in human misery. Many Orthodox have rejected the position of the Fathers on contraception from time immemorial, and the Church has been secularized enough for many to get their bearings from one article.

But two things are worth mentioning here. The first is that this is a time that invites prophets. Read the Old Testament prophets: prophets, named "the called ones" in the Old Testament never come when things are going well to say "Keep it up. Carry on your good work!" They come in darker days.

Second, while we live in a time where mere gloom is called light and we rely on much more *oikonomia* than others, *oikonomia* is real Orthodoxy in proper working order, and in ways Orthodoxy with *oikonomia* is much greater than rigidly rejecting *oikonomia*. The people who call themselves "True Orthodox", or now that "True Orthodox" sounds fishy, rename the term "Genuine Orthodox" to avoid the troubles they have created for the name of "True Orthodox." And despite observing the letter of canons more scrupulously than even the most straight-laced of normal Orthodox, these people are people who don't *get* Orthodoxy, and would do well to receive the penance of eating a thick steak on a strict fast day.

And despite having so many slices taken out, the timeless way of relating is alive and well. It is present at a meal around table with friends. It is present when a man and wife remain together "til death do us part." It is present when Catholics adore the Eucharist, or Evangelicals don't miss a Sunday's church for years and keep up with their quiet times and Bible studies. "Conversation is like texting for adults," said our deacon, and the timeless way of relating is there when people use texting to arrange a face-to-face visit. The timeless way of relating is always close at hand.

Video games

I was introduced to the computer game *rogue* and while in school wanted to play *rogue* / *UltraRogue* for as long as I could. When I decided in grad school that I wanted to learn to program, I wrote a crufty and difficult-to-understand roguelike game implemented in 60,000 lines of C.

Those many hours I played in that fantasy land were my version of time lost in television. There are things I could have done that I didn't: create something, explore time outside, write letters. And as primitive and humble as *rogue* is, it stems from the same root as *World of Warcraft*. It is one of several technologies I have tasted in an egg: *rogue*, *UltraRogue*, *The Minstrel's Song*, and different MUDs; or a command-line computer doing the

work of a social network. And on that score, see Children's toys on Baudelaire's "la Morale du Joujou". The newer games and social network may connect more dots and do some of your imagining for you. The core remains: you sit in front of a computer, transported to a fantasy land, and not exploring the here and now that you have been placed in in all its richness.

The Web

When I was a boy and when I was a youth, it was a sheer delight to go to Honey Rock Camp. I don't want to elaborate on all of my fond memories but I would like to point to one memory in particular: the web.

Resourceful people had taken a World War II surplus piece of netting, attached it to the edges of a simple building, and pulled the center up by a rope. The result was everything a child wants from a waterbed, and I remember, for instance, kids gathering on the far side of the web, my climbing up the rope, and then letting go and dropping five or ten feet into the web, sending little children flying. And as with my other macho ways of connecting with children, if I did this once I was almost certainly asked to do it again. (The same goes, for some extent, with throwing children into the web.)

I speak of that web in the past tense, because after decades of being a cherished attraction, the web was falling apart and it was no longer a safe attraction. And the people in charge made every effort to replace it, and found to everyone's dismay that they couldn't. Nobody makes those nets; and apparently nobody has one of those nets available, or at least not for sale. And in that regard the web is a characteristic example of how technologies are handled in the U.S. ("Out with the old, in with the new!") Old things are discarded, so the easily available technologies are just the newer one.

Software is fragile; most technological advances in both software and hardware are more fragile than what they replace. Someone said, "If builders built buildings the way programmers write programs, the first woodpecker that came along would destroy civilization." The web is a tremendous resource, but it will not last forever, and there are many pieces of technology stack that could limit or shut off the web. Don't assume that because the web is available today it will equally well be available indefinitely.

Conclusion

This work has involved, perhaps, too much opinion and too much of the word "I"; true Orthodox theology rarely speaks of me, "myself, and I," and in the rare case when it

is really expedient to speak of oneself, the author usually refers to himself in the third person.

The reason I have referred to myself is that I am trying to make a map that many of us are trying to make sense of. In one sense there is a very simple answer given in monasticism, where renunciation of property includes technology even if obediences may include working with it, and the words "Do not store up treasures on earth" offer another simple answer, and those of us who live in the world are bound not to be attached to possessions even if they own them. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* offers a paragraph addressed to married people and a book addressed to monastics, but it has been read with great profit by all manner of people, married as well as monastic.

Somewhere amidst these great landmarks I have tried to situate my writing. I do not say that it is one of these landmarks; it may be that the greatest gift is a work that will spur a much greater Orthodox to do a much better job.

My godfather offered me many valuable corrections when I entered the Orthodox Church, but there is one and only one I would take issue with. He spoke of the oddity of writing something like "the theology of the hammer"; and my own interest in different sources stemmed from reading technological determinist authors like *Neil Postman*, and even if a stopped clock is right twice a day, their Marxism is a toxic brew.

However, I write less from the seductive effects of those books, my writing is not because they have written XYZ but because I have experienced certain things in mystical experience. I have a combined experience of decades helping run a Unix box that served as a social network, and playing MUDs, and sampling their newer counterparts. My experience in Orthodoxy has found great mystical truth and depth in the words, Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Part of that pruning has been the involuntary removal of my skills as a mathematics student;; much of it has been in relation to technology. The Bible has enough to say about wealth and property as it existed millenia ago; it would be strange to say that Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth speaks to livestock and owning precious metals but has nothing to do with iPads.

One saint said that the end will come when one person no longer makes a path to visit another. Even with social media, we now have the technology to do that.

Let our technology be used ascetically, or not at all.

Mindfulness and Manners

Mr. Jenkins One looked at his watch.
Madeleine l'Engle, *A Wind in the Door*

18. Consider screen time, and multitasking, to be a drain on the mindfulness we are seeking from the East because we have rejected it in the West.

55 New Maxims for the Cyber-Quarantine

Declaring war on the pencil

I haven't been able to trace my sources at all, but I vaguely remember a book like *Good to Great* talking about a company like Intuit making a decision for a product like Quicken, a decision, not just to have a collection of really nice tools, but to *declare war on the pencil*.

The core insight behind ?Intuit? declaring war on the pencil when it made ? Quicken? was that accounting and finance types using accounting software would also use pencil and paper, and possibly a calculator. The company's decision was to do user research, find out when and why finance users resorted to using pencil and paper, and then implement improvements to eliminate the need to resort to pencil and paper.

(?Intuit? has also been credited with a similar feat in making a lighter and cheaper version that was not just a more feature-limited version of mainstream accounting software, but would make sense to non-accountants who did not know all the technical

terms as one would expect of finance and accounting professionals using the version of Quicken? made for accounting and finance professionals. Hence the change in terms to a dirt-simple "money in" and "money out." This is an additional feat of user research and knowing your audience.)

I am interested in what might be called a "neo-old-fashioned mindfulness," and an older part of this project relates to looking at your watch more than is necessary, an ancestor to "phubbing," or snubbing someone socially by looking at your phone. I do not seek a new project, but articulate how we can continue an age-old Western pursuit of mindfulness with a few nuances updated to be mindful when using technologies not around when this aspect of manners came to be.

In a martial arts class, the teacher commented, "Set your foot down because you want to, not because you need to." This was in reference to a swinging kick that started with picking up your leg from behind you and ended with setting it down in front. And in fact there is a difference between moving so that you have to set your foot down or else lose your balance, and moving so that you set your foot down because you choose to do so.

The difference is illuminating.

Face-threatening behavior and basically rude behavior

When I was taking Wheaton College's "linguistics and anthropology boot camp for missionaries," one theme that was underlined was the concept of "face-threatening behavior." The core concept in face-threatening behavior is behavior that could cause the other party to lose face, and it is normally polite to try to soften or remove the danger of causing the other party to lose face. The next time the lecturer was asked a question by someone in the audience, he pointed out the asker's politeness behavior: before asking the question directly, he offered some kind words to the person he was addressing. The social subtext? "I am asking you a question, but not because you're a bad lecturer, and I don't want to make you lose face." In other words, politeness leads people to usually try and avoid getting egg on someone else's face.

I remember visiting with a friend of about my age, some years back, where my friend had asked me to look at a printer. I looked at it briefly, but didn't immediately see how to fix it. I then apologetically asked if I could call my brother, who worked at a well-treated internal help desk. The social message? "I'm doing something that is basically rude, but I don't want to be rude to you." And this was when I was acting entirely out of concern for my friend. I had made a first approach to a difficulty he asked me to look at, and when that didn't resolve the issue, I made a sensible second approach. However, my behavior was an example of how to maintain politeness while doing something that is basically rude: calling and talking with someone else on my phone when I was visiting him.

On another level, I remember a post-graduation visit to a well-liked professor who, as we were talking, glanced at his clock and then apologized, saying that he looked at the clock because he was surprised it was dark so soon. This was a graceful recovery from a minor social blunder: needlessly looking at his clock, which is an example of basically rude behavior. When Madeleine l'Engle briefly states that Mr. Jenkins One "looked at his watch," this is a social shorthand to say that Mr. Jenkins One was tired with the present social situation, was wishing it would be over and he could be doing *something* else, perhaps *anything* else, and that he wondered how long it would continue to drag on and on. And the professor I was visiting, who has a profound ability to enjoy and be present to practically *anyone*, made a social recovery after a behavior that carries a message of "I wish this conversation were over."

Mindfulness and manners

Mindfulness as we use the term today derives from Buddhism, where Right Mindfulness is part of what in Buddhism is called "the Eightfold Noble Path," and what in classic Western philosophy would be called cardinal or hinge virtues. (A "cardinal" or "hinge" virtue is not just a virtue, but a virtue that others hinge on, cardinal being Latin for "hinge," with a cardinal virtue being a sort of gateway drug to further virtue. The "four-horsed chariot" of the cardinal virtues of classical antiquity lists *courage*, classically called "fortitude" or today "grit," *justice*, *wisdom*, and *moderation*, to which Christian Tradition has added *faith*, *hope*, and *love*, and perhaps implicitly, *humility*.) Now Buddhism's Eightfold Noble Path may be a different list of cardinal virtues than those in Western philosophy, and the two may or may not be two equivalent ways of cutting up the same pie. This question need not concern us here.

Different traditions have different lists of virtues, and it does not take any particularly great stretch of the imagination for a Westerner interested in virtue to recognize, for instance, India's *ahimsa*, or not causing at least *needless* harm, as a virtue, and perhaps recognize it as a profound virtue and a cardinal virtue. It has also in my experience not been particularly difficult to get Western Christians to see mindfulness as a virtue, at least in some other tradition's way of cutting up the pie.

However, this is not because they do not see mindfulness as an obligation. It is because they see the obligation as falling under the heading of manners rather than moral virtue.

A friend I mentioned earlier talked about how decades back, when Walkmans were eating tapes, about how his mother or grandmother had commented that people running with Walkmans on were not paying due attention to their surroundings. I'm not entirely clear how much our society's concept of manners extends beyond treatment of other people (perhaps manners covers being gentle with your friend's pets, or at very least leaving them alone if they're not bothering you), but there is some sense in her

remark that you owe attentiveness to your surroundings whether or not there are other people in the picture, and perhaps even that "being off in your own little world" is another name for *Hell*.

I am not specifically interested in establishing that mindfulness should be thought of as a department of manners, nor am I interested in establishing that mindfulness is a department of virtue. In the interest of not holding my cards too close to my vest, I think it is mostly in an area where the heart of manners meets virtue, and I am inclined to regard it, as I am interested in virtues, as a virtue. However, this is not a point I am interested in establishing. It could be argued that if you owe attentiveness, meaning mindfulness, to nearby rocks and trees as well as other people, it is a virtue rather than just manners as conventionally understood, but possibly some reader will find in this article itself solid reasons to believe mindfulness is manners first and foremost and should not in the first instance be lumped in with virtues. I am genuinely not interested in the question.

However, I will remark, as curiously interesting, that while I've seen attention to mindfulness blanketing the air and I have been invited to share in mindfulness exercises, not one of the mindfulness practices I have seen talks about old-fashioned manners to pay attention to others and the situation. Mindfulness is discussed as a Far Eastern virtue or discipline. I have never heard it connected to old-fashioned Western manners.

Fr. Tom Hopko's famous (to Orthodox) "55 Maxims" include:

1. Be always with Christ.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings. Cut them off at the start.
19. Be polite with everyone.
23. Live a day, and a part of a day, at a time.
26. Do your work, then forget it.
34. Be awake and be attentive.

These at least *overlap* with mindfulness; when I spoke to one martial artist heavily influenced by Buddhism and quoted, "Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings," he said, "That's mindfulness!"

Fr. Tom never uses the word "mindfulness," but he calls for politeness to "everyone" and to be attentive, and it would at least be *consistent* with his call for unqualified politeness to say "When you are exercising, be attentive to your surroundings rather than using the time to be off in your own little world." And I believe there are several maxims of his that a mindfulness practitioner would rightly interpret as being mindfulness or overlapping with mindfulness. And, while Fr. Tom is Eastern Orthodox and perhaps praying for all of us from Heaven, his 55 maxims are written almost entirely on terms the West should be able to make sense of, and the incredible number of search results for "fr tom hopko 55 maxims" attest that he has written something simple that people can connect to.

Manners are much more important, and much more than arcana about which is the salad fork. "The fork goes to the left, and the knife guards the spoon," is a particular alphabet and language in which manners are translated. It is at the exterior of manners that, under some circumstances, you could be given a bowl of water to rinse your fingers in before eating. A much deeper glimpse into manners is afforded in that a distinguished visitor to a Queen picked up his finger bowl and then drunk it, then Her Majesty picked up her finger bowl and then drunk it, and then every person seated around the table picked up their finger bowls and drunk them.

Manners, at least according to older generations and according to our conversations about manners with prior generations, has a great deal to do with paying attention to other people. It was both manners and mindfulness if Boomers and Gen X's teachers told us not to pass notes and throw paper airplanes in class, perhaps with exceptions for e.g. the last day of school, but the fact that this may have made life easier for the teacher is incidental to teachers using humble gradeschool arithmetic classes to teach a major life lesson, and a major life lesson that is not only for dealing with authorities. I remember talking to one friend with a spine of steel about children who do not respect adults, and the biggest takeaway I took from the conversation is not that children who do not respect adults grind down adult patience. It was that children who do not respect adults can hardly benefit from adult help, and it is far easier to do something that will benefit a child who respects adults than one who is hostile and disrespectful.

In Madeleine l'Engle's day, needless attention to a watch or clock was the go-to device to avoid practicing mindfulness for a time. It changed and told you where you are. This pint of beer that Boomers tried not to drink too many of has been replaced by a pint of rum in the smartphone, and a pint of weed in the smartwatch and its successors. Mr. Jenkins One looked at his plain old pre-digital watch, probably one without a second hand, while kids now enjoy (or are bored with) a virtual acid trip quickly surfing from one smartphone app to another.

If we care about mindfulness, an excellent starting point is to drink deeply of what we can learn about manners especially from Boomers while we still can.

My own rather counter-cultural technology choices

Some people seek great merit in being counter-culture. I do not think counter-culture is too great an index of merit, and not just because I believe some countercultures, such as the Klu Klux Klan, are evil incarnate. I have sought, even if I have so far not achieved my goal, to reach life on Orthodox turf where I will not be working out a private heresy in counterculture. None the less, I believe that many of my most helpful technology choices amount to counterculture, whether or not I have the faintest desire to be counter-cultural.

I've tried to share some of my fruits in 55 New Maxims for the Cyber-Quarantine; here I would like to zoom in on watches.

When I was in high school, and for far longer, I made it a matter of pride not to wear a watch. It helped me evade, for a certain age, the tyranny of the clock. Since then I have worked professionally where late is unacceptable, and I've been bitten by the personal information management and logistics bug; I have my own system for keeping track of calendar appointment, tasks, etc., so at a glance I can see a month or more of scheduled events and when they are scheduled for. And now I own an Apple Watch.

Any freedom I have from compulsively checking phone, email, or watch is a freedom on the other side of needing to deal with logistics.

But a funny thing happened along the way.

I've almost exclusively used the solar watch face because, while it may be beautiful, it is less distracting than the face of my industrial strength Pathfinder watch, which changes every second and shows patterns in the numbers (to a mathematician, 11:23:58 looks familiar). I have it set to a smaller analog clock face display within the solar face because from childhood I've found analog clocks harder to read than digital. (If analog clocks were easier for me, I would have the digital display, and if I had the option to turn off the inset clock besides the outer solar display, I would turn it off.)

Taking a cue from Humane Tech, I have dug around in "Accessibility" settings and set the watch face to grayscale. It's beautiful, and the analog clock face's second hand, brown on blue when seen in color, blends in remarkably well. I have to strain to see it the one time I genuinely want to watch a second hand's sweep. I also found, under "Display and Brightness," how to turn off one of the key reasons I purchased an Apple Watch 5: its "Always on" display. It now takes just a little more work to check my watch, supplemented by wearing an oversized fleece whose sleeves tend to cover my watch face.

I've also turned on the hourly chime, also an accessibility feature. This reminds me to check the clock once an hour, and relieves me of having to constantly check. If I need to check email once an hour (my preference is to check it once a day), I don't need

to check either my watch or my email compulsively; my watch will remind me on the hour.

Furthermore, I set alarms for when I need to do something. Besides appointments and things like taking medication, I have followed a practice recommended by sleep advocates and set an alarm for when I should go to bed and not when I should get up.

I would briefly pause and acknowledge one objection to the technique above, which is that doing things according to a preset timer and quite possibly stopping when you have momentum going is not as good as working on tasks for as long as they naturally take. For those no ancient or modern watch is needed. However, while I believe working on something for however long it takes to unfold naturally is often better than working for a fixed length of time set without knowledge of how things will unfold, I believe that use of intelligently set alarms is better than clock-watching. (One further aspect of intelligent use of alarms is to have two alarms for something: one five or ten minutes before, meaning when you look at your watch because of the "early warning" alarm, it's time to start wrapping up; and one at the exact time, meaning it's time to stop.)

I have almost completely unplugged logistic need to check my watch unprovoked, and I may have the most unobtrusive, if still most expensive, watch I've owned. Every non-Apple watch I've owned had a digital display, and most recent ones have been gadgety (I have owned three Pathfinders). However, the gadgetry is almost always there if I summon it, and I can take shortcuts by twiddling with complications.

The Apple Watch is designed and marketed as the next level of integrating digital and everyday life, and in my opinion that is not a wise thing to be wishing for at all.

However, it is also powerful enough that judicious choices mean it can be tamed into unobtrusiveness further than any previous watch I've owned.

I'm glad for my Apple Watch. For as long as I've owned a timepiece, my Apple Watch is the biggest friend of mindfulness to grace my wrist yet.

A few closing words

I would recall a few words from *Seeing Through Native Eyes*. The main speaker recounted a visit to Kalihari bushmen, who retain hunter-gatherer life unhindered today, and an elder asked him in reference to a device, "Is that a timepiece?"

He said, "Yes."

The elder said, "Then I don't like it."

He said, "Why not?"

The elder said, "Every time you look at it, the next thing you do is rude."

If you want mindfulness, cultivate an inexhaustible interest in manners.

Money

Today the biggest symbol of evil is Hitler or Naziism; there is almost no bigger insult than calling someone a Nazi or a comparison to Hitler. The Old Testament's symbol of evil that did the same job was a city in which the Lord God of Hosts could not find fifty righteous, nor forty-five, nor forty, nor thirty, nor twenty, nor even ten righteous men. It was the city on which fire and brimstone rained down from Heaven in divine wrath until smoke arose as from a gigantic furnace. It was, in short, the city of Sodom.

Ezekiel has some remarks about Sodom's sin that might surprise you. Ezekiel 16:49 says, This was the sin of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, more than enough food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.

These are far from the only stinging words the Bible says to rich people who could care for the poor and do not do so. Jesus said something that could better be translated, "It is easier for a rope to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God." (Mark 10:25). It would take hours or perhaps days to recite everything blunt the Bible says about wealth, if even I could remember so much.

But who are the rich? The standard American answer is, "People who have more money than I do," and the standard American answer is wrong. It takes too much for granted. Do you want to know how special it is, worldwide, to be able to afford meat for every meal you want it and your Church permits it? Imagine saying "We're not rich; we just have Champagne and lobster every day." That's what it means for even poorer

Americans to say "We're not rich, just a bit comfortable." The amount of money that America spends on weight loss products each year costs more than it would cost to feed the hungry worldwide. When Ezekiel says that "your sister Sodom" had more than enough food but did not care for the poor, he is saying something that has every relevance to us if we also fail to care for the poor.

I would be remiss not to mention the Sermon on the Mount here, because the Sermon on the Mount explains something we can miss (Matt 6:19-21,24-33):

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also... No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Do you think that by worrying you can add a single hour to your life? You might as well try to make yourself a foot taller! And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the Kingdom of God and his perfect righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

This *includes* a hard saying about wealth, but it is not only a hard saying about wealth, but an invitation to joy. "Do not store up treasures on earth but store up treasures in Heaven" is a command to exchange lead for gold and have true wealth. It is an invitation to joy, and it is no accident that these sharp words about Money lead directly into the Bible's central text on why we never need to worry.

Elsewhere we read, "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions," (Luke 12:15), which is *not* a statement that spiritual people can rise so high that *their* lives aren't measured by possessions. It is about everybody, great and

small. If money doesn't make you happy this is not something specially true about spiritual people; it's something that's true of everybody. But Jesus's entire point is to direct us to what our life *does* consist in. The words about storing up treasures in Heaven prepare us for the "*Therefore* I tell you," and an invitation to live a life that is fuller, richer, more vibrant, deeper, more alive, more radiant with the light of Heaven than we can possibly arrange through wealth.

What will we leave behind if we spend less on ourselves? Will we leave behind the Lord's providence, or hugs, or friendship, or banter, or worship, or the Church, or feasting? Will we leave behind the love of the Father, or Christ as our High Priest, or the Spirit? Will we be losing a Heaven whose beginning is here and now, or will we be pulling out our right hands and our right eyes? If it seems that way, we may adapt C.S. Lewis to say that living the life of Heaven through our finances today may seem like it will cost our right hand and our right eye, or in today's words an arm and a leg, but once we have taken that plunge, we will discover that what we have left behind is precisely nothing. Or perhaps we could say that we are leaving behind a false Savior who never delivers, but only distracts us from the true Savior in Christ, and the treasure that is ours when we lay our treasures at his feet.

Is there a luxury you could give up in this invitation to joy?

More than Royalty

One element I remember from a documentary video at Avery Coonley School was talking about some Native American cultures. They commented that, like Christianity, there was an origins myth in which they were placed in a garden, a Paradise. But unlike Christianity, there was no story of leaving paradise. And yet in Orthodoxy, we insist that Paradise is wherever the saints are. (Paradise can be every bit here and now!)

There are certain ways that this is not an obvious thing to say for Christianity, especially if Hell exists, and great saints are often sanctified through great suffering. However, I wish to say more than I said in *God the Spiritual Father*, in which I said that we do not live in the best of all possible worlds, but we live in a world governed by the best of all possible Gods, and that makes all the difference.

There is something more to say, but words begin to fail me.

One point where we are in paradise is that every moral injunction, insofar as Orthodox asceticism is moral, is not for God's benefit, but for ours. St. Maximus Confessor describes three grades of sonship: *slaves* obey God out of fear of punishment, *mercenaries* obey God for Heavenly reward, but *sons* obey God out of love. And the *Philokalia* contains the striking statement that we owe more to Hell than to Heaven, because more people have obeyed God out of the fear of Hell than out of desire for the delights of Paradise. Nonetheless, if the highest growth is to obey God out of love for him, *we* are the beneficiaries of our obedience and love. We can be saved from Hell by fearing the torments, or we can grow to seek Heaven's rewards, or we can love as the least inadequate kind of response to God, but we do not benefit God. In the best spirit of

de-mythologizing, it can be said that God is perfect from all eternity and has never had needs except in the person of your neighbor, and God is fundamentally beyond being made more perfect by our acts or our love, no matter how much we love him. We benefit *ourselves* the more we obey God out of love for him.

In something of the same sense, ambition, which includes trying to become a bishop, is a sin, but when things are rightly understood, there is a sense in which we cannot overreach and we cannot reach so high as to be guilty of overreaching ambition. Now maybe ecclesiastical office need not be sought after (but I do not condemn honorable seminarians in the world). However, when we talk about what is good for us, about humility, about prayer, about repentance, we cannot reach too far. And humility is a greater thing than the Philosopher's Stone or the Holy Grail, as I just barely graze on in "The Treasure of Humility and the Royal Race:" in short, it opens your eyes and mine to the godlike beauty with which God has imbued every single human being. Humility transforms everything, or rather it transforms us so that we can be in Paradise anywhere. And monks may be forbidden to seek the lowest of elevations, let alone seek to be the next Ecumenical Patriarch, but there is no degree of the treasure of humility I know of that will bring a confessor's rebuke of "Do you really think such a lofty humility is fitting for someone in your undistinguished rank? Have some more pride like the rest of us!" And humility, in monastics or in the world, is a far greater treasure than any external honor that is to be had. Humility may sometimes be *followed* by ecclesiastical rank, but the real high estate doesn't wait for ecclesiastical office which may or may not come. The treasure and reward of humility is there, immediately, not just sometime later when authorities decide you are ready to bear a heavier cross and push you out of the nest for a greater service.

I would like to comment, very inadequately, on the monastic vow of wealth. It is said well enough that monastics renounce possessions and Orthodox in the world are to practice generosity and detachment, but he who renounces all possessions ends up with God Himself as pre-eminent among *many* possessions. The words "Do not store up treasure on earth" are but a shadow to "Store up treasures in Heaven," and monasticism is scarcely more nor less than a community framework for storing up still more treasures in Heaven. The Gospel may censure the man who stores up treasures on earth and tears down his barns to build bigger barns: but in and out of monasticism Orthodox are summoned to reach positions where their barns are not big enough for the treasures in Heaven they have come to possess, and they need to tear down their spiritual barns and build up bigger barns. The Gospel implies nothing positive about the man who has great earthly wealth while considering himself much too poor and wearing himself out to acquire even more wealth, but God's fullest blessings are on the monk who considers himself to have no appreciable treasures in Heaven and lives an insatiable desire to get even more treasures in Heaven. The monk who rejects an earthly endowment of wealth

is instead given an incomparable Providence that gives him treasures he didn't know to seek. Royalty have such privilege that they are not to touch money: monasticism takes this treasure to the utmost. The monk has lost two hundred and thirty-nine pounds in one vow: if you want to know true treasure, monks have the greatest treasure of all, in this world in the next. St. Constantine, equal to the apostles and great among princes, told one monk that if he had known what rewards monks have in Heaven, he would have exchanged his royal purple for a monk's robes immediately. Monasticism is a unique realm of privilege in the Church. (And the security provided by merely earthly wealth is an illusion and does not compare to the Providence given to married and monastic who do not put their trust in riches.)

What does monastic work pay for a monastic or pilgrim? The answer "100% below minimum wage" is positively misleading. The coin which monastic work pays in, and is more important to a spiritual father than getting work done, is healing from our passions, and freedom from our sins is a coin which no amount of secular money is worth. As regards what monks receive by their labor, I would appeal to the Song of Songs: *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

All this and more is to be said of monasticism, but it is also to be said that monasticism is no more than the rudiments of the Gospel. *If you do not have a monastic spiritual father, all that really means is that you have God for a Spiritual Father.* Monastics insist that salvation is possible at every time and everywhere, and is offered to all. However spectacular the blessings of monasticism sound, God's blessings are offered everywhere. If you should be a monk, by all means become a monk. But if not, do not believe that the God who created and governs all of Creation cares for monks but does not care for you. Christ died for you, and you are made in the divine image to ascend to the divine likeness whether or not monasticism is your path. God has loved you from everlasting to everlasting, and even your ability to choose between Heaven and Hell is part of the glory he built into you.

Moreover the saints, and we are invited to this, are not dependent on their efforts succeeding. We often think of moral victory like a consolation prize, as a palliative to essential failure, but the saints don't. St. Paul at the end of his life, when he had greater external achievement than almost anyone since, wrote to St. Timothy, "I have fought the good fight. I have run the race. I have kept the faith." St. Paul, saint that he was, seemed to consider his moral victories of being faithful as more worthy of mention than external victories that included planting churches, writing half the books of the New Testament, and healing and even raising the dead. He did not need to be successful, and his gargantuan external successes were never mentioned when he claimed a faithfulness that many others can share. There is a crushing character to needing to succeed, and the

example of the saints is liberating. We don't need to succeed, however noble our endeavor may be. We need only pray and be faithful.

We live in a spiritual and visible world, and some say that man, as the recapitulation of the spiritual and visible worlds, as a microcosm of all Creation, is higher than even the angels. And in this world, there are devils and there is evil, but the devils are always and only on a leash. Meanwhile, the Church Triumphant, the Holy Trinity and every saint before, is watching and cheering us as we run the race. The Church has been called a large yet extremely close-knit family, and every saint standing before the throne of God is praying, or is willing to pray, for us.

And the world we live in is *real*. I am not the only person who has wanted to escape into another world; small literature brings escape from the world while great literature brings engagement with the world. I've wanted to be in Narnia, among other places, and C.S. Lewis says that many kids have their own little world, but for the children, it was real. And this world we are in is itself real. It may not be in its final greatness yet. But it is real and still profoundly great, and after one spiritual adventure I came to realize that being in communion with Christ, I was in a certain sense in communion with all Creation, with the stars in the sky and the starfish in the sea, and insofar as the human person is constituted in the image of the Trinity, I was more in communion with the heretics than they were with themselves. I am not sure this is officially endorsed language; but I do know that I reached the brink of death and Hell, and my salvation consisted in rejecting a passion of alienation with Creation, and that I am in fact in communion with the Orthodox Church, in communion with God, and in communion with Creation.

Even suffering has meaning. Before I became Orthodox, as a Protestant I said that Purgatory seemed to be a spiritual reality present on earth, whether or not it was a place after death. Now Orthodoxy has been clear in not preaching that some must pass through Purgatory to reach Heaven: but we share in the sufferings of Christ, and spiritual giants suffer more. Part of this is "No servant is greater than his master," but suffering in our lives is neither random nor meaningless. Marriage and monasticism are both intended to be a crown of thorns to help us grow up; and unlike the world assumed by certain Church Fathers, we live in a world where blessed marriage is almost as much an exceptional holy light as monasticism, and it should be recognized both that marriage and monasticism serve the same goal of self-transcendence, and are different positions on one and the same team.

In *The Orthodox Church*, Vladyka KALLISTOS compares Christians today to the Early Church in terms of what society Christians are surrounded in. He does not make the complaint in ages past, when ancient Roman persecution ended and a saint said that easy times rob the Church of her saints. Now we live in times more reminiscent in pagan terms of Ragnarok or the Kali-Yuga, where Norse paganism sided with the good gods

because they wanted to go down losing on the right side. But this is precisely not the Christian situation. It is more like a business with unrestricted Facebook use, where some people spent all their work hours sunk into social media, while the worker bees became even more focused. Things are darker outside for Christians, but for many the divine light shines more starkly. I have been blessed.

I have titled this piece "More Than Royalty" because whatever is distinctive about royalty, or giftedness, or wealth is a shadow compared to what is built into the human constitution in the divine image. The reference is obvious:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paradise is wherever the saints are!
(What more is there to say?)

A New Term?

I wonder if a new and improved term for a prostitute might be "Professional rape victim."

A Note to the Reader

Dear Reader;
How do I love thee?
Let me count the ways:
integer overflow error at 0x0

Open

How shall I be open to thee,
O Lord who is forever open to me?
Incessantly I seek to clench with tight fist,
Such joy as thou gavest mine open hand.
Why do I consider thy providence,
A light thing, and of light repute,
Next to the grandeur I imagine?
Why spurn I such grandeur as prayed,
Not my will but thine be done,
Such as taught us to pray,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come:
Thy will be done?
Why be I so tight and constricted,
Why must clay shy back,
From the potter's hand,
Who glorifieth clay better,
Than clay knoweth glory to seek?
Why am I such a small man?
Why do I refuse the joy you give?
Or, indeed, must I?

And yet I know,
Thou, the Theotokos, the saints,
Forever welcome me with open hearts,
And the oil of their gladness,
Loosens my fist,
Little by little.

God, why is my fist tightened on openness,
When thou openest in me?

An Open Letter to Catholics on Orthodoxy and Ecumenism

Surgeon General's Warning

Roman Catholic readers are asked to seriously consider skipping this chapter.

This piece is being made available for the benefit of Orthodox readers.

Rome's position is that Rome and Orthodoxy agree on all essentials needed for appropriate reunion. Orthodoxy's position is that there are unresolved essential differences which need to be addressed before appropriate reunion. This piece is intended to specifically, clearly, forcefully, and bluntly articulate some (not all) of unresolved essential differences for what is held as essential in the Orthodox Church in response to Roman communication that acknowledged no genuine Orthodox objection to Roman ecumenism. It remains posted because it may be helpful for Orthodox who are searching for why Orthodoxy disagrees with Rome and Roman ecumenism.

You have been warned.

The Elephant in the Room

There is an elephant in the room. But Catholics are very skilled at NOT seeing it.

What might be called "the Orthodox question"

I expect ecumenical outreach to Orthodox has been quite a trying experience for Catholics. It must seem to Catholics like they have made Orthodoxy their top ecumenical priority, and after they have done their best and bent over backwards, many

Orthodox have shrugged and said, "That makes one of us!" or else made a nastier response. And I wonder if Catholics have felt a twinge of the Lord's frustration in saying, "All day long I have held out my hands to a rebellious and stubborn people." (Rom 10:21)

In my experience, most Catholic priests have been hospitable: warm to the point of being warmer to me than my own priests. It almost seems as if the recipe for handling Orthodox is to express a great deal of warmth and warmly express hope for Catholics and Orthodox to be united. And that, in a nutshell, is how Catholics seem to conceive what might be called "the Orthodox question."

And I'm afraid I have something painful to say. Catholics think Orthodox are basically the same, and that they understand us. And I'm asking you to take a tough pill to swallow: Catholics do not understand Orthodox. You think you do, but you don't.

I'd like to talk about an elephant in the room. This elephant, however painfully obvious to Orthodox, seems something Catholics are strikingly oblivious to.

A conciliatory gesture (or so I was told)

All the Orthodox I know were puzzled for instance, that the Pope thought it conciliatory to retain titles such as "Vicar of Jesus Christ," "Successor of the Prince of the Apostles," and "Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church," but drop "Patriarch of the West." Orthodox complain that the Roman bishop "was given primacy but demanded supremacy," and the title "Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church" is offensive. Every bishop is the successor of the prince of the apostles, so reserving that title to the Pope is out of line. But Orthodoxy in both ancient and modern times regard the Pope as the Patriarch of Rome, and the Orthodox Church, having His Holiness IGNATIUS the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, has good reason to call the Patriarch of Rome, "the Patriarch of the West." The response I heard to His Holiness Benedict dropping that one title while retaining the others, ranged from "Huh?" to, "Hello? Do you understand us at *all*?"

What Catholics never acknowledge

That is not a point I wish to belabor; it is a relatively minor example next to how, when in my experience Catholics have warmly asked Orthodox to reunify, never once have I seen any recognition or manifest awareness of the foremost concern Orthodox have about Rome and Constantinople being united. Never once have I seen mere acknowledgment of the Orthodox concern about what Rome most needs to repent of.

Let me clarify that slightly. I've heard Catholics acknowledge that Catholics have committed atrocities against Orthodox in the past, and Catholics may express regrets over wrongs from ages past and chide Orthodox for a lack of love in not being reunified.

But when I say, "what Rome most needs to repent of," I am not taking the historian's view. I'm not talking about sack of the Constantinople, although people more Orthodox than me may insist on things like that. I am not talking about what Rome has done in the past to repent of, but what is continuing now. I am talking about the present tense, and in the present tense. When Catholics come to me and honor Orthodoxy with deep warmth and respect and express a desire for reunion, what I have never once heard mention of is the recantation of Western heresy.

This may be another tough pill to swallow. Catholics may know that Orthodox consider Catholics to be heretics, but this never enters the discussion when Catholics are being warm and trying to welcome Orthodox into their embrace. It's never acknowledged or addressed. The warm embrace instead affirms that we have a common faith, a common theology, a common tradition: we are the same, or so Orthodox are told, in all essentials. If Orthodox have not restored communion, we are told that we do not recognize that we have all the doctrinal agreement properly needed for reunification.

But don't we agree on major things? Rome's bishops say we do!

I would like to outline three areas of difference and give some flesh to the Orthodox claim that there are unresolved differences. I would like to outline one issue about what is theology, and then move on to social ethics, and close on ecumenism itself. I will somewhat artificially limit myself to three; some people more Orthodox than me may wonder why, for instance, I don't discuss the filioque clause (answer: I am not yet Orthodox enough to appreciate the importance given by my spiritual betters, even if I do trust that they are my spiritual betters). But there's a lot in these three.

To Catholics who insist that we share a common faith, I wish to ask a question that may sound flippant or even abrasive. A common faith? Really? Are you ready to de-canonize Thomas Aquinas and repudiate his scholasticism? The Orthodox Church's response to the Renaissance figure Barlaam and Aristotelianism. Orthodox faith is something incompatible with the "theology" of Thomas Aquinas, and if you don't understand this, you're missing something fundamental to Orthodox understandings of theology. And if you're wondering why I used quotes around "theology," let me explain. Or, perhaps better, let me give an example.

See the two texts below. One is chapter 5 in St. Dionysius (or, if you prefer, pseudo-Dionysius), *The Mystical Theology*. That gem is on the left. To the right is a partial rewriting of the ideas in the style of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*.

**St. Dionysius the Areopagite,
"The Mystical Theology"**

**Rewritten in the scholastic style of
Thomas Aquinas**

Again, as we climb higher we say this. *Question Five: Whether God may accurately be*

**St. Dionysius the Areopagite,
"The Mystical Theology"**

It is not soul or mind, nor does it possess imagination, conviction, speech, or understanding. Nor is it speech *per se*, understanding *per se*. It cannot be spoken of and it cannot be grasped by understanding. It is not number or order, greatness or smallness, equality or inequality, similarity or dissimilarity. It is not immovable, moving, or at rest. It has no power, it is not power, nor is it life. It is not a substance, nor is it eternity or time. It cannot be grasped by the understanding since it is neither knowledge nor truth. It is not kingship. It is not wisdom. It is neither one nor oneness, divinity nor goodness. Nor is it a spirit, in the sense that we understand the term. It is not sonship or fatherhood and it is nothing known to us or to any other being. It falls neither within the predicate of nonbeing nor of being. Existing beings do not know it as it actually is and it does not know them as they are. There is no speaking of it, nor name nor knowledge of it. Darkness and light, error and truth—it is none of these. It is beyond every assertion and denial. We make assertions and denials of what is next to it, but never of it, for it is both beyond every assertion, being the perfect and unique cause of all things, and, by virtue of its preeminently simple and absolute nature, it is also beyond every denial.

**Rewritten in the scholastic style of
Thomas Aquinas**

described with words and concepts.

Objection One: It appears that God may be accurately described, for otherwise he could not be described as existing. For we read, *I AM WHO AM*, and if God cannot be described as existing, then assuredly nothing else can. But we know that things exist, therefore God may be accurately described as existing.

Objection Two: It would seem that God may be described with predicates, for Scripture calls him Father, Son, King, Wisdom, etc.

Objection Three: It appears that either affirmations or negations must accurately describe God, for between an affirmation and its negation, exactly one of them must be true.

On the Contrary, I reply that every affirmation and negation is finite, and in the end inadequate beyond measure, incapable of containing or of circumscribing God.

We should remember that the ancients described God in imperfect terms rather than say nothing about him at all...

Lost in translation?

There is something lost in "translation" here. What exactly is lost? Remember Robert Frost's words, "Nothing of poetry is lost in translation except for the poetry." There is a famous, ancient maxim in the Orthodox Church's treasured *Philokalia* saying, "A theologian is one who prays truly, and one who prays truly is a theologian:" theology is an invitation to prayer. And the original *Mystical Theology* as rendered on the left is exactly that: an invitation to prayer, while the rewrite in the style of the *Summa Theologiae* has been castrated: it is only an invitation to analysis and an impressively deft solution to a logic puzzle. The ideas are all preserved: nothing of the theology is lost in translation except for the theology. And this is part of why Archimandrite Vasileos, steeped in the nourishing, prayerful theology of the Orthodox Church, bluntly writes in *Hymn of Entry* that scholastic theology is "an indigestible stone."

Thomas Aquinas drew on Greek Fathers and in particular St. John the Damascene. He gathered some of the richest theology of the East and turned it into something that is not theology to Orthodox: nothing of the Greek theology was lost in the scholastic translation but the theology! And there is more amiss in that Thomas Aquinas also drew on "the Philosopher," Aristotle, and all the materialistic seeds in Aristotelianism. (The Greeks never lost Aristotle, but they also never made such a big deal about him, and to be called an Aristotelian could be a strike against you.) There is a spooky hint of the "methodological agnosticism" of today's academic theology—the insistence that maybe you have religious beliefs, but you need to push them aside, at least for the moment, to write serious theology. The seed of secular academic "theology" is already present in how Thomas Aquinas transformed the Fathers.

This is a basic issue with far-reaching implications.

Am I *seriously* suggesting that Rome de-canonize Thomas Aquinas? Not exactly. I am trying to point out what level of repentance and recantation would be called for in order that full communion would be appropriate. I am not seriously asking that Rome de-canonize Thomas Aquinas. I *am* suggesting, though, that Rome begin to recognize that nastier and deeper cuts than this would be needed for full communion between Rome and Orthodoxy. And I know that it is not pleasant to think of rejoining the Orthodox Church as (shudder) a reconciled heretic. I know it's not pleasant. I am, by the grace of God, a reconciled heretic myself, and I recanted Western heresy myself. It's a humbling position, and if it's too big a step for you to take, it is something to at least *recognize* that it's a big step to take, and one that Rome has not yet taken.

The Saint and the Activist

Let me describe two very different images of what life is for. The one I will call "the saint" is that, quite simply, life is for the contemplation of God, and the means to contemplation is largely asceticism: the concrete practices of a life of faith. The other one, which I will call, "the activist," is living to change the world as a secular ideology would understand changing the world. In practice the "saint" and the "activist" may be the ends of a spectrum rather than a rigid dichotomy, but I wish at least to distinguish the two, and make some remarks about modern Catholic social teaching.

Modern Catholic social teaching could be enlightened. It could be well meant. It could be humane. It could be carefully thought out. It could be a recipe for a better society. It could be providential. It could be something we should learn from, or something we need. It could be any number of things, but what it absolutely is *not* is theology. It is absolutely not spiritually nourishing theology. If, to Orthodox, scholastic theology like that of Thomas Aquinas is as indigestible as a stone, modern Catholic social teaching takes indigestibility to a whole new level—like indigestible shards of broken glass.

The 2005 *Deus Caritas Est* names the Song of Songs three times, and that is without precedent in the Catholic social encyclicals from the 1891 *Rerum Novarum* on. Look for references to the Song of Songs in their footnotes—I don't think you'll find any, or at least I didn't. This is a symptom of a real problem, a lack of the kind of theology that would think of things like the Song of Songs—which is highly significant. The Song of Songs is a favorite in mystical theology, the prayerful theology that flows from faith, and mystical theology is not easily found in the social encyclicals. I am aware of the friction when secular academics assume that Catholic social teaching is one more political ideology to be changed at will. I give some benefit of the doubt to Catholics who insist that there are important differences, even if I'm skeptical over whether the differences are quite so big as they are made out to be. But without insisting that Catholic social teaching is just another activist ideology, I will say that it is anything but a pure "saint" model, and it mixes in the secular "activist" model to a degree that is utterly unlawful to Orthodox.

Arius is more scathingly condemned in Orthodox liturgy than even Judas. And, contrary to current fashion, I really do believe Arius and Arianism are as bad as the Fathers say. But Arius never dreamed either of reasoning out systematic theology or of establishing social justice. His *Thalia* are a (perhaps very bad) invitation to worship, not a systematic theology or a plan for social justice. In those regards, Catholic theology not only does not reach the standard of the old Orthodox giants: it does not even reach the standard of the old arch-heretics!

Catholics today celebrate Orthodoxy and almost everything they know about us save that we are not in full communion. Catholic priests encourage icons, or reading the

Greek fathers, or the Jesus prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." But what Catholics may not always be mindful of is that they celebrate Orthodoxy and put it alongside things that are utterly anathema to Orthodox: like heartily endorsing the Orthodox Divine Liturgy and placing it alongside the Roman mass, Protestant services, Unitarian meetings, Hindu worship, and the spiritualist seance as all amply embraced by Rome's enfolding bosom.

What we today call "ecumenism" is at its root a Protestant phenomenon. It stems from how Protestants sought to honor Christ's prayer that we may all be one, when they took it as non-negotiable that they were part of various Protestant denominations which remained out of communion with Rome. The Catholic insistence that each Protestant who returns to Rome heals part of the Western schism is a nonstarter for this "ecumenism:" this "ecumenism" knows we need unity but takes schism as non-negotiable: which is to say that this "ecumenism" rejects the understanding of Orthodox, some Catholics, and even the first Protestants that full communion is full communion and what Christ prayed for was a full communion that assumed doctrinal unity.

One more thing that is very important to many Orthodox, and that I have never once heard acknowledged or even mentioned by the Catholics reaching so hard for ecumenical embrace is that many Orthodox are uneasy at best with ecumenism. It has been my own experience that the more devout and more mature Orthodox are, the more certainly they regard ecumenism as a spiritual poison. Some of the more conservative speak of "ecumenism awareness" as Americans involved in the war on drugs speak of "drug awareness."

Catholics can be a lot like Orthodox in their responses to Protestants and Protestant ideas of ecumenism; one might see a Catholic responding to an invitation to join an ecumenical communion service at First Baptist by saying something like,

I'm flattered by your ecumenical outreach... And really am, um, uh, *honored* that you see me as basically the same as an Evangelical... And I really appreciate that I am as welcome to join you in receiving communion as your very own flock... Really, I'm flattered...

...But full communion is full communion, and it reflects fundamental confusion to put the cart before the horse. For us to act otherwise would be a travesty. I know that you may be generously overlooking our differences, but even if it means being *less* generous, we need to give proper attention to our unresolved differences before anything approaching full communion would be appropriate.

But Catholics seem to be a bit like Protestants in their ecumenical advances to Orthodox. If I understand correctly, whereas Rome used to tell Orthodox, "You would be welcome to take communion with us, but we would rather you obey your bishops," now I am told by Rome that I may remain Orthodox while receiving Roman communion, and my reply is,

I'm flattered by your ecumenical outreach... And really am, um, uh, *honored* that you see me as basically the same as any Catholic... And I really appreciate that I am as welcome to join you in receiving communion as your very own flock... Really, I'm flattered...

...But full communion is full communion, and it reflects fundamental confusion to put the cart before the horse. For us to act otherwise would be a travesty. I know that you may be generously overlooking our differences, but even if it means being *less* generous, we need to give proper attention to our unresolved differences before anything approaching full communion would be appropriate.

If the Roman Church is almost Orthodox in its dealings with Protestants, it in turn seems almost Protestant in its dealings with Orthodox. It may be that Rome looks at Orthodoxy and sees things that are almost entirely permitted in the Roman Church: almost every point of theology or spirituality that is *the only way to do things* in Orthodoxy is at least *a permitted option* to Roman Catholics. (So Rome looks at Orthodoxy, or at least some Romans do, and see Orthodox as something that can be allowed to be a full-fledged part of the Roman communion: almost as Protestants interested in ecumenism look at the Roman Church as being every bit as much a full-fledged Christian denomination as the best of Protestant groups.) But the reverse of this phenomenon is *not* true: that is, Orthodox do not look at Rome and say, "Everything that you require or allow in spiritual theology is also allowed in healthy Eastern Orthodoxy." Furthermore, I have never seen awareness or sensitivity to those of Orthodox who do not consider ecumenism, at least between traditional communions, to be a self-evidently good thing to work for: Catholics can't conceive of a good reason for why Orthodox would not share their puppyish enthusiasm for ecumenism. And I have never heard a Catholic who expressed a desire for the restoration for full communion show any perception or willingness to work for the Orthodox concerns about what needs to feed into any *appropriate* restoration of communion, namely the recantation of Western heresy represented by figures like Thomas Aquinas and not only by *Mater et Magistra* or liberal Catholic dissent (but I repeat myself).

Conclusion: are we at the eve of an explosion?

I may have mentioned several elephants in the room. Let me close by mentioning one more that many Orthodox are painfully aware of, even if Catholics are oblivious.

Orthodoxy may remind Western Christians of Rome's ancient origins. But there is an important way in which I would compare Orthodoxy today to Western Christianity on the eve of the Reformation. Things hadn't exploded. Yet. But there were serious problems and trouble brewing, and I'm not sure it's that clear to people how much trouble is brewing.

Your ecumenical advances and efforts to draw us closer to Rome's enfolding bosom come at a rough and delicate time:

What if, while there was serious trouble but not yet schisms spreading like wildfire, the East had reached out to their estranged Western brethren and said:

Good news! You really don't need scholasticism... And you don't exactly need transsubstantiation either... And you don't need anywhere such a top-down Church heirarchy... And you really don't need to be in communion with the Patriarch of Rome... And...

There is a profound schism brewing in the Orthodox Church. It may not be within your power to stop it, but it may be within your power to avoid giving it an early start, and it may be within your power to avoid making the wreckage even worse.

The best thing I can think of to say is simply, "God have mercy on us all."

Cordially yours,

Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward

The Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt; Lent, 2009.

Orthodox Affirmations

All Orthodox theology is positive theology.

Nothing can harm the man who does not injure himself.

I can do all things I am charged with through Christ who strengthens me.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first.

Only God and I exist.

God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man that men and the sons of men might become gods and the sons of God.

Trying to become god, Adam failed to become god; Christ became man, to make Adam god.

God did not only become man that I might become divine. He also became man that I might become man.

Make peace with yourself, and ten thousand around you will be saved.

Save yourself, and Heaven and earth will make peace with you.

Banish two thoughts and live two thoughts: banish "I am a saint" and "I will be damned," and live "I am a great sinner" and "God is greatly merciful."

All the world will be saved and I will be damned.

In humility consider others better than yourself. It is the key to truly enjoying them.

Keep your mind in Hell, and despair not.

The vilest of sins is a smouldering ember thrown into the ocean of God's love.

Our social program is the Trinity.

The Orthodox martial art is living the Sermon on the Mount.

An Orthodox Bookshelf

The Greatest Treasures

These are some of the greatest treasures around to read, and there's a lifetime worth of reading in them. I may be critical in some of my reviews, but I only list books I think are worth reading, and the pieces I criticize are probably worthy of a more charitable spirit.

The Orthodox Study Bible* (Kindle)

In this Orthodox bookshelf, a decisive pride of place goes to *The Orthodox* Study Bible*. I have felt more comfort in reading it than any other Bible, and it gives a real sense of reading the Bible, not privately, but in community with the saints across the ages. The footnotes are decisively better than the Bible de Jerusalem / *New Jerusalem Bible*, and those responsible for *The Orthodox* Study Bible* decisively understand that the proper use of footnotes in a text is not to speculate about how a text came together across the ages, but to illumine the Bible as the ultimate work of practical, spiritual, and mystical theology, with footnotes oriented towards practical, spiritual, and mystical theology.

Then why have I put an asterisk in *The Orthodox* Study Bible*?

The Orthodox Study Bible* shows signs of a group of converts who have described as trying to do too much, too fast. Their selection of saints for

commentary is limited to the first millenium (have no nineteenth century saints *already* stood the test of time?), and the introduction harps on the ancient Church.

If harping on the antiquity of the Church doesn't seem strange, think about how we are all the continuation of the royal, ancient bloodline of His Majesty King ADAM and Her Majesty Queen EVE. Poetry and meaning are alike profound when, to quote a Protestant author, C.S. Lewis has Aslan proclaim "Sons of Adam and Daughters of Eve." Such a thing may be poetic to note, and quaint, but it would be a strange thing to harp on and say that you respect other people primarily as carriers of an ancient bloodline. Most of the respect we have, or should have, for other people is not for the antiquity of our bloodline, but because they are fully human, however we may understand being human, because they are made in the image of God and can be transformed into the likeness of Christ. It may be a useful thing to remember that a beggar or a person we can't stand is ultimately family to us, but very little of the language of respect for the human person, whether Orthodox, other religious, or secular, states that we are the fullness of the ancient bloodline of our first parents. And, notwithstanding that eagerness to re-create the ancient Church was foundational to the Reformation and can still be found in Protestant influences, the basis of respect for Orthodoxy is not that it is Ancient Orthodoxy, but that it is *Holy* Orthodoxy.

Though *The Orthodox* Study Bible* introduces its material by talking about the authentic continuity of the Orthodox Church (without so much as a brief passing mention of our antiquity as the authentic continuity of the bloodline of Lord Adam and Lady Eve), I have never heard such harping on the ancient Church among cradle Orthodox. Admittedly the Orthodox Church is the same living organism as the ancient Church, but in the altar at my parish, most of the books are ancient in character (service books, Gospel books, a Greek New Testament), not one of them is labeled as ancient: no service book touts "the ancient Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom." 'Ancient' is not the point.

And there are other things like that are written to "smooth things over" at the expense of truth in *The Orthodox* Study Bible*. For one instance, the note on Creation on page 2 says like a politico, "Regarding scientific questions about the scientific accuracy of the Genesis account of creation, and about various viewpoints concerning evolution, the Orthodox Church has not dogmatized any particular view." This is misleading disinformation; origins questions may well be among the many areas "not dogmatized", but there is a near-universal consensus among the Church Fathers, including the Church

Fathers of the first millenium that *The Orthodox* Study Bible* returns to, that the earth was created in six days about six thousand years ago. This may be inconvenient to point out, and it might be easier to help people get along if we say that several views are legitimate, but this is twisting facts for the sake of convenience. (And for the recdord, I believe in a billions of years old earth and legitimate disagreement over how God created the world), although the world was created 3:00 PM, March 25, 28 AD.)

With all that stated, *The Orthodox* Study Bible* has a number of helpful and edifying notes in an overall tenor that provides guidance in reading the Bible, and nothing better has come to fill its place.

Perhaps another work will come along that is not trying to do "too much, too fast," but *The Orthodox* Study Bible* has left behind a pretty big pair of boots to fill, and there is much profit in it whether you know the Bible well or are just beginning to dive into it.

The Philokalia

The Philokalia is a library of practical theology, and there is nothing else like it. It is a collection about the science of spiritual struggle, and though entries can vary substantially from each other, they are very edifying and can orient us to what is truly important in life.

The Philokalia is best viewed, not as a book, but as a library of classics, and the intent is that people would read specific works as selected by a clergy member. I can attest that simply reading it cover to cover is a second-best solution.

Many Orthodox give The Philokalia first place outside of the Bible.

The Ladder of Divine Ascent

The Ladder of Divine Ascent is a work addressed to monastics, and is read each Lent in monasteries. However this is far from being a treasure only useful to monastics. It is a jewel of the Orthodox Church as a whole, and all kinds of people have read *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* to great spiritual profit.

The *Prologue* of Ochrid

The Orthodox Church has a great tradition of biography as theology: one grasps holiness by reading the lives of the saints. A rich sampling of these

lives is found in the daily readings of the Prologue, which tells of all the saints commemorated on a particular day.

The Jordanville Prayer Book

Praying the prayers of the Church is a great help along the way, and *The Jordanville Prayer Book* (or any other good prayer book) is like the script to a play: it is not primarily meant to be read silently while sitting in a chair, but spoken aloud, brought to life, preferably from a standing position.

Prayers, with fasting, are an area to work out with one's priest or spiritual father. They come alive when they are practiced as part of the life of the Church.

Akathists

St. Romanos the Melodist is said to have miraculously received the prayer of the Akathist to the Mother of God. Since then there is a tradition of Akathist prayers; the term "akathist" means "not seated," i.e. standing to deliver the prayer. The first Akathist, and many of the ones that follow, are beautiful and powerful prayers.

The Ante-Nicene Fathers and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers

The Ante-Nicene and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers provide the standard reference translations to a great many Church Fathers. This collection receives its own asterisk because while the texts are Orthodox they were translated by Anglicans grinding a massive axe against Rome. Hence a condemnation of contraception, abortion, and infanticide by St. John Chrysostom is turned into a condemnation of abortion and infanticide alone; Augustine may be allowed to condemn Natural Family Planning, but there is an axe that is ground in the texts and is even more explicit in the accompanying notes and introductions.

Still, this does not stop a great deal of glory from the Fathers; read, for instance, St. John Chrysostom's "A Treatise to Prove that No One Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself." The collection, for all its deficiencies, is still a great treasure.

St. John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Pseudo-Dionysius: *The Complete Works*, etc.

I have picked these two examples of works that it is work to read. I read them, not because I have grown enough that they seem easy and natural to read, but because they stretch me and challenge me to enter into a larger space. Fr. John Behr said, "The only thing worse than not reading the Fathers and reading them systematically;" in a similar fashion, the Fathers are of the most value to us, not when we find an endorsement of what we have always believed, but when we are challenged and invited to grow. I am challenged by these works, and I pick out these two as representative examples of innumerable works that challenge me to grow bigger and unpleasantly challenge me to enter a larger world.

Lesser Classics

This is a collection of lesser greats, limited in number by the limitations of what I am familiar with. Note that this does not include a lot of popular authors, such as Fr. Seraphim (Rose), or Met. John (Zizioulas); in the latter case, I answered the question, "Is John Zizioulas an existentialist in disguise?" by asking, "Where's the disguise?" However, there is some good work produced recently, and I've even read a little of it.

The Orthodox Way

The standard print introduction to Orthodoxy is His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos's *The Orthodox Church*, but what captivated my attention was not that more systematic work but the less systematic and more mystical *The Orthodox Way*. It is an excellent introduction to Holy Orthodoxy.

The Way of the Pilgrim

The Way of the Pilgrim is a glimpse of one pilgrim for whom the Philokalia unlocked the treasures of the Gospel. The author, whose name is lost, would today be considered a vagrant; that was the form taken by his pilgrimage. Along the way the Jesus Prayer unfolds in his heart. The book is a lesser classic, but it is a classic.

External Influences

One queer postmodern theologian speaking in class spoke of how the Fathers used "the best philosophical resources of their day," the implication being that we should use

the postmodern resources fashionable today. To that I might reply: the best philosophical resources available to the Fathers were neo-Platonism, and the best philosophical resources available today are neo-Platonism. That may sound harsh, but the Church that said "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" used philosophical resources without limiting themselves to them as captives. Neo-Platonism was at once the air the Fathers breathed and the opponent they struggled against; in today's terms, slightly clumsy to apply to them, they strove for a critical reception of neo-Platonism, or developed (or rather preserved) a counterculture.

These books are not exhaustive; but they serve to point to an area that is worth reading. But perhaps this section of this Orthodox bookshelf is less important than one might think.

Note here that there is one category I have deliberately excluded: Gnostic and other heretical writings. Gnostic writing is spiritual pornography and I regret I have ever set eyes on it. I thought it would provide perspective to help me understand Orthodoxy. It did not, and I would rather have read any Orthodox resource than that form of spiritual poison.

Plotinus: The Enneads

A central work of neo-Platonism, and possibly the best single resource in philosophy from outside the Church into what the Fathers drew from when they drew from pagan philosophy, in the image of one Church Father, "like a bee that goes straight to the sweetest nectar and ignores all else."

Plato: The Republic (Kindle)

A seminal work that was the first domino that would build to neo-Platonism. There are parts of the work that seem strange today; Derrida called it "the world's oldest, longest, and least funny political joke". I would amend that to "the world's oldest, longest, least funny, and least intentional political joke." The treatment of sexuality reads like something plagiarized from Monty Python today, but viewed in relation to historical context (in books I shouldn't have read), it does not seem nearly so provocative a stance against currents of its own day as in currents of our own day. It sets forth one of the oldest radical political ideologies, but for all that it is a seed of many important things, many good things, and I lightly adapted its most famous passage in Plato: The Allegory of the...Flickering Screen?.

Almost last, and certainly least,

I would at least like to mention my own offerings, not because there is any conclusion that they are classics, but because I cherish them and they are what I have to offer. They are available from CSHayward.com/books.

I invite you to visit my collection of theology Kindle eBooks!

The "Big Room"

Programmer slang uses "the Big Room" for outside, the "room" one is in when one is not hunched over a computer indoors. And there is something profound to looking beyond books and learning from life.

Monasticism has a maxim, "Your cell will teach you everything you need to know." And the precept holds whether or not one is a monk; staying in one's place and learning things is powerful. Most monks have been illiterate and not owned books; the maxim is not simply "Your bookshelf will teach you everything you need to know," but "Your cell will teach you everything you need to know." The here and now that God has put you in, that you are tempted to escape by real or virtual means, will teach you everything you need to know.

An Orthodox Looks at a Calvinist Looking at Orthodoxy

Jack Kinneer, an Orthodox Presbyterian minister and a D.Min. graduate of an Eastern Orthodox seminary, wrote a series of dense responses to his time at that seminary. The responses are generally concise, clear, and make the kind of observations that I like to make. My suspicion is that if Dr. Kinneer is looking at things this way, there are a lot of other people who are looking at things the same way—but may not be able to put their finger on it. And he may have given voice to some things that Orthodox may wish to respond to.

Orthodoxy is difficult to understand, and I wrote a list of responses to some (not all) of the points he raises. I asked New Horizons, which printed his article, and they offered gracious permission to post with attribution, which is much appreciated. I believe that Dr. Kinneer's words open a good conversation, and I am trying to worthily follow up on his lead.

A Calvinist Looks at Orthodoxy
Jack D. Kinneer

During my studies at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, I was often asked by students, "Are you Orthodox?" It always felt awkward to be asked such a question. I thought of myself as doctrinally orthodox. I was a

minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. So I thought I could claim the word *orthodox*.

But I did not belong to the communion of churches often called Eastern Orthodox, but more properly called simply Orthodox. I was not Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, or Antiochian Orthodox. As far as the Orthodox at St. Vladimir's were concerned, I was not Orthodox, regardless of my agreement with them on various doctrines.

My studies at St. Vladimir's allowed me to become acquainted with Orthodoxy and to become friends with a number of Orthodox professors, priests, and seminarians. My diploma was even signed by Metropolitan Theodosius, the head of the Orthodox Church in America. From the Metropolitan to the seminarians, I was received kindly and treated with respect and friendliness.

I am not the only Calvinist to have become acquainted with Orthodoxy in recent years. Sadly, a number have not only made the acquaintance, but also left the Reformed faith for Orthodoxy. What is Orthodoxy and what is its appeal to some in the Reformed churches?

The Appeal of Orthodoxy

Since the days of the apostles, there have been Christian communities in such ancient cities as Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Syria, and Corinth in Greece. In such places, the Christian church grew, endured the tribulation of Roman persecution, and ultimately prevailed when the Roman Empire was officially converted to Christianity. But, unlike Christians in the western half of the Roman Empire, the eastern Christians did not submit to the claims of the bishop of Rome to be the earthly head of the entire church. And why should they have done so? The centers of Orthodox Christianity were as old as, or even older than, the church in Rome. All the great ecumenical councils took place in the East and were attended overwhelmingly by Christian leaders from the East, with only a smattering of representatives from the West. Indeed, most of the great theologians and writers of the ancient church (commonly called the Church Fathers) were Greek-speaking Christians in the East.

The Orthodox churches have descended in an unbroken succession of generations from these ancient roots. As the Orthodox see it, the Western church followed the bishop of Rome into schism (in part by adding a phrase to the Nicene Creed). So, from their perspective, we Protestants are the product of a schism off a schism. The Orthodox believe that they have continued unbroken the churches founded by the apostles. They allow that we Reformed may be Christians, but our churches are not part of the true

church, our ordinations are not valid, and our sacraments are no sacraments at all.

The apparently apostolic roots of Orthodoxy provide much of its appeal for some evangelical Protestants. Furthermore, it is not burdened with such later Roman Catholic developments as the Papacy, purgatory, indulgences, the immaculate conception of Mary, and her assumption into heaven. Orthodoxy is ancient; it is unified in a way that Protestantism is not; it lacks most of the medieval doctrines and practices that gave rise to the Reformation. This gives it for many a fascinating appeal.

Part of that appeal is the rich liturgical heritage of Orthodoxy, with its elaborate liturgies, its glorious garbing of the clergy, and its gestures, symbols, and icons. If it is true that the distinctive mark of Reformed worship is simplicity, then even more so is glory the distinctive mark of Orthodox worship. Another appealing aspect of Orthodox worship is its otherness. It is mysterious, sensual, and, as the Orthodox see it, heavenly. Orthodox worship at its best makes you feel like you have been transported into one of the worship scenes in the book of Revelation. Of course, if the priest chants off-key or the choir sings poorly, it is not quite so wonderful.

There are many other things that could be mentioned, but I've mentioned the things that have particularly struck me. These are also the things that converts from Protestantism say attracted them.

The Shortcomings of Orthodoxy

So then, is this Orthodox Presbyterian about to drop the "Presbyterian" and become simply Orthodox? No! In my estimation, the shortcomings of Orthodoxy outweigh its many fascinations. A comparison of the Reformed faith with the Orthodox faith would be a massive undertaking, made all the more difficult because Orthodoxy has no doctrinal statement comparable to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Orthodoxy is the consensus of faith arising from the ancient Fathers and the ecumenical councils. This includes the forty-nine volumes of the Ante- and Post-Nicene Fathers, plus the writings of the hermits and monastics known collectively as the Desert Fathers! It would take an entire issue of *New Horizons* just to outline the topics to be covered in a comparison of Orthodoxy and Reformed Christianity. So the following comments are selective rather than systematic.

First, in my experience, the Orthodox do not understand justification by faith. Some reject it. Others tolerate it, but no one I met or read seemed to really understand it. Just as Protestants can make justification the whole (rather than the beginning) of the gospel, so the Orthodox tend to make sanctification (which they call "theosis" or deification) the whole gospel. In

my estimation, this is a serious defect. It weakens the Orthodox understanding of the nature of saving faith.

Orthodoxy also has a real problem with nominal members. Many Orthodox Christians have a very inadequate understanding of the gospel as Orthodoxy understands it. Their religion is often so intertwined with their ethnicity that being Russian or Greek becomes almost synonymous with being Orthodox. This is, by the way, a critique I heard from the lips of Orthodox leaders themselves. This is not nearly as serious a problem in Reformed churches because our preaching continually stresses the necessity for a personal, intimate trusting, receiving, and resting upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Such an emphasis is blurred among the Orthodox.

Second, the Orthodox have a very inadequate understanding of sovereign grace. It is not fair to say that they are Pelagians. (Pelagius was a Western Christian who denied original sin and taught that man's will is free to choose good.) But they are definitely not Augustinians (Calvinists) on sin and grace. In a conversation with professors and doctoral students about the nature of salvation, I quoted Ezekiel 36:26-27 as showing that there is a grace of God that precedes faith and enables that human response. One professor said in response, "I never thought of that verse in that way before." The Orthodox have not thought a lot about sin, regeneration, election, and so forth. Their view of original sin (a term which they avoid) falls far short of the teaching of Paul. Correspondingly, their understanding of Christ's atonement and God's calling is weak as well. Their views could best be described as undeveloped. If you want to see this for yourself, read Chrysostom on John 6:44-45, and then read Calvin on the same passage.

Third, the Orthodox are passionately committed to the use of icons (flat images of Christ, Mary, or a saint) in worship. Indeed, the annual Feast of Orthodoxy celebrates the restoration of icons to the churches at the end of the Iconoclast controversy (in a.d. 843). For the Orthodox, the making and venerating of icons is the mark of Orthodoxy—showing that one really believes that God the Son, who is consubstantial with the Father, became also truly human. Since I did not venerate icons, I was repeatedly asked whether or not I really believed in the Incarnation. The Orthodox are deeply offended at the suggestion that their veneration of icons is a violation of the second commandment. But after listening patiently to their justifications, I am convinced that whatever their intentions may be, their practice is not biblical. However, our dialogue on the subject sent me back to the Bible to study the issue in a way that I had not done before. The critique I would offer now is considerably different than the traditional Reformed critique of the practice.

Finally, many of the Orthodox tend to have a lower view of the Bible than the ancient Fathers had. At least at St. Vladimir's, Orthodox scholars have been significantly influenced by higher-critical views of Scripture, especially as such views have developed in contemporary Roman Catholic scholarship. This is, however, a point of controversy among the Orthodox, just as it is among Catholics and Protestants. Orthodoxy also has its divisions between liberals and conservatives. But even those who are untainted by higher-critical views rarely accord to Scripture the authority that it claims for itself or which was accorded to it by the Fathers. The voice of Scripture is largely limited to the interpretations of Scripture found in the Fathers.

There is much else to be said. Orthodoxy is passionately committed to monasticism. Its liturgy includes prayers to Mary. And the Divine Liturgy, for all its antiquity, is the product of a long historical process. If you want to follow the "liturgy" that is unquestionably apostolic, then partake of the Lord's Supper, pray the Lord's Prayer, sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," and say "amen," "hallelujah," and "maranatha." Almost everything else in any liturgy is a later adaptation and development.

A Concluding Assessment

But these criticisms do not mean that we have nothing to learn from Orthodoxy. Just as the Orthodox have not thought a lot about matters that have consumed us (such as justification, the nature of Scripture, sovereign grace, and Christ's work on the cross), so we have not thought a lot about what have been their consuming passions: the Incarnation, the meaning of worship, the soul's perfection in the communicable attributes of God (which they call the energies of God), and the disciplines by which we grow in grace. Let us have the maturity to keep the faith as we know it, and to learn from others where we need to learn.

Orthodoxy in many ways fascinates me, but it does not claim my heart nor stir my soul as does the Reformed faith. My firsthand exposure to Orthodoxy has left me all the more convinced that on the essential matters of human sin, divine forgiveness, and Christ's atoning sacrifice, the Reformed faith is the biblical faith. I would love to see my Orthodox friends embrace a more biblical understanding of these matters. And I am grieved when Reformed friends sacrifice this greater good for the considerable but lesser goods of Orthodox liturgy and piety.

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I wrote the following reply:

Dear Dr. Kinneer;

First, on an Orthodox mailing list, I saw a copy of your "A Calvinist Looks at Orthodoxy." I would like to write a somewhat measured response that you might find of interest; please quote me if you like, preferably with attribution and a link to my website (CJSHayward.com). I am a convert Orthodox and a graduate of Calvin College, for which I have fond memories, although I was never a Calvinist, merely a non-Calvinist Evangelical welcomed in the warm embrace of the community. I am presently a Ph.D. student in theology and went to church for some time at St. Vladimir's Seminary and have friends there. I hope that you may find something of interest in my comments here.

Second, you talk about discussion of being Eastern Orthodox versus being orthodox. I would take this as a linguistically confusing matter of the English language, where even in spoken English the context clarifies whether (o)rthodox or (O)rthodox is the meaning intended by the speaker.

Third, I will be focusing mostly on matters I where I would at least suggest some further nuance, but your summary headed "The Appeal of Orthodoxy," among other things in the article, is a good sort of thing and the sort of thing I might find convenient to quote.

Fourth, the Orthodox consensus of faith is not a much longer and less manageable collection of texts than the Ante-Nicene Fathers and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, combined with the even more massive Patrologia Graecae, and other patristic sources. I have said elsewhere that Western and particularly Protestant and Evangelical culture are at their core written cultures, and Orthodoxy is at its core an oral culture that makes use of writing—I could suggest that it was precisely the Reformation that is at the root of what we now know as literate culture. This means that Orthodoxy does not have, as its closest equivalent to the Westminster Confession, a backbreaking load of books that even patristics scholars can't read cover to cover; it means that the closest Orthodox equivalent to Westminster Confession is not anything printed but something alive in the life and culture of the community. (At very least this is true if you exclude the Nicene Creed, which is often considered "what Orthodox are supposed to believe.")

Fifth, regarding the words, "First, in my experience, the Orthodox do not understand justification by faith:" are you contending that former Evangelicals, who had an Evangelical understanding of justification by faith, were probably fairly devout Evangelicals, and are well-represented at St. Vladimir's Seminary, do not understand justification by faith?

There seems to be something going on here that is a mirror image of what you say below about icons: there, you complain about people assuming that if you don't hold the Orthodox position on icons, you don't understand the Christian doctrine of the incarnation; here, you seem in a mirror image to assume that if people don't have a Reformation-compatible understanding of justification by faith, you don't understand the Biblical teaching.

I wrote, for a novella I'm working on, *The Sign of the Grail*, a passage where the main character, an Evangelical, goes to an Orthodox liturgy, hears amidst the mysterious-sounding phrases a reading including "The just shall walk by faith," before the homily:

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.

One of the surprises in the *Divine Comedy*—to a few people at least—is that the Pope is in Hell. Or at least it's a surprise to people who know Dante was a devoted Catholic but don't recognize how good Patriarch John Paul and Patriarch Benedict have been; there have been some moments Catholics aren't proud of, and while Luther doesn't speak for Catholics today, he did put his finger on a lot of things that bothered people then. Now I remember an exasperated Catholic friend asking, "Don't some Protestants know anything else about the Catholic Church *besides* the problems we had in the sixteenth century?" And when Luther made a centerpiece out of what the Bible said about "The righteous shall walk by faith," which was in the Bible's readings today, he changed it, chiefly by using it as a battle axe to attack his opponents and even things he didn't like in Scripture.

It's a little hard to see how Luther changed Paul, since in Paul the words are also a battle axe against legalistic opponents. Or at least it's hard to see directly. Paul, too, is quoting, and I'd like to say exactly what Paul is quoting.

In one of the minor prophets, Habakkuk, the prophet calls out to the Lord and decries the wickedness of those who should be worshiping the Lord. The Lord's response is to say that he's sending in the Babylonians to conquer, and if you want to see some really gruesome archaeological findings, look up what it meant for the Babylonians or Chaldeans to conquer a people. I'm not

saying what they did to the people they conquered because I don't want to leave people here trying to get disturbing images out of people's minds, but this was a terrible doomsday prophecy.

The prophet answered the Lord in anguish and asked how a God whose eyes were too pure to look on evil could possibly punish his wicked people by the much more wicked Babylonians. And the Lord's response is very mysterious: "The righteous shall walk by faith."

Let me ask you a question: How is this an answer to what the prophet asked the Lord? Answer: It isn't. It's a refusal to answer. The same thing could have been said by saying, "I AM the Lord, and my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are my ways your ways. I AM WHO I AM and I will do what I will do, and I am sovereign in this. I choose not to tell you how, in my righteousness, I choose to let my wicked children be punished by the gruesomely wicked Babylonians. Only know this: even in these conditions, the righteous shall walk by faith."

The words "The righteous shall walk by faith" are an enigma, a shroud, and a protecting veil. To use them as Paul did is a legitimate use of authority, an authority that can only be understood from the inside, but these words remain a protecting veil even as they take on a more active role in the New Testament. The New Testament assumes the Old Testament even as the New Testament unlocks the Old Testament.

Paul does not say, "The righteous will walk by sight," even as he invokes the words, "The righteous shall walk by faith."

Here's something to ponder: The righteous shall walk by faith even in their understanding of the words, "The righteous shall walk by faith."

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.

When I showed this to one Reformation scholar to check my treatment of the Reformation, he said that I didn't explain what "The righteous shall walk by faith," but my entire point was to show what the Old Testament quotation could mean *besides* a shibboleth that one is sanctified in entirety in response to faith without one iota being earned by good works. The Reformation teaching, as I understand it, reflects a subtle adaptation of the Pauline usage—and here I might underscore that Paul and Luther had different opponents—and a profound adaptation of the Old Testament usage. And it may be possible to properly understand the Biblical text without interpreting it along Reformation lines.

Sixth, you write that Orthodox tend to have a poor understanding of sovereign grace. I remember how offended my spiritual Father was when I shared that a self-

proclaimed non-ordained Reformed minister—the one person who harassed me when I became Orthodox—said that Orthodox didn't believe in grace. He wasn't offended at me, but I cannot ever recall seeing him be more offended. (Note: that harassment was a bitter experience, but I'd really like to think I'm not bitter towards Calvinists; I have a lot of fond memories from my time at Calvin and some excellent memories of friends who tended to be born and bred Calvinists.)

I would suggest that if you can say that Orthodox do not understand sovereign grace shortly after talking about a heavy emphasis on theosis, you are thinking about Orthodox doctrine through a Western grid and are missing partly some details and partly the big picture of how things fit together.

Seventh, I am slightly surprised that you describe original sin as simply being in the Bible and something Orthodox do not teach. Rom 5:12 as translated in the Vulgate ("...in quo omnes peccaverunt") has a Greek ambiguity translated out, so that a Greek text that could quite justifiably be rendered that death came into the world "because all sinned" (NIV) is unambiguously rendered as saying about Adam, "in whom all have sinned," which in turn fed into Augustine's shaping of the Western doctrine of original sin. It's a little surprising to me that you present this reading of an ambiguity as simply being what the Bible says, so that the Orthodox are deficiently presenting the Bible by not sharing the reading.

Eighth, I too was puzzled by the belief that the Incarnation immediately justifies icons, and I find it less puzzling to hold a more nuanced understanding of the Orthodox teaching that if you understand the Incarnation on patristic terms—instead of by a Reformation definition—its inner logic flows out to the point of an embrace of creation that has room for icons. I won't develop proof-texts here; what I will say is that the kind of logical inference that is made is similar to a kind of logical inference I see in your report, i.e. that "The righteous shall walk by faith" means the Reformation doctrine that we are justified by faith alone and not by works.

I believe that this kind of reasoning is neither automatically right nor automatically wrong, but something that needs to be judged in each case.

Ninth, you write, "Finally, many of the Orthodox tend to have a lower view of the Bible than the ancient Fathers had." When I was about to be received into the Orthodox Church, I told my father that I had been devoted in my reading of the Bible and I would switch to being devoted in my reading of the Fathers. My spiritual father, who is a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary, emphatically asked me to back up a bit, saying that the Bible was the core text and the Fathers were a commentary. He's said that he would consider himself very fortunate if his parishioners would spend half an hour a day reading the Bible. On an Orthodox mailing list, one cradle Orthodox believer among mostly converts quoted as emphatic an Orthodox clergyman saying, "If you don't read

your Bible each day, you're not a Christian." Which I would take as exaggeration, perhaps, but exaggeration as a means of emphasizing something important.

Tenth, regarding higher-critical views at St. Vladimir's Seminary: I agree that it is a problem, but I would remind you of how St. Vladimir's Seminary and St. Tikhon's Seminary compare. St. Vladimir's Seminary is more liberal, and it is an excellent academic environment that gives degrees including an Orthodox M.Min. St. Tikhon's Seminary is academically much looser but it is considered an excellent preparation for ministry. If you saw some degree of liberal academic theology at St. Vladimir's, you are seeing the fruits of your (legitimate) selection. Not that St. Vladimir's Seminary is the only Orthodox seminary which is not completely perfect, but if you want to see preparation for pastoral ministry placed ahead of academic study at an Orthodox institution, St. Tikhon's might interest you.

Eleventh, after I was at Calvin, I remembered one friend, tongue-in-cheek, talking about "the person who led me to Calvin." I also remember that when I was at Calvin, I heard more talk about being "disciples of John Calvin" than being "disciples of Jesus Christ," and talk more about bearing the name of "Calvinist" than "Christian," although this time it wasn't tongue-in-cheek. I notice that you speak of how, "sadly," people "left the Reformed *faith* for Orthodoxy." One response might be one that Reformers like Calvin might share: "Was John Calvin crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of John Calvin?" (Cf I Cor. 1:13)

I left this out at first because it's not as "nice" as some of the others, but I would like to invite you to perhaps leave the "faith" (as you call it) that aims for John Calvin, and embrace the faith that Calvin was trying to re-create in response to abuses in the Western Church. It's still alive, and we still have an open door for you.

When I studied early modern era Orthodox Patriarch Cyril Lucaris, I compared the Eucharistic teaching in his profession of faith to the Eucharistic teaching in Calvin's *Institutes*...

...and concluded that Calvin was more Orthodox. Calvin, among other things, concerned himself with the question of what John Chrysostom taught.

I really don't think I was trying to be a pest. But what I did not develop is that Calvin tried to understand what the Greek Fathers taught, always as an answer to Protestant questions about what, in metaphysical terms, happens to the Holy Gifts. The Orthodox question is less about the transformation of the Holy Gifts than the transformation of those who receive it, and Calvin essentially let the Fathers say whatever they wanted... as long as they answered a question on terms set by the Reformation.

When I read Francis Schaeffer's *How Should We Then Live?*, my immediate reaction was that I wished the book had been "expanded to six times its present length." I have some reservations about the fruitfulness of presuppositional apologetics now.

What I do not have reservations about is saying that there is a valid insight in Schaeffer's approach, and more specifically there is distortion introduced by letting Orthodoxy say whatever it wants... as an answer to Calvinist questions.

To assert, without perceived need for justification, that the Orthodox have very little understanding of sovereign grace and follow this claim by saying that there is a preoccupation with divinization comes across to Orthodox much like saying, "_____ have very little concept of 'medicine' or 'health' and are always frequenting doctor's offices, pharmacies, and exercise clubs." It's a sign that Orthodox are allowed to fill in the details of sin, incarnation, justification, or (in this case) grace, but on condition that they are filling out the Reformation's unquestioned framework.

But the way to understand this is less analysis than worship.

The Orthodox Martial Art is Living the Sermon on the Mount

A look at India in relation to my own roots and formation

My life story up until now would be immeasurably impoverished if the various ways in which India had entered my life would simply be subtracted. I appreciate Indian food, even if I eat it in a non-Indian (Paleo) fashion. And that is not trivial, but there are deeper ways I've been enriched by that great nation. One of these relates to pacifism, where one of India's giants, one certain Gandhi, is perhaps the best-known person in history as I know it for the strength of pacifism. Gandhi might have said with perfect sincerity, "Truth and nonviolence are as old as the hills," but there is a certain motherlode as old as the hills that Gandhi may have mined that motherlode better than anyone else in history.

My own earliest roots, the brand of Christianity I received as mother's milk, were in the Anabaptist tradition, and more specifically the Mennonite Church. I have never been a member of the Amish tradition, but I would contrast Amish as they are known today from Anabaptists in the time of the Reformation. Today Amish are seen as quiet, peaceful, and daft in being picky about which technologies they accept in their community.

(Amish are conservative, perhaps seen as a bit daft, and as Weird Al offensively jabs them, says, "Tonight we're going to party like it's 1699," not seeing what on earth could be good about partying like it's 1699.)

But Amish and other Anabaptists were originally the anarchist wing of the Reformation, the Radical Reformers who were radical even in the eyes of fellow Protestants, the Reformation's Left Coast. That they would have been parodied in the future as "quaint"ly conservative and "please don't point and stare" would have perhaps astonished Zwingli and his radical wing of the Reformation, and all their opponents, alike.

Before and during college, I went on a bit of a journey and a quest to bolster and advocate for pacifism. I studied the Sermon in the Mount; I read Gandhi write things that I thought only a Christian would write. Gandhi did not only say that his three heroes were Jesus, Daniel, and Socrates; he said that Christ offered himself as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, a perfect act. And it was only years later that I learned why Gandhi did not become a Christian, something not given a single stinging word in a single quote I ever saw attributed to Mr. Gandhi.

I was filled with shame when I learned that Gandhi wanted to become a Christian, attended a Christian evangelist's meeting, and was turned away from being accepted into the Christian faith, because of the color of his skin. And he gave advice to Christians on how to present Christianity to Hindus, including displaying the hard parts very clearly, but he was not willing, after that, to consider becoming a Christian.

I would not have felt shame if I heard that Gandhi simply didn't ever consider becoming a Christian, or that he found the Hindu mystical tradition deep enough that he would content himself with Hindu roots, or that he would not have considered adopting the religion of the colonial occupiers of India, or other reasons like Hinduism as perhaps the most cosmopolitan of all world religions, or if we may permit an anachronism, Hinduism as the deep tradition that would years later establish India as a software superpower. These are all bearable. But not becoming Christian because a Christian evangelist turned him away—that is not bearable, but shameful.

In my own journey and life practices, the very oldest of the major works on my website, Blessed are the peacemakers: Real Peace Through Real Strength, was from my own search for pacifism. I don't deny that the nonviolent power that Gandhi described in terms of "satyagraha" or hold onto Truth (from the Sanskrit), nor that satyagraha became incarnate with Indian flesh. "I am a man, so nothing that is human is alien to me," as an ancient Roman said. The Church Fathers who quickly saw a path that meets its fruition in Christianity in philosophy or Plato is able to read of the practice of satyagraha and nonviolence, and the Indian cardinal virtue of ahimsa that recognizes you are tied to the other person and cannot harm the other without harming yourself, can be coherently interpreted without recognizing what Gandhi took, without compromise, from Christianity and the Sermon on the Mount. If Plato or Platonism can be purified, and someone *Taoism can be purified*, then perhaps something can be

purified from Gandhi and the one nation on earth that established itself as sovereign and independent without shedding a drop of enemy blood.

I would like to briefly stop at C.S. Lewis and what is apparently an attack on satyagraha. The architect of "mere Christianity" as it is established in the West makes the only external addition to what is called "mere Christianity" that is in fact not part of Christianity as it was known then. He describes and condemns a guilt manipulation that one holds oneself hostage to make pity a weapon. And he is the only Protestant writer I have read who, in papers like "Why I am not a Pacifist," says not only that Christians may wage war but in fact that conscientious exemption is not acceptable in any sense, and pacifists as much as anyone else should be compelled to try their best to kill men in military service. And on that point I really give Lewis an F. Ruling out even alternative service for people who believe it is always wrong to kill is FAIL, at least for someone pushing a comprehensive plan of "mere Christianity."

A second look at my roots

I mentioned Anabaptism or Mennonites earlier as my earliest roots, and I have revisited them, not as a matter of regression but pushing a divide further. And there are some points of contact. The Anabaptist movement has three self-identified points of distinction:

1. A "believer's baptism", meaning baptism only on adult profession of faith,
2. A refusal to take oaths under any circumstance.
3. Pacifism.

On the first point there is a disagreement between Orthodoxy and the Anabaptist tradition; what Anabaptists sought to dismantle in saying "Infant baptism is of the Devil," is one of many continuities with Orthodoxy that some in the West has opted out of.

On the second point, there is strong agreement. Now in pastoral terms there is an issue of people's comfort with a teaching, and it is not pastorally helpful to take a teaching someone is not ready to recognize, and ram it down that person's throat rather than allowing that person to grow to accept the teaching. But as far as oaths go, there was one Athonite monk who refused to take a required oath before testifying in a court of law, and endured without complaint the four months of prison that he was punished with before refusing to take an oath. St. John Chrysostom, called "the moral theologian among the Fathers par excellence," throughout every work that I have read, keeps on returning to certain moral topics regardless of perception. He keeps on hitting on the necessity of sharing with the poor, and of the theatre "in which the common nature of

women is affronted" (think Internet porn, as it existed in the fourth century; to be an actress included being a member of a much older profession), and he more than once drops the hammer on the practice of taking oaths at all. Martyrs and Passion-bearers Boris and Gleb, who were rulers in authority who chose to be murdered rather than take the sword, and warrior-saints like the Greatmartyr, Victory-bearer and Wonderworker George. Both are treasures of the Orthodox Church, and while a soldier who has gone on active duty cannot become clergy, he can become a saint. I might also comment that in years back, when I was exploring and searching, Christians who believed in a just war, without exception, met my forceful arguing only with gentleness and kindness. If you are one of those people, this piece is dedicated to you.

But as regards the question of pacifism, I regard my own "Blessed are the Peacemakers: Real Peace Through Real Strength" as an interesting early step, particularly as there weren't too many other pieces playing in the same space that I was able to find. I asked a number of other people for feedback, and I regret my own sophomoric side of dealings with mature Christians who believe in a just war and who in every sense embodied what I advocate for here. (Wheaton College president Dr. J. Richard Chase asked for a copy for his personal files; part of this was undoubtedly kindness, but the kind gesture was against a backdrop where he probably had not seen too many works like it at all, even if he searched for them.) I've come back to review it, and there are things I wouldn't say now in this the very oldest and earliest of my works. But my coming back to it after all these years is not so much a matter of recognizing I was *young* and *idealistic* and thinking I am *practical* and *realistic* now, but looking again and saying that *I did not go nearly far enough*.

(Coming back years later deepened in the Orthodox spiritual tradition, or at least slightly less immature, my further knowledge has unlocked things in my earlier position that I could not understand in my early career as a convinced pacifist.)

But let us not demand perfection from everyone, and give one concession, at least, for lawful gun ownership.

A cue from the military that might matter to gun owners

One Orthodox faithful explained gun ownership and challenged people who regarded gun ownership as simply nothing but a passion of anger. And he explained how, as a loving and careful father, he hopes to never fire his gun "live", but as a loving and responsible husband and father, he knows what he would do if someone broke into his house with intent to do harm. He would bring such killing to confession, but he had his priorities straight.

(Note that this is reasoning about what *would* happen in an imagined scenario, not what *was* happening, a distinction which is important in Orthodox mystical theology.)

I have heard gun control advocates talk about how tragic it was when someone heavily armed opened fire on children; I haven't yet heard a rebuttal after a card-carrying NRA member answered, "Yes, it was tragic not only that that started, but that there was no one lawfully possessing firearms available to stop the crime. Did you hear about one of those many incidents that never appears on television, where for instance a man armed to kill a bear entered a church sanctuary with intent to do ill, and an off-duty security guard who was carrying a firearm legally and with explicit permission of her church shot and stopped a crime?"

And this may be just my observation, but the primary approach to persuasion taken by gun control advocates is to show hard-hitting images of traumatized people after an active shooter met no speed bump even, and the primary approach to persuasion taken by the gun lobby is to mount a logical argument appealing to research and statistics. Now as a mathematician I understand Mark Twain's point that there are three types of lies (lies, _____ lies, and statistics), and I don't put my weight onto statistics I haven't seen investigated, but the question between gun control and gun lobby isn't a matter of deciding which side has cooked their books. Perhaps the gun lobby *has* cooked their books: but it is a little sad when only one side of a discussion argues from research, evidence, and statistics.

I may be hypocritical or a freeloading parasite when I say this, but I do not personally own a gun; I never have and probably never will. I have some skill with firearms, but that is beside the point. But I feel safer now that my state has legalized carrying concealed firearms, with a few asterisks about how to opt out on your property. I would rather be in a situation where there are two guns in a room, owned by a criminal and meant for a crime, and one by a law-abiding citizen intending to stop crime in the most drastic circumstances, than only the gun carried by a criminal. I feel safer knowing that gun-using criminals do not know where there is a lawfully carried firearm, and criminals simply do not know if I am carrying a .45 with hollow-nosed rounds.

But if you're keeping a firearm by your bed for self-defense, may I ask if you are also, for instance, investing in good night vision? Have you taken the time to install a respectable home security system? This may be slightly less "sexy" than having a powerful gun at hand, but have you established the powerful and immediate deterrent of flooding your home with light (a thief's worst enemy) if someone approaches?

And have you considered that it may be easier, after training, to hit someone while shooting out a solid stream of pepper spray—especially in poor lighting, where at least without night vision you can't really aim—than the few rounds in a gun's magazine? And that the effects on your house are much easier to clean up from a vile liquid than a few bullet holes after a powerful gun has shot through an intruder's body and hit the wall behind. Killing someone, however justified it may be, is a traumatic experience; even for trained law enforcement professionals, for instance, killing in the line of duty is trauma

and good police chiefs can mandate that an officer who has killed in the line of duty get a year's counseling. Training as a law enforcement professional or soldier does not change the fact that it is traumatic to kill another person. If I had a choice between stopping a dozen innocent men with pepper spray and stopping one guilty man with a shot through the heart, I know which one I would rather remember when I look in the mirror each day.

For a first cue from the military, snipers, who know well enough how to fire a rifle at a paper target, are given one round and only one round to keep with them, carry, hold, and move around, and then after a couple of days are given one shot to take a "hostage situation" (balloon full of oatmeal or whatever) shot. Most fail the first time. With a bit more training and preparation, it gets to one shot, one kill. But it takes some training to get there. I wouldn't myself trust that with one shot, cold and in a panic, to hit home.

But with all that preface stated, may I ask people who look for safety via firearms to at least take a cue from the military?

Sun Tzu's classic *The Art of War* c. 500 BC, adapted for the business world in sometimes flaky ways, is arguably the greatest classic in military strategy and usually considered to be less dated than the best of the best from 100 years ago.

If one were to condense the multi-faceted classic into a single sentence, it should probably be one gem taken from the text, "All warfare amounts to deception." To put it starkly, war is not achieved by killing people, with psychological considerations in any sense being a side issue. War is about deceiving people; killing people has more of a supporting role than anything else. The terms "strategy" and "strategem" are forms of the same basic word; they amount to how to trick the opponent. You don't win well by killing each other's soldiers and seeing who has some left over at the end; military forces at any rate fall apart at a third (maybe less) casualties, and rank and file U.S. troops have guns and ammunition intended to seriously wound in the average case, but not kill. (Part of this is love for enemies; part of it is a tactical consideration that if you instantly kill an enemy soldier, you take one man out of action; if you seriously wound a soldier with a wound that may be treatable, you take three men out of action.)

One ancient account talks about how a military leader stripped a force of thousand down to a few hundred, and gave them torches and the shofars that one would use at the head of a host. Then they crept around the host, surrounded it, and blasted the horn. The entire enemy warhost, "like the sand at a seashore for multitude", fell into deep panic and was routed, falling to each other's swords (original text).

World War II might have been won under even more dire circumstances, but at least it was not the armies of second-born sons whose blood was poured out like water who won D-Day without strategem. Also contributing to that scenario was an enormous effort to build up rubber balloon versions of tanks at the like, massing to look from the

air like the Allies were intending to invade from the point where the English Channel was narrowest, but sent a double agent to keep Hitler believing the D-Day invasion was just a diversion and keeping his main forces to where the channel was nearest and therefore out of the way when the breach was made on Normandy beach.

What does this have to do with home security? Everything. You're not firing on all pistons if you stop with a gun, and I do not mean that you need more firepower, or really even more gadgets.

Jack MacLean's *Secrets of a Superthief* says, on the cover:

"They said I was the best, the one the police called the 'Superthief.' Before I went straight I picked every lock, turned off every alarm, found every hiding place. I know how burglars get inside—and what gets them out. If you're smart, you'll pay attention to what I have to say..."

Possibly the most valuable observation in the text is that *home security should be 60% psychological and 40% physical*, and it is seriously confused to think that you can win a physical arms race with a thief who wants to get in and isn't afraid of you. If you change your doors for heavier doors and less glass then a determined intruder will just change an already big crowbar for an even bigger crowbar. Then what other options are there? the book has some options; drawn from it:

Situation: There is an intruder accidentally making sounds in your house, or at least you think it is an intruder.

You say, crossly, with irritation and as much frosty, icy condescension as you can muster, "Yes, Sweetie, I *know* what the *machine gun* will do to the *walls*. I don't *care*. I'm going to give 60 more seconds for the SWAT team to get here, and then I'm taking care of it *MY* way."

Situation: A thief is casing your back door for possible entrance.

Have a clearly scribbled note on your back door, fresh-looking note that says, "Honey, will you please talk to Billy? He's let that stupid pet rattlesnake escape his cage again, and right now, I can't even find that idiotic scorpion! Can you explain to him that this is UNACCEPTABLE?"

(Women have sometimes taken to putting a pair of size 17 men's boots outside the door each evening.)

Does it work? Perhaps you may not sound entirely believable, but nerves roughened by intruding in unknown situations where you don't know how people are armed and you could legally be killed tell a different story. (The "Superthief" tells of not

being able to count how many terrifying times he heard a barking dog answered by "Shaddap, Max!"

The most implausible note he described, more humorous than believable, was a notice when he wanted people to leave him alone, was a note saying that he had a severe case of crabs, and the crabs were strong enough to break people's fingers with their claws.

However, it was enough to motivate other convicted felons in prison to simply leave him alone.

There's a lot that can be accomplished by violence in certain very unhappy circumstances, and Gandhi respected those who use force nobly. Seriously, he did:

The people of a village near Bettiah told me that they had run away whilst the police were looting their houses and molesting their womenfolk. When they said that they had run away because I had told them to be nonviolent, I hung my head in shame. I assured them that such was not the meaning of my nonviolence. I expected them to intercept the mightiest power that might be in the act of harming those who were under their protection, and draw without retaliation all harm upon their own heads even to the point of death, but never to run away from the storm centre. It was manly enough to defend one's property, honour or religion at the point of the sword. It was manlier and nobler to defend them without seeking to injure the wrongdoer. But it was unmanly, unnatural and dishonourable to forsake the post of duty and, in order to save one's skin, to leave property, honour or religion to the mercy of the wrongdoer. I could see my way of delivering the message of ahimsa to those who knew how to die, not to those who were afraid of death.
- Gandhiji in Indian Villages by Mahadev Desai

But there is more...

...and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

"Our social program is the Trinity"

Of all the brief sayings that most mystifies people, "Our social program is the Trinity" may be the most confusing. A social program includes a blueprint for some more or less vaguely Utopian social order, and how by ~~civil war~~ politics it is possible to influence, manipulate, coerce, intimidate, bamboozle a plan to concretely build things on earth. And given such a bulleted list of key features to a social program, it seems an extremely strained reading of the doctrine of the Trinity.

But may I ask: What about devout Christian family communities saying, "Our juvenile correctional system is parents who love each other, stay married to each other,

and love and discipline their children?" That's wordier, but the key point lies in a similar vein. If you go to a staunch Evangelical community, you may not see terribly many prisons, courthouses, correctional officers, and so on and so forth, but the purpose of a staunch Evangelical community is not that it has abundant "department of corrections" responses to a 10-year-old arrested for pushing hard drugs or a 12-year-old arrested for rape; however much there may be support for repentance, an ounce of prevention is worth a much more than a ton of cure, and an ounce of bored children in a less-than-ideal Bible study is worth years of expensive state programs to care for children who have been incarcerated.

And in that sense, prayerful life, or the entire struggle in spiritual discipline, is the Orthodox martial art. Certain threads more than others, but the disciplined Orthodox life offers more than a martial art as wholesome homes offers something better than a state Department of Corrections or a doctrine of the Trinity that effectively answers social planners: "There are more things in Heaven and earth, visible and spiritual, than are even *dreamed* of in your ideologies."

Orthodox have various statements of how monasticism and the laity are compared, if they should be; I am of the opinion that it is beneficial to monastics to regard laity as fully equal, and laity to regard monastics as immeasurably above them. But some things in monasticism are falsely criticized as "just because it's monasticism:" taking passages of the Bible at face value is not, or at least should not, be a particularly distinctive feature of monasticism. And some people have said that Lent is just how Orthodoxy should be year round, and it makes sense to say that the bulk of monasticism is just how all Orthodox Christians should be.

Monasticism is privilege.

Monasticism is privilege, easily on par with a full ride scholarship at a top-notch university. But doesn't it entail poverty, obedience, and chastity? Well, of course. Aren't they difficult? Yes. But the vow of poverty, of never providing for your future self, is a vow of accepting the Providence who knows and loves you (past, present, and future) more than you could possibly ask. It is one of three medications that carves out a niche for abundant health. Perhaps most laity should observe chastity through faithfulness, but it is the same virtue that powers one practice and the other.

We are to be as the birds of the air, highlighted in the Sermon on the Mount:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Do you think you can add one single hour to your life by taking thought? You might as well try by taking thought to work your way into being a foot taller! And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or, 'What shall we drink?' or, 'Wherewithal shall we be clothed'? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

There is something very powerful here, a something that is missed in business as usual in the U.S. Business as usual means heaping up treasures on earth, saying "God helps those who help themselves" (a quotation from Benjamin Franklin not found anywhere in the Bible), to be your own Providence. The idea that we are to do God's job as our Providence is at times treated harshly by Christ (Luke 12:15):

And [Jesus] said unto them, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?' And he said, 'This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I

bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said unto him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?' So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

I wrote about the husband who owned a gun as a means of being responsible towards his family: but my inward wincing was less that firing a gun is not turning the other cheek, than that he responded out of a spiritual illusion. This side of the Fall, we cannot ever arrange things right, and we do not do well to oust God so that we can get back to steering the helm of our lives *ourselves*.

It may or may not be appropriate for Orthodox laity to arm themselves, but whatever other reasons there may be for arming yourself, shutting off risk is not one of them. It is non-negotiable that no matter what hedge we surround ourselves with, the sand we grasp will slip through our fingers, and this is actually good news: we have another option, living the Sermon on the Mount, not harmed because we do not have control, and free because we know we do not need to have control, open to a larger world than the constricted world we keep on making for ourselves.

There was a Linux fortune that said, on eloquent terms that I cannot fully reproduce, that there were a bunch of starfish clinging to rocks on the bottom of a rapidly flowing river, holding the rocks tightly and terrified they would lose their grip. Then one of them suddenly let go, was battered against a few rocks, and then finding a place in the flow. And, perhaps in a dig at Christianity, the other starfish who didn't get it called the one starfish a Messiah and worshiped him while continuing to cling, and remaining terrified of losing their grip on the rock.

(But we are called to do *both*: worship the Man, *and* imitate him.)

The Sermon on the Mount would almost speak more strongly about violence being unworthy of Christians if it didn't address violence. The direct mention shadows the overarching theme, where silence speaks more powerfully than words.

But there are in fact words:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:' But I say unto you, 'Ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.' And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.' But I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them

that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;' Ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

St. Paul's empathic plea to Christians to not demean themselves and the Church by secular lawsuits against fellow Christians ("Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?") is cut from the same cloth.

But there is *more*.

How does the Orthodox Christian martial art really work?

Returning the theme of monasticism as privilege, one aspect of the depth of monasticism is that monks are not to defend themselves by force. When they are accused, they are not to defend themselves in words, as Christ Himself remained silent before Pilate (Note:...and terrorized Pilate more than any threat could have done). And this is not exactly a mainstream approach in the West. It's a bit of an oblong concept: something that is a common assumption between the various permutations of pacifism and just war is that, once you've decided what are the appropriate means for self-defense, you can and should use the most effective appropriate means to end the danger with minimal harm to yourself and others. It just goes without saying that whatever limits may be, obviously defending yourself with speech is appropriate. But the monastic interpretation of "Ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." is quite simply that we are not to defend ourselves. We are not to defend ourself by means of lethal force; we are not to defend ourselves by means of less lethal force; we are not to defend ourselves even by words; we are not to defend ourselves even in thoughts. Not a single angry thought is permitted to us, and there are two kinds of power that we wield after renouncing power.

The first kind of power, the (relatively) obvious one, is highlighted in a story from *A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul*:

In the days when an ice cream sundae cost much less, a 10-year old boy entered a hotel coffee shop and sat at a table. A waitress put a glass of water in front of him. "How much is an ice cream sundae?" "Fifty cents," replied the waitress. The little boy pulled his hand out of his pocket and studied a number of coins in it. "How much is a dish of plain ice cream?" he inquired.

Some people were now waiting for a table and the waitress was a bit impatient. "Thirty-five cents," she said brusquely. The little boy again counted the coins. "I'll have the plain ice cream," he said.

The waitress brought the ice cream, put the bill on the table, and walked away. The boy finished the ice cream, paid the cashier and departed. When the waitress came back, she began wiping down the table and then swallowed hard at what she saw. There, placed neatly beside the empty dish, were two nickels and five pennies - her tip.

C.S. Lewis's article, "Why I Am Not a Pacifist" which would be more accurately be titled, for what it says, "Why I Believe No Christian Should Be a Pacifist Nor Have Either Their Church Teachings or Their Conscience Respected As a Conscientious Objector," dismissed what appeared to be Gandhi's toolchest as a dog lying in a manger (as in "Aesop's Fables:" which not only does not eat but also prevents other animals from eating). And it is not clear to me that all of the tools Gandhi used are appropriate: I'm not sure there is ever reason to seek out suffering, and after the Church's decision to both canonize St. Ignatius (who brought martyrdom down on himself), and forbid future Orthodox Christians from trying to provoke martyrdom, apart from strained readings of the Sermon on the Mount, I can't remember seeing any subsequent interpretations of hunger strike as appropriate. In other words, the Sermon on the Mount may give us tools, including a Do not resist evil that is never separate from the more foundational Truth in Do not worry, does not justify other tactics such as civil disobedience without *direct* provocation, or hunger strikes.

The Brothers Karamazov.

There's plenty of reason for fasting, of course, but fasting is not a tool for straightening out God and his Providence: fasting is a tool to let God straighten you out. And in fact the Sermon on the Mount tells us that fasting, like prayer, should be as secret as manageable. Then it can reach its full power. However, Lewis himself may have furnished the most touching portrayal of Gandhi's toolbox in Christian literature of all that I have read, in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*:

"Hail, Aslan!" came his shrill voice. I have the honor—" But then he suddenly stopped.

The fact was that he still had no tail—whether that Lucy had forgotten it or that her cordial, though it could heal wounds, could not make things grow again. Reepicheep became aware of his loss as he made his bow; perhaps it altered something in his balance. He looked over his right shoulder. Failing to see his tail, he strained his neck further till he had to turn his shoulders and

his whole body followeed. But by that time his hind-quarters had turned too and were out of sight. Then he strained his neck looking his shoulder again, with the same result. Only after he had turned completely round three times did he realize the dreadful truth.

"I am confounded," said Reepicheep to Aslan. "I am completely out of countenance. I must crave your indulgence for appearing in this unseemly fashion."

"It becomes you very well, Small One," said Aslan.

"All the same," replied Reepicheep, "if anything could be done . . . Perhaps her Majesty?" and here he bowed to Lucy.

"But what do you want with a tail?" asked Aslan.

"Sir," said the Mouse, "I can eat and sleep and die for my King without one. But a tail is the honor and glory of a Mouse."

I have sometimes wondered, friend," said Aslan, "whether you do not think too much about your honor."

"Highest of all High Kings," said Reepicheep, "permit me to remind you that a very small size has been bestowed on us Mice, and if we did not guard our dignity, some (who weigh worth by inches) would allow themselves very unsuitable pleasantries at our expense. That is why I have been at some pains to make it known that no one who does not wish to feel this sword as near his heart as I can reach shall talk in my presence about Traps or Toasted Cheese or Candles: no, Sir—not the tallest fool in Narnia!" Here he glared very fiercely up at Wimbleweather, but the Giant, who was always at a stage behind everyone else, had not yet discovered what was being talked about down at his feet, and so missed the point.

"Why have your followers all drawn *their* swords, may I ask?" said Aslan.

"May it please your High Majesty," said the second Mouse, whose name was Peepiceek, "we are all waiting to cut off our own tails if our Chief must go without his. We will not bear the shame of wearing an honor which is denied to the High Mouse."

"Ah!" roared Aslan. "You have conquered me. You have great hearts. Not for the sake of your dignity, Reepicheep, but for the sake of the love that is between you and your people, and still more for the kindness your people showed me long ago when you ate away the cords that bound me on the Stone Table (and it was then, though you have long forgotten it, that you began to be Talking Mice), you shall have your tail again."

On an immediate level, this is what nonviolent resistance may seem to have. But the "big picture" realization was one that I realized in discussion with one friend about "What will you do in situation X [which had not, and has not, happened]?" and I told a joke:

A young man who was a prospective captain of a ship was being quizzed about how he would handle difficulties.

The person quizzing him said, "What would you do if a storm came?"

"I'd drop an anchor."

"OK; suppose that the anchor gets stuck and won't come up, and later on another storm came up again. What would you do?"

"I'd drop another anchor."

"Ok, and if that gets stuck and won't come up, and later on you see another storm, what would you do?"

"Where on earth are you getting all these anchors from?"

"From the same place you're getting all these storms from!"

Fr. Thomas Hopko's 55 Maxims says, "Flee imagination, fantasy, analysis, figuring things out," and connects with "What would you do in situation X?" and the point I tried to make in *Treasures in Heaven: The Inner Meaning of "Do Not Store Up Treasures on Earth"*. We are not to store up treasures on earth only in things external to our bodies; we are not to store up internal treasures on earth, things that exist in our minds.

One of these kinds of false treasure exists in terms of our perceived need to map everything we do out in advance. One teacher talked about how some scholar claimed to map out what St. Irenaeus would have said in various circumstances that hadn't happened: "What would St. Irenaeus have said if Adam and Eve, with their immediate children, had not sinned, but their grandchild did?" And regardless of the content of such scholarship, it is imposing on St. Irenaeus something utterly foreign to his mindset. As I have seen the academic community today, it is natural both to ask, "What is ...?" and "What would ...?" when trying to understand something. In patristic writers, only one of the two basic kinds of questions is valid for understanding something: "What is ...?" And no real saint that I am aware of announces that we must have a plan that anticipates every possibility before we act. Part of the point in the Sermon on the Mount is that there is no need for planning. It is as if this dialogue plays out:

God: Will you trust me on this?

Us: I don't know. I'm trying to trust you, but I really don't understand what you are trying to do with me here.

God: I *know* you don't know. That's my *point*. As your Spiritual Father, I *am not asking you to do my thinking for for me*. I am asking you to trust me. Do you trust me?

Us: I'm trying to fit things together, really I am, and maybe can work together if I am able to work out a plan. Could you work with me on this?

God: I am very interested in working with you. *Do you trust me?*

It is not my point—and probably not my position—to try to tell fellow Orthodox what saints' footsteps they may follow. There are warrior-saints, and then there is St. Acacius, mentioned in St. John Climacus's *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, who obediently served an abusive elder for nine years until he died, and when asked at his grave, "Brother Acacius, are you dead?" called out from beyond the grave, "No, Father, how is it possible for an obedient man to die?" And there are many others of various stripes, a kaleidoscope to the glory of God.

It is not my point—and probably not my position—to tell other Orthodox Christians whether they should join the military, or under what (if any) conditions firearm ownership is appropriate, or other questions regarding violence. I have a hunch that a good set of bright lights that turn on instantly whenever someone approaches your house may, at least by itself, provide a more effective deterrent than a gun for when an intruder is already in your house. And it may be a mistake to assume that the real "I'm taking it seriously" way to address threats is something that *starts* with weapons. However, at least for the sake of argument, I do not wish to give a prescription for how others may relate to violence. But it is my direct wish to challenge the main assumption that keeps popping up when Christians regard violence as the real practical power.

One point regarding the Sermon on the Mount is that this side of Heaven, control that you plan out is simply impossible. The task is not to God's thinking for him; it is to accept his Providence as intended to bless you entirely, and trust him with the complete trust that the Sermon on the Mount cries out. This may mean being with the birds of the field and the lilies of the field, and being so with (in some cases) or without openness to using violence. And, though this is a lesser point, I'm a little wary of a second assumption that lurks under the covers: "Pacifism is idealistic and appropriate for an ideal world, while sometimes using force is what works in the non-ideal world that we have." But there is confusion for people stressed and worried to give that line to "Each day has enough trouble of its own." I've had times with more stress in my life, and times with less, and it may more be true that in an ideal world, we wouldn't need "Each day has enough trouble of its own, but in the rough circumstances in which we live, we need

to take things one day at a time, and we need it much more than we would if we were in Paradise.

One ex-military person I spoke with talked about how top brass would keep on waking everyone up at very late night / early morning, sound the alarm, say the USSR was invading NOW, and everybody had to get up and go out to the tanks. And so soldiers would grudgingly walk out, dragging their rifles by the muzzle, and get into the tanks, and the live question in everyone's eyes was whether the officers would call off the exercise before they got the tanks out and into mud. The live concern here is whether the soldiers would have to clean the mud off the tanks for moving into the field the next morning. And he talked about idealistically believing that if only he and his colleagues trained hard enough, no one would attack anyone else.

I remember hearing a missionary's kid who grew up somewhere on the African continent saying, "You can't defeat people who have nothing to lose!" and thinking that that sounded awfully idealistic, something I really wanted to believe but couldn't, but that was over a decade ago, and since then the U.S. has been involved in multiple wars against third world nations and perhaps won none of them. World War I proudly paraded a mechanized army down to California for a sort of extended field training exercise where the entire mechanized army failed to apprehend the one single Mexican bandit that they were searching for. In Vietnam, the U.S. strategy was, "Our cool gadgets will win this war for us," the Viet Cong's strategy was to maximize the war's unpopularity back home ("ballbuster": a non-lethal anti-personnel mine used by the Viet Cong, just powerful enough to crush testicles), and the present strategy in the present conflict of shooting at ISIL from the air and arming jihadists to fight ISIL jihadists is really less of a military strategy, properly speaking, than an all-American marketing strategy.

Having control this side of Heaven is not possible, and believing that firearms can be a way to opt-out of the conditions Sermon on the Mount addresses in its prescriptions. In that sense gun ownership is dangerous, because even if you accept 100% of what NRA advocates say, you have effectively closed your eyes to some of the bedrock of what the Sermon on the Mount says. In another matter, that of finances, the Fathers are quite clear: "That robe, hanging in your closet, belongs to the poor;" "Feeding the hungry is greater work than raising the dead." If your firearm costs you the ability to live the Sermon on the Mount, drop it off at the police department; it is better for you to enter eternal life as killed where a firearm would have let you stop a crime, than to have your whole body (and your gun with it) cast into Hell.

I might briefly comment that I have brief experience with martial arts, and I have consistently noticed that they had become the driest portions of my spiritual life. Firearms and martial arts, if they are to be useful, depend on constant practice and preparation. As the banner for every school but one of Kuk Sool Won, "We need more

practice!" At the grandmaster's school, the banner says, "You need more practice!" The common concensus is that with martial arts, you fight noticeably better within months, but real mastery takes years, and years, and years. And even then you don't have a money-back guarantee; any martial arts instructor worth anything will make it clear before you reach black belt level (arguably before you reach anything above white belt) that martial arts instructors will make it abundantly clear that martial arts are no silver bullet; you may be safer in a conflict but not safe against every threat; someone testing for black belt can, if arrogant enough, wind up with a hole in the head. There have been attempts to make something simply easier to learn and remember—Goshin Jitsu is meant to be simple and effective—but keeping up on a martial art just because it might be useful in a fight is a bit like spending a few hours a week practicing a spare profession so that if you happen to lose your job you have a spare profession ready and waiting for you. It's a lot of work, and it's no more of a guarantee at that.

And there is a spiritual toll for practicing violence over and over and over. You sink in a lot of time that might be better spent sharpening your skills in your own profession. Aiki Ninjutsu talks about becoming a compassionate protector of others, and talks about building great compassion to offset the incredible destructiveness of the techniques. With all due respect, I need to give all the compassion to others that I can give, without preventably siphoning it off to offset other considerations. Perhaps you can numb or ignore what it feels like to practice violence on others and have others practice violence on itself; and martial arts have an occult ambiance; the concept of ki / qi / chi is a Buddhist practice, not really Christian, and there is a good case to be made that it's magical, even without taking a common sense look at the philosophies Eastern martial arts draw on, which are almost invariably laden with an occult dimension.

...and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

Thoughts Which Determine Our Lives

Much of what I wrote in "Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: Beyond *The Secret* and the Law of Attraction" relates here. After Providence, here is perhaps the core payload for what is the Orthodox martial art.

The English word "practice" has two senses. One is, as a musician says, "I'm practicing," meaning, "I am taking time to make dry runs at this skill and sharpen it as much as possible." Or one speaks of a doctor "practicing medicine," meaning "I am exercising and doing the proper live activity in my profession." I will use the terms musician-style-practice and doctor-style-practice to distinguish the two meanings

With both firearms and martial arts, you need to practice to keep an edge, practice in the sense of the musician-style-practice. Competence requires an ongoing time sink. But live doctor-style-practice, comes very, very rarely.

One communication textbook talked about what your odds were for being assaulted on your way home: 1 in 10, 1 in 100, 1 in 1000, or 1 in 10,000. The point was that the more TV you watch, the more you overestimate the chances of suffering a violent response. The heaviest TV viewers expected a 1 in 10 chance of assault. The actual figure was the 1 in 10,000 per night figure. Notwithstanding shows glamorizing a highly romanticized view of law enforcement—when did a police show ever depict an officer filling out an hour of paperwork, or spending a day doing a daily grind of dull responsibilities—police officers draw their weapons (excluding training) perhaps once every few years.

In the musician-style-practice, you only practice very, very rarely, even including officers. No matter how much preparation it takes to keep a sharp edge, live doctor-style-practice is, and should be, very rare.

The discipline of nepsis or spiritual watchfulness over thoughts, has more than one relevance, but a nepsis that watches for and cuts off warring thoughts at the first is invaluable. Though this is a different meaning than when I last saw it, "They say that if you must resort to violence, you have already lost." Read my article *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*: then read Elder Thaddeus's original *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives* and learn to appreciate your warring thoughts in deeper ways.

It may seem almost "sexist" that the blame, or at least attention and corrections, should be placed entirely on one side, yours; but this dark cloud hides an astonishing silver lining. If the correction is only put on one side, so is the power to change and make the situation better. Perhaps most (not all) conflicts include a feedback loop of escalating anger (and one that most or all truly good martial artists know how to shut down, by for instance meekly saying, "You're the tough guy"—and this was a third-degree black belt who meekly and submissively opted out of having to be the tough guy). There is a classic enlightenment exercise where a group of sailors stand in a ring, with instructions to touch the shoulder of the soldier exactly as yours was pressed. And someone touches one of the sailors lightly, with one light finger press. The "equal to what happened to me" results in a heavy finger press, and before too long at all the light touch has become a meaty, and nasty, punch. It is very hard at times, but love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully use you: but you have the power, many times, to shut down the escalating unmerry merry-go-round that others will not step off of. Not that this is only for pacifists; I have seen soldiers beautifully live out of this power, and people who weren't specifically soldiers but believed in a just war (a western concept that never really took in Orthodoxy even though Orthodoxy never really places an expectation of becoming a pacifist). If Elder Thaddeus's sage advice could be summed up in a single maxim, it might be Proverbs 15:1: "Anger slays even wise men; yet a submissive answer turns away wrath: but a grievous word stirs up anger."

Gandhi said, "An eye for an eye only ends by making the whole world blind." each day and practicing our nonviolent thoughts (doctor-style-practice) a watchfulness in thoughts that is alert to snuff out smoulders when it is small rather than heroically deluging a burning house, is harder up front, but *far* easier down the road.

It sounds small, but the results down the road are anything but small.

Holy and blinding arrogance

Elsewhere in *The Art of War*, Sun Tzu writes:

It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle.

And this is far from what the Orthodox Church has to offer. Do we need to know the demons? *No*. The Philokalia may say as much about demons as any Orthodox writing may have, but we are allowed arrogance such as Sun Tzu would have considered a fatal weakness. As regards the demons, we are to be really, properly, truly, and blindingly arrogant, like the Orthodox elder who was speaking with a novice about a strange clatter the novice heard in a courtyard and told the novice, "It is only the demons. Pay it no mind." This is cut from the same cloth as the liturgical references to "the feeble audacity of the demons." The mind takes the shape of whatever it contemplates, hence St. Paul's words, Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. We should look at Light, not darkness; live the Sermon on the Mount, and then, and not before, will we understand that the Light knows Himself and the darkness; the darkness knows neither itself nor the Light. If the spiritual eye receives things that make an impression on it, it matters what items it receives impressions from. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light: "single" in this context is cut from the same cloth as the Beatitudes that Orthodox chant in Liturgy, confessing in abbreviated form the entire Sermon on the Mount.

It has been said, "You can choose your options, but you cannot choose the consequences of your actions." You can choose whether to look at Light or darkness: in so doing you may choose, by gazing on the Light, to be filled with peace, or to gaze deeply into darkness (and have darkness gaze into you) by training your eyes on the whirlpool of circumstances all of us face. The option is not presented to try to do God's thinking for him, and analyze and work out how we will handle the future, and instead of darkness have all of the joys of peace that beholds the Light of God.

O that we could reach far enough into overreaching arrogance that we could, like saints old and new, look upon good and bad people and only see the beauty of the image of God in each!

Conclusion

A lot has been covered here; the past few paragraphs narrate what, in a very specific sense, can be done as the Orthodox martial art. Broadly and in a deeper sense, holiness matters.

We live in turbulent times, as did Elder Thaddeus, who wrote, *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*, a gift given to me by a friend who gave a very modest recommendation: "It's not terribly deep, but I find it helpful.". After reading it and writing, "Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: Beyond *The Secret* and the Law of Attraction," I came up to him and told him he'd undersold it. It wasn't long before he agreed.

We live in turbulent times, and probably more turbulent and rougher as time goes on. But there is an alternative to being whipped out in the vortex of our times and surroundings. (Elder Thaddeus had many sufferings and was repeatedly taken prisoner by Nazis.) We have a choice about whether we will be sucked into it. It might not seem like it, but we do. Psychologists advising addicts say that you have more power than you think. If we are attentive and refuse to consent to thoughts, perhaps praying to God to save us from this temptation, and if we are in anger, praying for God's every blessing. This is not a quick overall process: it may be something that is a minute to start, and a lifetime to master. But though it may take *years* and *years* and *years* to master, improvement may start much faster than months.

In "Treasures in Heaven: The Inner Meaning of "Do Not Store Up Treasures on Earth,"" I try to unpack a small mystical slice of Blessed are the poor in spirit. There is bodily poverty, and monastics are blessed when they let go of physical possessions. But we have many false treasures in terms of ideas in our heads, and the letting-go of these false interior treasures is in step with why my previous parish priest said, "When we are praying, we should not have very good thoughts; we should have no thoughts." And this has a poverty that is hard to come by. But once you have tasted it, earthly treasures taste suddenly flat. *You've drunk something purer.*

Beyond the Deep Magic of violence

When aggression and violence are met only with meekness and love, what results can be truly powerful. Evil is not always stopped from harming and killing no matter where you fall: witness Satan's defeat in the martyrs, who are not in any sense killed because they are not good enough as Christians. Martyrdom is implemented by the

Devil's work, but the victor in martyrdom is always and ever in the Lord and in the triumphant martyr entering Heaven in glory as a son of God. What happens in martyrdom, but quite a few other places as well, happens when the Deep Magic of violence runs its course, but when it has run its course, the Devil's work is transfigured into something immeasurably far beyond anything that the practical nature of violence can hope for. And its primary application is not reserved to the most extraordinary moments in a well-lived life, but the warp and woof of the daily living of those who practice it, be it on ever so small a scale!

Seeing as are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,
And such and heavenly treasures are set within our reach,
Let us ever reach,
Further Up and Further In!

Orthodox Theology and Technology: A Profoundly Gifted Autobiography

O Lord, I know not what to ask of Thee. Thou alone knowest what are my true needs. Thou lovest me more than I myself know how to love. Help me to see my real needs which are concealed from me. I do not dare to ask either a cross or a consolation. I can only wait on Thee. My heart is open to Thee. Visit and help me, for the sake of Thy great mercy. Strike me and heal me; cast me down and raise me up. I worship in silence Thy holy will and Thine unsearchable ways. I offer myself as a sacrifice to Thee. I have no other desire than to fulfill Thy will. Teach me to pray. Pray Thou Thyself in me. Amen.

St. Philaret of Moscow, a high rank of bishop, unusually named after a layman, St. Philaret the Merciful.

It is not particularly unusual for a teenager to lie awake in bed and wonder about the biggest questions: "Who are we?", "Where did we come from?", "Where will we go?"

What is unusual in my case, as I wondered and tried to answer questions like, "Is there an external world?", "Can there be a perpetual motion machine?"—"If so, how can it get started?" "What does it mean to be "Jonathan Hayward?", "Am I a being

of the same class as those I observe about me?", is that I was not a teenager. I was a little boy, too young to think about any of those questions in words. and so I worked out my idiosyncratic and even solipsistic metaphysics by thinking in pictures, and this is in fact my earliest memory.

People (some agree, some don't) say that a person's earliest memory can be illuminating, and it has been commented that this is an unusual first memory. I have read a number of people's earliest memory stories, and not one that I have read is like this. The one that jumps to memory is a girl saying she remembered her Mom holding her and then passing her to another woman, and asking, "Who is this?" and being told, "That's your grandmother." An earliest memory is normally a story, not to mention simple and concrete. I was a bit of an outlier.

But I am getting ahead of myself.

I was born in 1975, a firstborn son to John and Linda Hayward, when my father was a grad student. My father studied physics, and my mother would go on to study the teaching of English to speakers of other languages. I was born almost three weeks overdue. A botch by my Mom's obstetrician meant that at my birth both my mother and I were fighting a deadly infection. I spoke in complete sentences before my first birthday, and at the age of two fell down stairs and hit my head on a concrete basement floor. My eyes rolled back and I did not respond to stimuli. I survived, but spoke slowly, spoke very little, and stuttered. My Mom prayed over me and the stuttering was taken away. When my father had graduated and I was one, my parents moved to Macomb, Illinois, where my father taught at Illinois State University (their homepage shows a young woman wearing goggles that are simply inappropriate for the work she is doing, a common syndrome when photographers try to make a model look scientific). A major goal in their move was to be able to raise me outside of smog. When I was three, my family moved again, to the house where I have my earliest memory, and where my father began teaching at Wheaton College, where he worked until retirement. He had studied physics, but worked in computer science, and served both as a professor and a high-level in-house consultant at Wheaton. He introduced me to puzzles and questions relating to what we found most interesting in computer science (e.g. a question about the foundational 'pigeon hole principle: "You are in a dark room and cannot see at all, and have a drawer full of mixed black and white socks. What is the minimum number of socks you can take to be sure you have a matched pair?"), and Unix computer games, which I dialed into by modem.

Schooling from kindergarten on

I have fond memories of Lowell Elementary School, where I entered in kindergarten, sometimes dressed up as a cowboy with chaps or in a suit, and attended until third grade, when school and my parents sensed that I would do better at a

specifically gifted school, and I entered Avery Coonley School in fourth grade, where the headmaster bent a number of rules and awarded me 25% of the total financial aid awarded by the school for that year so my parents could afford to send me. I was initially placed in the less advanced of two math groups (one year ahead instead of two), and in eighth grade ranked 7th nationally in the 1989 MathCounts competition, programmed a four dimensional maze, conducted an independent study of calculus, and (re)invented recursion in programming and iterated integration in calculus.

After a brief class in modern algebra for math whizzes at the the University of Chicago which I didn't really get, I skipped a freshman year at a local school to enter the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, where I continued to get high ranks in math contests, ran a Unix server that did the work of a local and hard-to-use social network. and actively participated in discussions, and programmed a video game on my calculator. Someone commented later that this was the first video game they'd heard of where you *lose* points for shooting things, although I wasn't trying to be original. (I was trying to implement a game I'd envisioned in gradeschool.) In order to justify a decision, my high school asked me to take an IQ test, and the psychologist scoring the test almost fell off her chair.

The summer after my junior year of high school I trained as an Emergency Medical Technician at College of DuPage because I was frustrated at the shallowness of what I had taken in first aid class. I was also unsatisfied with the Emergency Medical Technician training, as it seemed to me then to only teach enough medicine to package patients up and ship them to the local emergency room, but there have been a few times I've used my training: once two summers later, in Malaysia, where I helped provide some faint parody of suspected spinal injury management in helping a motorcycle accident victim, who had evidence of serious internal injury, get to the emergency room when he was loaded into a nearby van instead of an ambulance. I also used knowledge about heat, years after that, to get an elderly dog to stop shivering after she was taken outside for a potty break and made a lethargic beeline to the place in the yard where the wind was least bitter, and stood there, shivering, until I picked her up and carried her back inside and did what I could to raise her body temperature. (I do not think she would have survived for more than a few hours more if I had not had that prior medical knowledge.)

I mentioned that two summers later I was in Malaysia. It was wonderful and I didn't want to leave. The rest of my family went there for a calendar year; I choosed to stay in the U.S. for my freshman year of college, but joined my family for the summer. It awakened a lifelong interest in culture and the many ways time can be experienced, but beyond that I would refer to a book on writing college admissions essays which talked about avoiding cliches that college admissions officers are tired of reading, which included pet death and The Travel Experience, which runs something like, "In my trip to

_____, I met new people and new ways of doing things. _____ challenged assumptions I didn't even know I had, and has changed me forever. [And so on and so forth about life in _____.]" Please note that this description is entirely ambiguous about what continent, island, or space station " _____ " was located on. Living in Malaysia was a life-changing experience, an eye-opener, and a delight, however I try to be careful to avoid stretching social patience in talking about my cherished travel experiences. Those who have already had a travel experience know what it is like; those who haven't don't want to hear me gush on and on.

I entered Wheaton College as a National Merit Scholar, but ran aground on a particular community requirement which, like others before and after me, some Christians are not comfortable with. When I stopped running from my conscience, I took the unprecedented step of appealing to the Board of Trustees to give a conscientious exemption to this requirement (no lesser figure had the necessary authority), they did not pay me the courtesy of letting the item be put on the agenda for consideration (they thought the voluntary nature of Wheaton made my concerns "evaporate"). The requirement, that Wheaton students don't drink and dance, has variously and inconsistently been defended by Wheaton leadership as "just social mores," "like vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity," and a strict requirement of Wheaton's conscience. I lay on bed at night, wondering, "If this is how Christians act, do I want to be a Christian?"

I transferred to Calvin with a broken heart. I ended up being able to take all of the highest-level math classes offered at Wheaton and also at Calvin, in total a major and a half's worth of them. I spent a semester in Paris at the Sorbonne, where I imagined the cultures of my own fantasy world, "Espiritichthus," a fusion of the beauty I saw in Malaysia and France. I met my first Luddite, a man who commented simply that he would look into the window to the computer lab and observe that everybody seemed to be angry as they were typing. On a larger scale, I also had a painful relationship with a girl named Rebecca. In that troubled relationship, I am not interested in stating what she did wrong. I am interested, however, in stating what I did wrong. I approached that relationship, like life itself, as a department of mathematics. Meaning, as time passed, I did not relate to Rebecca as especially human, and I did not relate to myself as especially human either. Our relationship was mercifully broken off.

I spent a summer as a camp counselor and entered as a graduate student at UIUC, where I managed to get a master's in applied mathematics, with a thesis accomplishing one thing usually associated with a PhD: carving out a niche where I knew more than anyone else in the world, in this case opening a new subbranch of "point-set topology" whose implications included a straightforward but rigorous way to handle infinitesimals such as bedeviled the foundation of calculus, in an academic discipline where it was hard to find something new to prove. Nonetheless, my advisor, the department chair,

told me in one prolific summer that he regarded my many emails (see a later writeup of one topic covered) as "mathematics fiction" by analogy with "science fiction," and he did not regard my math awards as indicating in any way that I was adequate in mathematics. He and one other professor approved my thesis without reading the second half.

Entering the work world, or trying to

My first job out of college, at an anonymous company, told me when I was hired that I had gotten the highest score on one test of any applicant yet, and I had gotten a perfect score on the linear logic test, and I submitted the best code sample they'd seen ("reads like plain English"). Then things turned a little odd. I believe the reasons were complex, but they boasted about the computers they gave employees then gave me what was apparently a hand-me-down, and more seriously when, in the interview process, I asked if I would be able to program in what was then the darling language in IT, I was told I would program in a language they compared to a Formula One racecar, but once hired, I was told I would program in a language that had a terrible reputation (one computer science great said that its use "...cripples the mind. Its teaching should therefore be regarded as a criminal offense;" lesser wits had compared it with a sexually transmitted disease in that "those who have it tend not to admit it in polite company"). I complained, believing in good faith that its use would be harmful for me. In retrospect I do not believe they made an intentional bait and switch, but there was some ineptitude in advertising what they advertised I would work with and then assigning what I was assigned to work with. Also, I think that is the main area where I earned my "not a team player" badge.

I was brainsized my third day on the job (they refused to tell me why...), and I was later told that fellow alumni of the company blocked me from getting jobs at other companies.

A few months later, I developed a terrible manic episode and my life was again in danger. However, the manic episode is less significant in its aftermath, where I was prescribed a year-long drug overdose that destroyed my abilities of mathematician. I spent a year of my life at my parents' house (where I am still), lying on my bed, staring at the light bulb, with nary a thought running through my mind beyond, "This is worse than watching television." When I saw my psychiatrist, I would inevitably ask, "When am I going to get my abilities back?" and with an edge of anger in his voice my psychiatrist would answer, "I don't know. You've had a major manic episode, and it can take a long time to recover from a manic episode." After about a year of this, my Mom dragged me against my will to a patient advocate group meeting on Wheaton College's campus where a fellow patient, without medical credentials that I know of, listened to

my complaints, asked about my medication, and said, "That's not an effect of your manic episode. It's your medication."

I have incidentally complained about the provider's preferred counselor to work with a complaint I could have directed at the psychiatrist equally well: trying to get anything done better was "like a magic spell, where you have to say just the right words, and say them just right, or else it's all for nothing." (It wasn't, for instance, enough for me to tell him, and have other medical personnel he was working with to observe, that I was throwing up half my medication most days for a year. I had to make a request in *just the right words*, and *just the right way*, for him to prescribe the other form of the same medication which had all of the benefits of what he prescribed me, and no added drawbacks, but would not induce vomiting on a frequent basis.)

The hardest intellectual achievement I had made in my life was not some discovery; it was, after spending six months away from mathematics (including my semester studying French at the Sorbonne), regaining competency. I was never in my life to regain competency in research mathematics. Computer programming came back, but with difficulty and imperfectly. Humanities work, which I had always been interested in, came back almost immediately.

Picking up the pieces

After being on a less destructive dose, I took stock and tried to decide what I wanted to do with my life. I had had some rough times outside of academia; I would later hold one post for over a year, but I was fired after I reported a senior manager for harassment. I asked my pastor, who was also a professor at Wheaton College and one of the most charismatic people around, advice on how to get an interdisciplinary humanities degree, and was strongly advised to pick a single field and get a doctorate in that specific field: "American Studies" PhD's from a department he taught at, who had studied an interdisciplinary fusion of American literature and history, were incredibly hard to place. History departments wanted a straight history PhD; literature departments wanted a straight literature PhD. I applied to several schools, and Cambridge University accepted me.

In the time between employment and Cambridge, I had joined a group of Wheaton students and some alumni, close friends, meeting every Tuesday night at 9:58 PM for a reader's theatre reading of classic children's literature, and it was lore that students from that group would enter a tailspin after leaving England (and it seemed almost every member of the group found a way to England at some point). However, I thought that that simply did not apply to me. It was not exactly arrogance on my part; past experience had been that I simply did not experience culture shock on cue. I had experienced culture shock, but not when I was expected to, and when culture shock was

predicted, I experienced nothing particularly like culture shock. I had, furthermore, already lived abroad, so this wouldn't be my first time outside the U.S.

New directions at, and after, Cambridge

There was a major crescendo of trial and providence involved in my getting to England; there were several distractions, and after six months of red tape and difficulties getting student loans, they fell into place one business day before I left. My college told me not to come into residence. Additionally, I had a growing lump by my collarbone and was very sleepy very often. Cambridge had admitted me for a diploma, not yet a master's, and after I arrived on faith and things started working out, I was diagnosed and treated for lymphoma. And despite all this, I succeeded. After further difficulties and prayer, I was admitted to the master's program, where at the beginning of the year I said I wanted to study the holy kiss, meaning a doctrinal study of ideas, and after reclassifying my intent as a sociological study of kissing that was not particularly edifying, I was told two thirds of the way through the year that my announced thesis topic did not fit my philosophy of religion seminar, and I would therefore have to change topic completely. (There was also some hideous confusion where it took all but two weeks to meet with my professor and fix the topic for my second compulsory essay, which was a two month project.) I pulled out the stops, wrote a still not particularly edifying thesis in AI as an Arena for Magical Thinking, and succeeded at earning a master's in theology as well, albeit with not quite high enough marks to enter a doctorate. *I went home and had my tailspin.*

Now there were several things that happened along the way; the biggest one being, during my time at Cambridge, my reception into the Orthodox Church. And I would like to tell a bit about one particular nuance.

There is a tradition in Orthodoxy for people of sufficient age to choose a patron saint, and take that saint's name. It is believed that not only does the catechumen choose the saint, but that the saint chooses the disciple from Heaven. I wanted to be called "John Adam:" "John" after John the Theologian, and "Adam" as bearing *Sources of the Self's* burden of pioneering a new way of life for others to follow. I knew at some level that this was wrong, and I should have recognized I was choosing those names out of pride. A significant struggle occurred when I was wrestling with my guilty conscience, and after long resistance on my part, I repented. This just happened to be when a priest was reading the names of people commemorated in prayer. The next name I heard was "Christos," and my surrender was complete.

The name has had some salutary side benefits I did not even think of. One thing I have found is that whether clergy are quick to dress me down for taking Christ as my patron gives me a highly effective early warning system for how well we will end up getting along. (It seems to reflect whether I am judged for obvious pride in choosing One

above all Saints, versus perhaps seeing no legitimate way I might have been right in that choice, but still refraining from judging.) Now at my cathedral clergy are not happy about my name, but that came later, after I kept bringing horrible things to confession. I give no complaint about them. But social response has offered me a powerful and useful social cue.

As an author, I have usually given my name as "C.J.S. Hayward", and on Facebook, which is not terribly friendly to such use of initials written out my name as "Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward," which I thought would condense to "CJSH" when people spoke of me. I have been told that on Facebook it has instead condensed to "CSH," meaning "C.S. Hayward." Did I mention that I've read every well-known work by C.S. Lewis and most of his obscurities, and he formed me as a writer?

I might also mention that there is more besides the number of times my life has been in danger and I've survived (I seem to have more than a cat's nine lives, though I have rarely been accused of being catlike.) I've had an awful lot of being in the right place at the right time in ways I do not that I can rightly take credit for. For instance, I built my first website within a year or two of the web's creation, although it would be over a year between when I first built a website and I ever used a graphical browser. I used Lynx, a command line tool that displays text alone. It is still a good way to check if a site appears pornographic before loading graphical view; not the reason why I made a nasty parody site called "Revenge of the Hydra," optimized for Internet Explorer, which if you load it, nine popup windows appear, and for each popup window you close, two more appear. (People on the Megalist wanted to ride me out on a rail for that one.) My main site, started in the early nineties, would grow to be a fixture of the web; when Google still published its PageRanks, my website had a PageRank of 5, a respectable PageRank for a medium to large sized organization, and was the top site in its category in directory.google.com. (I've won dozens of math awards, and hundreds of web awards.) It's grown since then, and in some people's opinions, it has only gotten better. Now I have worked long and hard to make my website a good site, but there was from the beginning a great deal of being in the right time and choosing decisions that would prove helpful for reasons I could not have imagined. I also published on the web when the tried and true advice was to pursue traditional publication. Now I am a traditionally published author; I've published two books with Packt, and they've been very good to me and I would heartily recommend contacting an acquisition editor for IT professionals who want to write a book. (Note to such professionals: the pay you receive directly from an IT publisher is a social courtesy; Packt pays more than many publishers but hardly enough to live on. For an IT professional to publish a technical book should be seen as a marketing move that will qualify you as a domain expert who can charge over \$100 per hour for expert work.) However, while Packt is built to give structure to unformed authors, traditional publishing tripped me up, and my traditionally published

titles are far from excellent and lower in Amazon ratings than those I've self-published. The core reason is that I do my best work when I am writing out of my heart, but working with editorial requests for major overhaul has been necessarily out of my head; I cannot summon or control my inspiration or awen at will. Even this work, alongside works I consider some of my best, is not the work I set out to write, though that is grace.

I wrote in another blog post that I believed I had experienced what I would call "fame lite." Leonard Nimoy, in *I am Spock* talks about how Hollywood has teachers for all kinds of skills they would need to portray that skill in movies: musical instruments, riding a horse, and so on and so forth. However, there was something that no teachers were to be found in Hollywood: dealing with fame. Nimoy learned, for instance, how to enter a restaurant through the kitchen because there would be a public commotion if Spock walked in through the front door. And on that count, I do not obviously suffer the consequences of real fame. I've been asked for my autograph, once. I've had someone call out publicly, before I entered Orthodoxy, "That's Jonathan Hayward!", once. I have repeatedly had pleasant meetings with people who know me through my website. And since then, the only new tarnish to my claim of undeserved "fame lite" is in recent years when a job opportunity was really a cloak for attempted seduction. If that was because of my website or reputation; I am not sure it was.

My thorn in the flesh: *harassment*

However, there is another shoe to drop, a scorpion in the ointment: harassment. To take one example, whenever I made a new post to my website, an acquaintance from IMSA wrote extended and intense criticism that delivered pain, took me down quite a few notches, and elevating himself even more notches socially. No matter what genre, length, or really quality I posted, he would, he would deliver trenchant criticism that covered those bases.

At one point, when I explained why his *contorting* and *twisting* of my words into an *actual* alleged assertion that rape is the victim's fault, followed by his giving me the most belittling lecture in my life, I explained where rape had come close to home and I found that the most offensive thing he'd said yet. He responded with another hefty serving of criticism. I asked him not to send any further criticisms on my writing. He responded with another hefty dollop of criticism of me personally. I asked him not to send any further unsolicited criticisms on any topic. He wrote, "Ok, I will not send any unsolicited criticisms, but I will take emails from you as solicitation for response," and responded by another king-sized industrial strength dose of brutal, judgmental criticism.

A forceful "No" cc'ed to helpdesk@imsa.edu stopped his criticisms cold, or rather I think that the help desk explained to the great liberal what the word "No" means.

I have not heard from him since apart from one request to list him as a trusted contact on LinkedIn.

I also can't say that I missed him.

This sort of thing has happened dozens of times, and not just with people who post a fantasy of their alter ego luring a boy into a car and being finished with him in under five minutes. For one couple of amateur psychologists, my months or years-long ongoing, repeated "No" was slapped down with an assertion that I was "sending mixed messages" each and every time, combined with moving forward with their attempts to help me with my (alleged) Asperger's. This kind of thing is why I made a T-shirt saying:

Autism Spectrum, n. A range of medical conditions whose real or imagined presence in your life causes numerous socially inappropriate behaviors in amateur psychologists.)

As far as underlying social dynamics go, in the Bible King Saul wanted St. David dead and sent St. David on a suicide mission that would require killing two hundred Philistines. St. David succeeded in his quest. Then women were singing in the streets, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands," which was about the worst thing they could have done for St. David's welfare. It really would have been better for St. David's political stock if the woman had chanted a cultural equivalent of, "David smells bad and his mother dresses him funny."

That was the point where Saul went from wanting St. David dead to making him Public Enemy #1 and engaging in extended manhunts after his first outright attempt at direct murder failed.

My giftedness is not simply from my genes, even if my parents are both at the top of their game. It is actually common for profoundly gifted individuals to have birth trauma or early childhood brain injury; such insults to the brain usually push a person towards intellectual disability, but once in a blue moon they overclock the brain and cause an intensification of overgrowth. I've had both routes, and however astonishingly bright my parents are, um...

I had higher SAT scores in 7th grade than my father had as a high school senior, and when I took the Modern Languages Aptitude test, the UIUC linguist who scored it said,

...and here's where it gets interesting. I've never seen someone complete this section before... Your mother scored in the mid 150's, which is considered a very, very high score. You scored 172. I don't know what to make of it. I've been scoring this test for thirty years, and I've never seen a score this high...

I was looking to avoid mentioning this, but my parents, especially in my childhood, surprisingly often dealt with me in anger.

In a moment of "I have no mouth and I must scream" after other unrelated situations of harassment and hostility from several other people, I gave my scream in The Wagon, the Blackbird, and the Saab.

My quality of life improved remarkably when I learned that a "CEASE AND DESIST" letter Cc'ed to abuse@gmail.com or other authority figure can stop harassment cold.

Schooling: Another attempt

Returning to education, in 2005 I entered Fordham's PhD program. What I think I'd like to say about that was that it was a golden illustration of St. John Chrysostom's "A Treatise to Prove That Nothing Can Injure The Man Who Does Not Harm Himself." During that time, there were occasions where my conscience was extraordinarily clear and I ignored it. Furthermore, while external things may have been inappropriate, it was my own sins that gave them real sting. That a doctor took me off a medication I needed was not my choice. That I worried to the point of uninterrupted waking nausea about whether I would be able to find employment given that my work in the business world had been clumsy and my PhD "union card" to teach in academia was jeopardized, worriedly asking, "Will there be a place for me?" was my decision. Stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger quoted in the NFL said, "We suffer more in imagination than in reality," and I suffered much more in imagination than in reality—;that was my decision, and not the decision of even the most hostile member of the university. Possibly I could have completed my degree if I had not ignored a conscience at full "jumping up and down" intensity when I didn't see a reason for what my conscience was telling me, and possibly I am guilty for failing to accept tacitly offered help. I washed out of the program in 2007. Perhaps the other thing really worth mentioning is what I intended to be my doctoral dissertation, which I wrote up in non-scholarly prose that one Roman reader called "the most intelligent and erudite" thing he'd ever read: "Religion and Science" Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution.

The birth of a unique area of attention

Now I'd like to shift gears a little bit and talk about something else that has slowly developed over the years, incrementally and mostly imperceptibly to me.

Like others before me, I've bristled at the concept of "an idea whose time has come." My main use of it, as a programmer who poked fun at tools he did not like and tools he did like, was to quote a fake advertisement for Unix's "X Windows:" "An idea

whose time has come. And gone." When at Fordham I read Vatican II's almost incessant anxiety to pay attention to "the signs of the times," meaning in practice to pay attention to whatever 1960's fads were in the *Zeitgeist* and take marching orders from them, I pointed out that in searching the 38 volume Ante-Nicene Fathers and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers collections, I could only find three or four references to discerning the signs of the times, and never a slavish imitation of *Zeitgeist*; one of them simply meant being on guard against lust.

Nonetheless, there is a sense in which *Zeitgeist* is real. It is a well-known phenomenon among mathematicians that a major problem will remain unsolved for ages and then be independently solved at almost the same time by several researchers: hence mathematicians are advised that if they discover something major, they should write it up and publish it as soon as possible, because if they don't, someone else will get the credit for first discovery. *And this is in what is possibly the least Zeitgeist-like academic discipline.*

Gandhi has been popularly misquoted as saying "First, they ignore you. Then, they laugh at you. Then, they fight you. Then, you win!" and while researchers have traced a legitimate Gandhi quotation about how victory will develop if you apply Gandhi's satyagraha or nonviolence in dealing with people hostile to you, this did not sound much like Gandhi to me. Nonetheless, it has some grain of truth.

When I wanted to do research on the holy kiss, at first I was bluntly ridiculed by my then current Cambridge advisor; he responded by asking cutesie questions about whether we could find reasons to only kiss the members of a congregation who were the prettiest, notwithstanding that in England there is a well-established social kiss and "Greet one another with a holy kiss" does not come across as a shorthand for all inapplicable ancient nonsense in the Bible as it might in the U.S. midwest, where hugs between friends are within standard cultural boundaries but kisses ordinarily are not.

Furthermore, when I tried to write a dissertation on it, every professor that sought to guide me took my intended *doctrinal* study, and reclassified it as a study of a physical detail of Biblical culture, to be studied alongside other *Realia* like, "When St. Paul said to put on the whole armor of God and used a Roman soldier's weapon and armor as a basis for the analogy, what kind of physical weapon and armor would have been in his imagination?" which overlooks that the "breastplate of righteousness" and the "helmet of salvation" are the armor that God Himself wears in Isaiah. I drew a line in the sand and told my second advisor that I wanted to do a doctrinal study. He immediately pushed past that line and said, "The best way to do that is to do a cultural study, and let any doctrines arise."

To my knowledge I am the first person who observed that the holy kiss is the only act that the entire Bible calls holy (excluding one reference to a "holy convocation" in the Old Testament where a different Hebrew word is translated "holy"), and it is called holy

three or four times. This is one of the highlights that I condensed into a homily, "The Eight Sacrament." But then a few years later, I suddenly had people contacting me to tell me about the holy kiss, and people asked if I knew more than I had stated in the homily (yes, I did; the Ante-Nicene Fathers and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers collections contain something like a hundred references to a holy kiss, many of them boilerplate repetitions of "Greet one another with a holy kiss," in festal epistles by St. John Chrysostom). Earlier I was rudely enough ridiculed by allies; then I was contacted in response to my website to inform me about the holy kiss by complete strangers.

At the moment I would downplay the importance of the holy kiss for active study. It is practiced in the Orthodox Church; I have said everything I want to say; I do not seek a kiss where none is offered. I have moved on to other concerns, one other concern as I am letting go as Fr. Seraphim of Plantina is in the process of canonization (one of my books, the one that's gotten by far the most scathing reviews, is *The Seraphinians: "Blessed Seraphim Rose" and His Axe-Wielding Western Converts*).

I would like to say that The Best of Jonathan's Corner is what I consider my overall best collection across my works and leave things at that, but I am rather suspecting another case of "Man proposes, God disposes." The most important collection I leave behind (if any) may well be The Luddite's Guide to Technology. The topic is loosely "religion and science," but it is very different in character. "Religion and science" as I have met it, with one stellar exception, is about demonstrating the compatibility of timeless revealed truths of Christian doctrine with the present state of flux in scientific speculation. Science is, or at least was, characterized by a system of educated guesses held accountable to experiment. Orthodox gnosis (understanding of knowledge) should find this to be very, very different from how true Orthodox theology works.

With one exception, none of the Orthodox authors I hold dear know particularly much about science. The one exception is patrologist Jean-Claude Larchet, who raises some of the same concerns I do about technology, and does some of them better. Everyone else (for instance, Vladimir Lossky) shows little engagement with science that I know of. And if I may refer to the *Karate Kid* movie that was popular in my childhood, the Sensei tells the boy, "Karate is like a road. Know karate, safe! Don't know karate, safe! In the middle, squash like a grape." The "religion and science" I've seen has a lot of "in the middle, squash like a grape," by theologians who want to be scientific (and perhaps make what I have called the "physics envy declaration:" theologians-are-scientists-and-they-are-just-as-much-scientists-as-the-people-in-the-so-called-hard-sciences-like-physics), but who almost never bother to get letters after their name in the sciences, which are genuinely hard. My own formation, in mathematics, engineering, technology, and science, affords me the position of the blackbelt who declares, "Don't know karate, safe!" Perhaps one blackbelt saying such things is needed!

Furthermore, my main concern from mathematics, engineering, technology, and science (all of which I was formed in, even if I've lost much of it) is not too much about science, but specifically about *technology*. I've experienced technology early; my life story and could largely be seen as a preparation for commenting on technology. And I have background in both studying theology academically and living it in practice. Another dimension to profound giftedness

One reader who has studied giftedness at length commented to me that profoundly gifted individuals are often "very, very conservative, or at least populist." I had thought earlier that my conservatism and my giftedness were two separate things. They are not, or at least there is a direct relationship.

The basic way I understand it is this. Possibly I had a contrarian spine built by requesting a conscientious exemption from Wheaton College's requirements and leaving Wheaton College after it was not even put on the agenda. I have certainly had as much exposure to liberal recruiting, or more, than most liberals. But standard methods of recruiting gifted are less successful in dealing profoundly gifted. The university system has very effective ways of drawing in the gifted, and up to a point the more gifted someone is the better it works—but recruiting tools fall flat with some of the profoundly gifted. Much of the gifted range ends up liberal. It has been pointed out that the math department tends to be one of the most liberal, or the most liberal, department on campus, even though the author pointing this out (and I) have never experienced mathematicians trying to recruit to liberalism. I believe, apart from natural bents, that mathematics shapes the mind in a way that inclines towards liberalism. I stopped really trying to learn chess after I found myself at the Cathedral looking at my quarantine-dictated socially distanced space with regard to other parishioners in terms of what I could threaten to capture in a knight's move. That may be superficial, and it may fade into the background with deeper study. However, mathematics does shape the character, in the direction of what Orthodox have called "hypertrophied dianoia, darkened nous," i.e. "overgrown head and impoverished, darkened heart," and mathematics may do this in a more concentrated form than humanities which promote the same. I certainly do not see that my successes in relating to my ex-girlfriend (there are some) were due to my bent to take a mathematician's approach to relating.

Something that never happened in my formation in mathematics was that my advisor at Cambridge consistently tried to recruit me to Biblical Egalitarianism (he was a plenary speaker at at least one conference), for instance, by asking, "But what about Biblical Egalitarians, who believe that 'In Christ there is no... male nor female?'" and I would dismantle the live grenade, for instance by saying that "who believe that" in English-speaking idiom means "whose non-shared distinguishing quality is that," and second by saying that he was snuggling into the back door that "no male nor female" be cast along at least quasi-feminist lines, as opposed to recognizing that some

conservatives (St. Maximus Confessor, for instance) hold that in Christ there really is no male nor female, but read it along profoundly non-feminist lines. (I think after a certain number of attempts my advisor gave up and accepted that I would not listen to reason.)

Yonder, which is a collection of works intended to answer and challenge feminism, might have been provocative when it was first published. Now there is much more than than the men's movement, which I consider opening men to feminist-style protest. It is mainstream for women to dissociate themselves from feminism and "Like" texts that challenge it. When the U.S. Supreme Court came out in rainbow colors, I posted a response echoing First Things in the discussion at StackExchange, whose CEO is an adamant gay activist, saying, "The question is not whether gay marriage is possible in the U.S., but whether anything else is popular. It has been established that marriage has no particular roles, is dissolvable, need not be open to bearing children, and so forth. Why suddenly draw a line in the sand about marriage involving a man and a woman?" It was censored, with a comment of "Not even close!" However, in the time since then, I have seen comments not censored about the whole policy violation of turning the StackOverflow logo rainbow colors for a time and flipping it to veer in the opposite direction, and so on and so forth, was in fact not StackOverflow's best moment.

C.S. Lewis has a tantalizingly brief remark in *The Allegory of Love?*, in reference to Spencer who alone receives almost undiluted praise in a book that is exacting of other authors, about how figures who turn out to be what some people call "ahead of their time" seem an odd throwback to the vintage past, when they first appear. Even Bach was respected in his life as a performing organist but not taken too seriously as a composer, because he composed in an area of music that had simply fallen out of fashion. I don't want to compare myself to the famous people who populate the most obvious examples, but in regard to what Lewis said, it seems that some of my portfolio has matured.

My critiques of feminism may still not be mainstream, but they are no longer so far off the beaten path. As far as raising concerns about technology goes, we have gone past the point where one very bright friend tweeted a link to Paul Graham's *The Acceleration of Addictiveness* and commented in only three words: "SOMEBODY UNDERSTANDS ME!" For that matter, we have gotten past the point where the cover of Time Magazine presents the Facebook "Like" button as a major part of our conundrum. Things that I said that were way off the beaten path when I said them remain of particular interest, but are far less provocative to say now.

When I tried to do a literature search before or during my writing of "Social Antibodies" Needed: A Request of Orthodox Clergy, I searched Amazon in regards to Orthodoxy and technology and was dismayed to find... my writing and nothing else so far as I could tell. Prior books that had influenced me such as Neil Postman's 1985 *Amusing Ourselves to Death* and Jerry Mander's 1974 *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (one Protestant friend answered my mentioning the title

in mock puzzlement: "The author could only think of four?"), were available and remain available today. However, an encompassing theological argument that takes into account today's singularity were simply not to be found.

Since then, times have changed, and I am not a lone author any more. I've learned a good deal from patrologist Jean-Claude Larchet, and what I've read from him on the topic is eminently worthy of study. I asked Ancient Faith to read "Social Antibodies" Needed: A Request of Orthodox Clergy, not exactly as a candidate for their imprint to publish, but to send to other authors to answer on the record. The response I got back was not detailed, but they said that they had forwarded the questions I raised for other of their authors to answer.

Two other comments before I drop this topic.

First of all, one thing that I can agree with one devotee of Fr. Seraphim of Plantina on is a quote that Fr. Seraphim tried to tell people he was a sinner and he was put on a pedestal anyway. I've been wary of being on a pedestal when I realized that I already am on a pedestal; God has just shielded me from some of the downsides. Apart from harassment, I have benefitted from what appears to be "fame lite." Possibly I may get put on a bigger pedestal, but I am neither more nor less in God's hands if God provides that.

The second one, perhaps a tangent, is that I am not mainly writing for success in my lifetime. Certainly I am not looking for writing to be lucrative; my revenues on Amazon, possibly due to Amazon's ongoing repositioning and reinterpretation of its contracts, has gone from about US\$150-200 per month to less than US\$10 per month over a time frame when more and more people have discovered my writing. I am trying to write works built to last, and I have released my books under CCo licensing ("no rights reserved," meaning that anybody can republish it). This is an aspect of a long haul strategy.

Now to move on.

More wonders in Heaven and earth...

I have enlisted at the Orthodox Pastoral School, about which I have only glowing things to say. After health issues compounded by provider issues, I have asked to withdraw for the rest of the semester and re-enroll next semester when I believe I have good reason to hope I will be stronger. What they say I do not know, and I am not specifically counting on the measure of grace they have already extended to me. However, one possibility that is off the agenda is that God will stop blessing me because of what they decide. I would like to continue on with them, but if God has something else in store for me, I will just try and thank them for what they have already done.

The second thing is that I have prayed for years:

Prayer from St. Symeon for a Spiritual Father

O Lord, who desirest not the death of a sinner but that he should turn and live, Thou who didst come down to earth in order to restore life to those lying dead to sin and in order to make them worthy of seeing Thee the true Light as far as that is possible to man, send me a man who knoweth Thee, so that in serving him and subjecting myself to him with all my strength, as to Thee, and in doing Thy will in his, I may please Thee the only true God, and so that even I, a sinner, may be worthy of Thy Kingdom.

I am not praying that now.

Within the past month of my writing, I sent a polite email to a nearby priest and said that I was going to ask a blessing to visit the parish, when I realized that was not then an option due to the quarantine, and then I thought of asking permission to visit him face-to-face, when I realized that would not be an option for the same reason. But, I said, I wished in gesture to visit.

He responded even more graciously, and offered spiritual direction.

I asked a blessing of my confessor, and have begun receiving spiritual direction.

I have also been seeking for years to enter a monastery. That hasn't happened yet, but I have a live conversation with a monastery now. It apparently won't work out for me to visit again in 2020, but I have hopes of ending 2021 as a novice, possibly a "rassophore monk," also called a "robe-wearing novice."

A last measure in negotiations

The next thing is that in dealing with others, especially as regards difficulties with medical providers, the last measure of resistance I have offered is to let the other party have it their way and then let them decide if they like the consequences.

Earlier I came to the practice I am seen at on double the standard limit of one medication, and they decided to let me have my eccentric ways, at least for a time. But then they decided to relentlessly pursue strict standard dosing, and after a year or two's power struggle, I let them have their way and I was in rapidly declining health. I can still remember the sad expression on my provider's face when she realized what situation I was in: she was not in any sense happy that it looked like I would be dead within a year, but standard dosing was simply not conceivable as something negotiable, or a decision that was less important than my life. After three hospitalizations in about two months, insurance advised me to work with a doctor rather than a nurse practitioner, and the doctor found room in her heart to let me have maximum doses of two similar medications, plus another medication that would help. I returned to the even keel I had when I entered their care.

Experience has been that sometimes the only card I can play is to submit to being keel-hauled, and when I come up torn and bleeding on the other side, the other party figures out things it had not been able to connect the dots on before.

I went through that last measure again with the department recently.

I have been on a medication whose known effects include kidney damage and eventual death to kidney failure. I have been experiencing precursors to kidney failure, although not yet real quality of life issues; however, every time previously my providers tried to soften the blow to my organs by reducing my dose of that medication by one quarter, it seemed a cure worse than the disease. Kidney failure can kill me within a decade or two; the effects I was experiencing would likely kill me within a year. Every time previously, my provider did not like what my medicine was doing, but they chose maintaining my dose above causing my death in the short term.

This time, my provider decided to wean me off the medication already, which was having destabilizing effects, and furthermore to forbid me to even take a related over-the-counter medication that is dosed much lower than the prescription analogue, and furthermore does not damage internal organs, period. And I decided to offer the last measure of resistance: to submit to being keel-hauled and follow all of her changes to the letter.

After two days of feeling worse than drunk, I felt sober for the first time in ages, and have been writing prolifically.

More wonders

Before that happened, my writing experienced what I can only term a death, a religious experience I have forgotten, and a resurrection. My writing was growing scantier and worse; there was something morally corrupt. Now I am still not writing perfectly, but I feel younger. Decades younger.

I have also been involved with Toastmasters, to learn to better communicate with my neighbor. I participated, albeit didn't rise above local level, in the 2019 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking, and it is widely considered that the experience and preparation are worth it even if you do not place particularly highly, as I did not. I completed the Competent Communicator curriculum and have started on the Presentation Mastery path.

One of the things my spiritual father said in a first call or two is that we tend to think we have tried plan A (getting a doctorate in math from the University of Illinois and going from there), plan B (getting a doctorate in theology from Cambridge in theology and teaching, which would have left me saddled with over twice the major student loans I graduated with), plan C (getting a doctorate "union card" at Fordham), and are "going down the alphabet" in faint hopes...

...but God is always on plan A.

I believe that if I had made better decisions I could have a degree from Fordham. However, I don't believe that God has withdrawn his care. If anything, he has given me a reminder that decisions have consequences, and a powerful reminder that placing reason above my conscience is not wise. At present I do not have the brand of PhD; I do have two master's degrees connected with Orthodox theology and technology from excellent institutions, and quite a story with them. I think I am the most blessed I have been in my life, and stand to receive greater blessings still. I would close with words offered from a friend:

"Life's Tapestry"

Behind those golden clouds up there
the Great One sews a priceless embroidery
and since down below we walk
we see, my child, the reverse view.
And consequently it is natural for the mind to see mistakes
there where one must give thanks and glorify.

Wait as a Christian for that day to come
where your soul a-wing will rip through the air
and you shall see the embroidery of God
from the good side
and then-- everything will seem to you to be a system and order.

Toastmaster, and possibly patrologist, Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward, Certificat Sémestriel, Niveau Supérieur I (semester certificate, advanced level 1) in French, Bachelor of Science in Pure Mathematics, Master of Science in Applied Mathematics with Computational Science and Engineering Option and the first person to graduate with a new Thesis Option, Diploma in Theology and Religious Studies, Master of Philosophy in Theology and Religious Studies, Competent Communicator, Presentation Mastery Level 2, and perhaps in substance a philosophia doctor

Orthodoxy, Contraception, and Spin Doctoring: A Look at an Influential but Disturbing Article

The reason for writing: "Buried treasure?"

Computer programmers often need to understand why programs behave as they do, and there are times when one is trying to explain a puzzle by understanding the source, and meets an arresting surprise. Programmer slang for this is "buried treasure," politely defined as,

A surprising piece of code found in some program. While usually not wrong, it tends to vary from *crafty* to *bletcherous*, and has lain undiscovered only because it was functionally correct, however horrible it is. Used sarcastically, because what is found is anything **but** treasure. Buried treasure almost always needs to be dug up and removed. 'I just found that the scheduler sorts its queue using [the mind-bogglingly slow] bubble sort! Buried treasure!'"

What I have found has me wondering if I've discovered theological "buried treasure," that may actually be wrong. Although my analysis is not exhaustive, I have tried to provide two documents that relate to the (possible) "buried treasure:" one treating the specific issue, contraception, in patristic and modern times, and one commentary on the document I have found that may qualify as "buried treasure."

How to use this document

This document is broken into two parts besides this summary page.

The first part is taken from a paper written by an Orthodox grad student, with reference to Orthodoxy in patristic times and today. It sets a broad theological background, and provides the overall argument. One major conclusion is that one paper (Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90) is important in a troubling shift in Orthodox theology.

The second part, motivated by the understanding that Zaphiris's paper is worth studying *in toto*, is a relatively brief commentary on Zaphiris's paper. If the initial paper provides good reason to believe that Zaphiris's paper may be worth studying, then it may be valuable to see the actual text of his paper. The Commentary can be skipped, but it is intended to allow the reader to know just why the author believes Zaphiris is so much worth studying.

It is anticipated that some readers will want to read the first section without poring over the second, even though the argument in the first section may motivate one to read the second.

Why the fuss?

The Orthodox Church appears to have begun allowing contraception, after previously condemning it, around the time of an article (Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90) which may have given rise to the "new consensus." This article raises extremely serious concerns of questionable doctrine, questionable argument, and/or sophistry, and may be worth further studying.

A broader picture is portrayed in the earlier article about contraception as it appears in both patristic and modern views, which are profoundly different from each other.

Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward - CJSHayward@pobox.com - CJSHayward.com

**Patristic and Current Orthodoxy:
on Contraception
Introduction**

Patristic and contemporary Orthodoxy do not say exactly the same things about contraception. Any differences in what acts are permitted are less interesting than the contexts which are much more different than the differences that would show on a chart made to classify what acts are and are not formally permissible.

Much of what I attempt below looks at what is unquestionable today and asks, "How else could it be?" After two sections comparing the Patristic and modern circumstances, one will be able to appreciate that one would need to cross several lines to want contraception in Patristic Christianity while today some find it hard to understand why the Orthodox Church is being so picky about contraception, I look at how these considerations may influence positions regarding contraception.

How are the Fathers valuable to us?

I assume that even when one criticizes Patristic sources, one is criticizing people who understand Christianity much better than we do, and I may provocatively say that the Fathers are most interesting, not when they eloquently give voice to our views, but precisely when they shock us. My interest in what seems shocking today is an interest in a cue to something big that we may be missing. This is for much the same reason scientists may say that the most exciting sound in science is not "Eureka," "I've found it," but "That's funny..." The reason for this enigmatic quote is that "Eureka" only announces the discovery of something one already knew to look for. "That's funny" is the hint that we may have tripped over something big that we didn't even know to look for, and may be so far outside of what we know we need that we try to explain it away. Such an intrusion—and it ordinarily feels like an intrusion—is difficult to welcome: hence the quotation attributed to Winston Churchill, "Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on."

Understanding Church Fathers on contraception can provide a moment of, "That's funny..."

The Patristic era

My aim in this section is not so much to suggest what views should be held, than help the reader see how certain things do not follow from other things self-evidently. I would point out that in the Patristic world, not only were there condemnations of contraception as such, but more deeply, I would suggest that there was a mindset where

the idea of freeing the goodness of sexual pleasure from any onerous fecundity would seem to represent a fundamental confusion of ideas.

We may be selling both the Fathers and ourselves short if we say that neo-Platonic distrust of the body made them misconstrue sex as evil except as a necessary evil excused as a means to something else, the generation of children. The sword of this kind of dismissal can cut two ways: one could make a reductive argument saying that the ambient neo-Gnosticism of our own day follows classical forms of Gnosticism in hostility to bodily goods that values sex precisely as an experience and despite unwanted capacity to generate children, and so due to our Gnostic influence we cannot value sex except as a way of getting pleasure that is unfortunately encumbered by the possibility of generating children whether they are wanted or not. This kind of dismissal is easy to make, difficult to refute, and not the most helpful way of advancing discussion.

In the Patristic era, some things that many today experience as the only way to understand the goodness of creation do not follow quite so straightforwardly, in particular that goodness to sex has its center of gravity in the experience rather than the fecundity. To Patristic Christians, it was far from self-evident that sex as it exists after the Fall is good without ambivalence, and it is even further from self-evident that the goodness of sex (if its fallen form is considered unambiguously good) centers around the experience of pleasure in coitus. Some contemporaries did hold that sexual experience was good. The goodness of sex consisted in the experience itself. Any generative consequences of the experience were evil, to be distanced from the experience. Gnostics in Irenaeus's day (John Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatments by Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, 57, 64. Unfortunately, not only is there no recent work of Orthodox scholarship that is comparable to Noonan, but there is little to no good Orthodox scholarship on the topic at all!), Manichees in the days of Augustine (Noonan 1986, 124.), and for that matter medieval Cathars (Noonan 1986, 181-3.) would hold to the goodness of sex precisely as an experience, combined with holding to the evil of procreation. (I will not analyze the similarities and differences to wanting pleasure unencumbered by children today.) Notwithstanding those heretics' positions, Christianity held a stance, fierce by today's standards, in which children were desirable for those who were married but "marriage" would almost strike many people today as celibacy with shockingly little interaction between the sexes (including husband and wife), interrupted by just enough sex to generate children (For a treatment of this phenomenon as it continued in the Middle Ages, see Philip Grace, *Aspects of Fatherhood in Thirteenth-Century Encyclopedias*, Western Michigan University master's thesis, 2005, chapter 3, "Genealogy of Ideas," 35-6.). Men and women, including husbands and wives, lived in largely separate worlds, and the framing of love antedated both the exaltations of courtly and companionate love without which many Westerners today have any frame by which to understand goodness

in marriage (See Stephen Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*, Ann Arbor: Servant 1980, Chapter 18, for a contrast between traditional and technological society.).

I would like to look at two quotations, the first from Augustine writing against the Manichees, and the second as an author today writes in reference to the first: "Sacred Seed, Sacred Chamber."

Is it not you who used to counsel us to observe as much as possible the time when a woman, after her purification, is most likely to conceive, and to abstain from cohabitation at that time, lest the soul should be entangled in flesh? This proves that you approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children. Therefore whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage, and makes the woman not a wife, but a mistress, who for some gifts presented to her is joined to the man to gratify his passion. Where there is a wife there must be marriage. But there is no marriage where motherhood is not in view; therefore neither is there a wife. In this way you forbid marriage. Nor can you defend yourselves successfully from this charge, long ago brought against you prophetically by the Holy Spirit (source; the Blessed Augustine is referring to I Tim 4:1-3).

There is irony here. "Natural family planning" is today sometimes presented as a fundamental opposite to artificial contraception. (The term refers to a calculated abstinence precisely at the point where a wife is naturally capable of the greatest desire, pleasure, and response.) Augustine here described natural family planning, as such, and condemns it in harsh terms. (I will discuss "natural family planning" in the next section. I would prefer to call it contraceptive timing for a couple of reasons.)

Note:

There is some irony in calling "'Natural' Family Planning" making a set of mathematical calculations and deliberately avoiding intercourse at the times when a woman is naturally endowed with the greatest capacity for desire, pleasure, and response.

Besides the immediate irony of Augustine criticizing the form of contraception to be heralded as "'Natural' Family Planning," (remember that "natural" family planning is a calculated abstinence when a wife is capable, naturally, of the greatest desire, pleasure, and response), Augustine's words are particularly significant because the method of contraception being discussed raised no question of contraception through recourse to the occult ("medicine man" *pharmakeia* potions) even in the Patristic world. There are

various issues surrounding contraception: in the Patristic world, contraceptive and abortifascient potions were difficult to distinguish and were made by *pharmakoi* in whom magic and drugs were not sharply distinguished (Noonan 1986, 25.). But it would be an irresponsible reading to conclude from this that Patristic condemnations of contraceptive potions were only condemning them for magic, for much the same reason as it would be irresponsible to conclude that recent papal documents condemning the contraceptive mindset are only condemning selfishness and not making any statement about contraception as such. Patristic condemnations of contraception could be quite forceful (Noonan 1986, 91.), although what I want to explore is not so much the condemnations as the environment which partly gave rise to them:

[L]et us sketch a marriage in every way most happy; illustrious birth, competent means, suitable ages, the very flower of the prime of life, deep affection, the very best that each can think of the other, that sweet rivalry of each wishing to surpass the other in loving; in addition, popularity, power, wide reputation, and everything else But observe that even beneath this array of blessings the fire of an inevitable pain is smouldering... They are human all the time, things weak and perishing; they have to look upon the tombs of their progenitors; and so pain is inseparably bound up with their existence, if they have the least power of reflection. This continued expectancy of death, realized by no sure tokens, but hanging over them the terrible uncertainty of the future, disturbs their present joy, clouding it over with the fear of what is coming... Whenever the husband looks at the beloved face, that moment the fear of separation accompanies the look. If he listens to the sweet voice, the thought comes into his mind that some day he will not hear it. Whenever he is glad with gazing on her beauty, then he shudders most with the presentiment of mourning her loss. When he marks all those charms which to youth are so precious and which the thoughtless seek for, the bright eyes beneath the lids, the arching eyebrows, the cheek with its sweet and dimpling smile, the natural red that blooms upon the lips, the gold-bound hair shining in many-twisted masses on the head, and all that transient grace, then, though he may be little given to reflection, he must have this thought also in his inmost soul that some day all this beauty will melt away and become as nothing, turned after all this show into noisome and unsightly bones, which wear no trace, no memorial, no remnant of that living bloom. Can he live delighted when he thinks of that? (source)

Let no one think however that herein we depreciate marriage as an institution. We are well aware that it is not a stranger to God's blessing. But since the common instincts of mankind can plead sufficiently on its behalf,

instincts which prompt by a spontaneous bias to take the high road of marriage for the procreation of children, whereas Virginité in a way thwarts this natural impulse, it is a superfluous task to compose formally an Exhortation to marriage. We put forward the pleasure of it instead, as a most doughty champion on its behalf... But our view of marriage is this; that, while the pursuit of heavenly things should be a man's first care, yet if he can use the advantages of marriage with sobriety and moderation, he need not despise this way of serving the state. An example might be found in the patriarch Isaac. He married Rebecca when he was past the flower of his age and his prime was well-nigh spent, so that his marriage was not the deed of passion, but because of God's blessing that should be upon his seed. He cohabited with her till the birth of her only children, and then, closing the channels of the senses, lived wholly for the Unseen...

This picture of a "moderate" view of marriage that does not "depreciate marriage as an institution" comes from St. Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On Virginité*, and allowances must be made for the fact that St. Gregory of Nyssa is contrasting virginité, not with an easy opposite today, namely promiscuity or lust, but marriage, which he bitterly attacks in the context of this passage. The piece is not an attractive one today. However, that does not mean that what he says is not part of the picture. This bitter attack is part of a picture in which contraception could look very different from today, but that way of looking at contraception is not purely the cause of a rhetoric attacking marriage to praise virginité. I present this not to analyze St. Gregory's exact view on marriage, but to give a taste of an answer to "How else could it be?" in comparison to what is unquestionable today.

Some attitudes today (arguably the basic assumption that motivates offense at the idea that one is condemning the goodness of the created order in treating sex as rightly ordered towards procreation) could be paraphrased, "We affirm the body as good, and we affirm sex in all its goodness. It is a source of pleasure; it is a way to bond; it is powerful as few other things are. But it has a downside, and that is a certain biological survival: unless countermeasures are taken, along with its good features unwanted pregnancy can come. And properly affirming the goodness of sex means freeing it from the biological holdover that gives the good of sexual pleasure the side effect of potentially resulting in pregnancy even if it is pursued for another reason." To the Patristic Christian, this may well come across as saying something like, "Major surgery can be a wonderful thing. It is occasion for the skillful art of doctors, in many instances it is surrounded by an outflow of love by the patient's community, and the difficulties associated with the process can build a thicker spine and provide a powerful process of

spiritual discipline. But it would be really nice if we could undergo surgery without attendant risks of unwanted improvements to our health."

It seems so natural today to affirm the goodness of the body or sex, and see as the only possible translation of that affirmation "the goodness of the pleasure in sexual experience," that different views are not even thinkable; I would like to mention briefly some other answers to the question, "How else could it be?" The ancient world, in many places, looked beyond the few minutes of treasure and found the basis for the maxim, "Post coitum omne animal triste" (after sex, every animal [including humans] is sad), and feared that sex could, among other things, fundamentally deplete virile energy (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, New York: Random House 1985, 137): its goodness might be seen as a costly goodness involving the whole person, rather than simply being the goodness of "one more pleasure, only a very intense one, that is especially good because it is especially intense" or self-evidently being at the core of even a good marriage (Noonan 1986, 47-8).

This is not to suggest that Christians merely copied the surrounding views. Contraception, abortion, and infanticide were quite prevalent in the Roman world (Noonan 1986, 10-29). Whatever else Patristic Christianity can be criticized for in its strong stance on contraception, abortion, and infanticide, it is not an uncritical acceptance of whatever their neighbors would happen to be doing. And if St. Gregory of Nyssa holds up an example which he alleges is procreation that minimizes pleasure, it might be better not to simply say that neo-Platonism tainted many of the Fathers with a dualistic view in which the body was evil, or some other form of, "His environment made him do it."

Modernity and "natural" family planning

In the discussion which follows, I will use the term "contraceptive timing" in lieu of the somewhat euphemistic "natural family planning" or "the rhythm method." In my own experience, I have noticed Catholics consistently needing to explain why "natural family planning" is an opposite to contraception; invariably newcomers have difficulties seeing why decreasing the odds of conception through mathematical timing is a fundamentally different matter from decreasing the odds of conception through biological and chemical expedients. I would draw an analogy to firing a rifle down a rifle range, or walking down a rifle range to retrieve a target: either action, appropriately timed, is licit; changing the timing of an otherwise licit action by firing a rifle while others are retrieving their targets and walk in front of that gun is a use of timing that greatly affects the moral significance of an otherwise licit act. I will hereafter use the phrase "contraceptive timing."

Orthodox implications

As Orthodox, I have somewhat grave concerns about my own Church, which condemned contraception before 1970 but in recent decades appears to have developed a "new consensus" more liberal than the Catholic position: abortifascient methods are excluded, there must be some openness to children, and it must be agreed with by a couple's spiritual father. This "new consensus," or at least what is called a new consensus in an article that acknowledges it as surrounded by controversy that has "various groups accusing each other of Western influence," which is, in Orthodox circles, a good cue that there is something interesting going on.

The one article I found on the topic was "lobbyist" scholarship that seemed to *avoid* giving a fuller picture (Zaphiris 1974.). This one article I found in the ATLA religion database matching the keywords "Orthodox" and "contraception" was an article that took a "new consensus" view and, most immediately, did not provide what I was hoping a "new consensus" article would provide: an explanation that can say, "We understand that the Fathers had grave reservations about contraception, but here is why it can be permissible." The article in fact made no reference to relevant information that can (at least today) be easily obtained from conservative Catholic analyses. There was no discussion of relevant but ambiguous matter such as Onan's sin (Noonan 1986, 34-6.) and New Testament condemnations of "medicine man" pharmakeia which would have included some contraception (Noonan 1986, 44-5.). There was not even the faintest passing mention of forceful denunciations of contraception by both Greek and Latin Fathers. John Chrysostom was mentioned, but only as support for distinguishing the good of sex from procreation: "The moral theologian par excellence of the Fathers, St. John Chrysostom, also does not stress the procreation of children as the goal of marriage." (Zaphiris 1974, 680) Possibly, as for that matter it is possible to argue that Zaphiris does not see openness to children as something to shut off, and wrench that fact out of context to say that Zaphiris opposed contraception. St. John Chrysostom may not have written anything like the incendiary material from St. Gregory above. But "the moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers" *did* write the quote a little below:

The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers has at times a legendary bias against against Rome (let alone against the Eastern Church), and renders Chrysostom as talking about abortion and infanticide but not obviously contraception. This is deliberate mistranslation. To pick out one example, In Patrologia Graecae 60.626 (the quotation spans PG 60.626-7), "enqa polla ta atokia," rendered "ubi multae sunt herbae in sterilitatem?" in the PG's Latin and "Where are the medicines of sterility?" by Noonan, appears in the NPNF as "where are there many efforts at abortion?" This is a deliberate under-translation.

[St. John Chrysostom:] Why do you sow [your seed—CJSH] where the field is eager to destroy the fruit [the child—CJSH]? Where are the medicines of sterility? Where is there murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. Do you see that from drunkenness comes fornication, from fornication adultery, from adultery murder? Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God, and fight with his laws? What is a curse, do you seek as though it were a blessing?... Do you teach the woman who is given to you for the procreation of offspring to perpetrate killing?... In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife. (*Homilies on Romans XXIV*, Rom 13:14, as translated in Noonan 1986, 98.)

St. Chrysostom is not so quick as we are today to distinguish contraception from murder. Possibly, as Zaphiris writes, "there is not a defined statement on the morality of contraception within Orthodoxy." But this is a treacherous use of words.

Let me give an analogy to explain why. People consume both food and drink, by eating and drinking. But it is somewhat strange to point out that a person has never drunk a roast beef sandwich, particularly in an attempt to lead a third party to believe, incorrectly, that a person has never consumed that food item. The Church has "defined" statements relating to Trinitarian and Christological, and other doctrines, and formulated morally significant canon law. But she has never "defined" a statement in morals; that would be like drinking a roast beef sandwich. And so for Zaphiris to point out that the Orthodox Church has never "defined" a statement about contraception—a point that would be obvious to someone knowing what sorts of things the Church does not "define;" "defining" a position against murder would, for some definitions of "define," be like drinking a sandwich—and lead the reader to believe that the Church has never issued a highly authoritative statement about contraception. The Orthodox Church has issued such statements more than once.

Saying that the Orthodox Church has never "defined" a position on a moral question is as silly and as pointless as saying that a man has never drunk a roast beef sandwich: it is technically true, but sheds no light on whether a person has consumed such a sandwich—or taken a stand on the moral question at hand. Zaphiris's "observation" is beginning to smell a lot like spin doctoring.

I have grave reservations about an article that gives the impression of covering relevant Patristic material to the question of contraception without hinting at the fact that it was condemned. Needless to say, the article did not go beyond the immediate condemnation to try to have a sympathetic understanding of why someone would find it

sensible to make such condemnations. If I were trying to marshal Orthodox theological resources in the support of some use of contraception, I doubt if I could do better than Zaphiris. However, if the question is what Orthodox should believe in reading the Bible through the Fathers, submitting to the tradition in seeking what is licit, then this version of a "new consensus" theological treatment gives me even graver doubts about the faithfulness of the "new consensus" to Orthodox tradition. The Zaphiris article, if anything, seems to be an Orthodox document with influence, and red flags, that are comparable to *Humanae Vitae*.

There have been times before where the Orthodox Church has accepted something alien and come to purify herself in succeeding centuries. In that sense there would be a precedent for a change that would be later undone, and that provides one ready Orthodox classification. The Orthodox Wiki provides no history of the change in Orthodoxy, and a formal statement by the Orthodox Church in America (), without specifically praising any form of contraception, attests to the newer position and allows some use of reproductive technologies, but does not explain the change. I would be interested in seeing why the Orthodox Church in particular has brought itself into sudden agreement with cultural forces beyond what the Catholic Church has.

The Orthodox Church both affirms that Christ taught marriage to be indissoluble—excluding both divorce and remarriage after divorce—and allows by way of *oikonomia* (a concession or leniency in observing a rule) a second and third remarriage after divorce, not counting marriages before full reception into the Orthodox Church. However, there is a difference between observing a rule with *oikonomia* and saying that the rule does not apply. If a rule is observed with *oikonomia*, the rule is recognized even as it is not followed literally, much like choosing "the next best thing to being there," in lieu of personal presence, when one is invited to an occasion but cannot easily attend. By contrast, saying that the rule does not apply is a deeper rejection, like refusing a friend's invitation in a way that denies any duty or moral claim for that friend. There is a fundamental difference between sending a gift to a friend's wedding with regrets that one cannot attend, and treating the invitation itself with contempt. The rites for a second and third marriage are genuine observations of the fact that one is observing a rule with leniency: the rite for a second marriage is penitential, the rite for a third marriage even more so, and a firm line is drawn that rules out a fourth marriage: *oikonomia* has limits (source). If a second and third marriage is allowed, the concession recognizes the rule and, one might argue, the reality the rule recognizes. If one looks at jokes as an anthropologist would, as revealing profound assumptions about a culture, snipes about "A wife is only temporary; an ex-wife is forever" and "When two divorced people sleep together, four people are in the bed" are often told by people who would scoff at the idea of marriage as a sacred, permanent union... but the jokes themselves testify that there is something about a marriage that divorce cannot simply erase: a

spouse can become an ex-spouse, but the marriage is too permanent to simply be dropped as something revocable that has no intrinsically permanent effects. And in that sense, an ex-spouse is closer to a spouse than to a friend that has never had romance. Which is to say that marriage bears witness both to an absolute and *oikonomia* in how that absolute is observed.

Even with noted exceptions, the Gospels give the indissolubility of marriage a forceful dominical saying backed by quotation from the heart of the Old Testament Scriptures. If something that forcefully put may legitimately be observed with *oikonomia*, then it would seem strange to me to say that what I have observed as Patristic attitudes, where thinking of contraception as desirable would appear seriously disturbed, dictate not only a suspicion towards contraception but a criterion that admits no *oikonomia* in its observation. Presumably some degree *oikonomia* is allowable, and perhaps one could not rule out the *oikonomia* could take the form of a new consensus's criterion allowing non-abortifascient contraception, in consultation with one's spiritual father, on condition of allowing children at some point during a marriage. However, even if that is the legitimate *oikonomia*, it is legitimate as the lenient observation of grave moral principles. And, in that sense, unless one is prepared to say that the Patristic consensus is wrong in viewing contraception with great suspicion, the *oikonomia*, like the rites for a second and third marriage, should be appropriate for an *oikonomia* in observing a moral concern that remains a necessary moral concern even as it is *observed* with leniency.

Conclusion

I am left with a puzzle: why is it that Orthodox have adopted the current "new consensus"? My guess is that Zaphiris's quite provocative article was taken as simply giving a straight account of Orthodoxy and Patristic teaching as it relates to contraception. The OCA document more or less applies both his analysis and prescriptions. But, while I hesitate to say that no one could explain both why the Fathers would regard contraception as abhorrent and we should permit it in some cases, I will say that I have not yet encountered such an explanation. And I would present, if not anything like a last word, at least important information which should probably be considered in judging the rule and what is appropriate *oikonomia*. If Orthodoxy regards Patristic culture and philosophy as how Christ has become incarnate in the Orthodox Church, then neither condemnations of contraception, nor the reasons why those condemnations would be made in the first place, concern only antiquarians.

Would it be possible for there to be *another* "new consensus?"

"Morality of Contraception: An Orthodox Opinion:" A commentary

The article published by Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90, seems *extremely* significant. It seems a lobbyist article, and in both content and timing the 1970's "new consensus" as articulated by the Orthodox Church in America is consistent with taking Zaphiris in good faith as simply stating the Orthodox position on contraception. (This was the one article I found in an ATLA search for keywords "Orthodox" and "contraception" anywhere, on 13 May, 2007. A search for "Orthodoxy" and "contraception" on 14 May, 2007 turned up one additional result which seemed to be connected to queer theory.) I perceive in this faulty—or, more properly, deceptively *incomplete* data, questionable argument, and seductive sophistry which I wish to comment on.

I believe that Zaphiris's text is worth at least an informal commentary to draw arguments and certain features to the reader's attention. In this commentary, all footnotes will be Zaphiris's own; where I draw on other sources I will allude to the discussion above or add parenthetical references. I follow his footnote numbering, note page breaks by inserting the new page number, and reproduce some typographical features.

Footnote from Zaphiris's text

Chrysostom Zaphiris (Orthodox) is a graduate of the Patriarchal Theological School of Halki, Turkey, and holds a doctorate with highest honors from the University of Strasbourg, where he studied with the Roman Catholic faculty. His 1970 thesis dealt with the "Text of the Gospel according to St. Matthew in Accordance with the Citations in Clement of Alexandria compared with Citations in the Greek Fathers and Theologians of the Second to Fifth Centuries." Dr. Zaphiris taught canon law and New Testament courses at Holy Cross School of Theology (at Hellenic College), Brookline, MA, 1970-72. From 1972 to 1974, he was Vice Rector at the Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Studies, Tantur, Jerusalem.

* This paper was originally presented during the discussion held for doctors of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the surrounding area hosted by theologians of the Ecumenical Institute at Tantur on the question of the morality of contraception. At this point, I would like also to thank Br. James Hanson, C.S.C., for his help editing my English text.

THE MORALITY OF CONTRACEPTION: AN EASTERN ORTHODOX
OPINION*

by

CHRYSOSTOM ZAPHIRIS

PRECIS

This discussion of the morality of contraception includes four basic points: the purpose of marriage as viewed scripturally and patristically, the official teachings of Orthodoxy concerning contraception, the moral issue from an Orthodox perspective, and "the Orthodox notion of synergism and its implications for the moral question of contraception."

It is possible through inference to determine that the Scriptures and the early Christian writers considered that, within marriage, sexual activity and procreation were not the same entity and that sexuality was to be practiced within marriage. These assertions are illustrated.

The official teaching of the Orthodox Church on contraception includes five points: a denunciation of intentional refusal to procreate within marriage, a condemnation of both abortion and infanticide, an absence of any commitment against contraception, and a reliance upon the medical profession to supply further information on the issue. The author offers a theological opinion on the question of contraception allowing for contraception under certain circumstances.

Synergism is the final issue discussed. Synergism is defined as cooperation, co-creation, and co-legislation between humans and God. When people use their talents and faculties morally and creatively, they are acting in combination with God and expressing God's will. The Orthodox view of contraception is perceived within the dimensions of synergistic activity and serves as a contrast to the Roman Catholic view.

The essay concludes with some comments about contraception as a moral issue as perceived within the Eastern Orthodox Church. Allowing for individual freedom and responsibility, and in light of synergism, Orthodoxy avoids definitive pronouncements on such moral issues as contraception.

I. INTRODUCTION.

Contraception is one of the most important aspects of human behavior and family life, and thus it is a part of life which cannot be ignored by theology itself. There can be no question of treating this moral question, but only of outlining the aspects which must be considered according to the Orthodox tradition.

I don't know an exact rule for "what must be considered for the Orthodox tradition," but besides of Biblical witness, the Patriarch of New Rome and one of three "hierarchy and ecumenical teachers" of the Orthodox Church, St. John Chrysostom, homilectically treating something as an abomination and calling it "worse than murder"

would tend to be something I would include under "aspects which must be considered according to the Orthodox tradition."

One reaction which I would like to address in many readers, even though it is not properly commentary is, "Contraception is comparable to homicide? It's called "worse than *murder*"? Is this translated correctly? Is this gross exaggeration? Is it cultural weirdness, or some odd influence of Platonic thought that the Church has recovered from? Why on earth would anybody say that?" This is a natural reaction, partly because the Fathers are articulating a position that is inconceivable today. So the temptation is to assume that this has some cause, perhaps historical, despite moral claims that cannot be taken seriously today.

I would like to provide a loose analogy, intended less to convince than convey how someone really could find a continuity between contraception and murder. Suppose that destroying a painting is always objectionable. Now consider the process of painting: a painting germinates in an artist's mind, is physically created and explored, and finally becomes something one hangs on a wall.

Now let me ask a question: if one tries to interrupt the process of artistic creation, perhaps by disrupting the creator's state of mind and scattering the paints, does that qualify as "destroying a painting"?

The answer to that question depends on what qualifies as "destroying a painting." If one disrupts the artist who is thinking about painting a painting, or scatters the paints and half-painted canvas, then in neither case has one destroyed a finished painting. You cannot point to a completed painting that was there before the interruption began, and say, "See? That is the painting that was destroyed." However, someone who is not being legalistic has good reason to pause before saying "This simply does not qualify as destroying a painting" A *completed* painting was not destroyed, but the process of artistic creation that produces a completed painting was destroyed. And in that sense, someone who interrupted Van Gogh and stopped him from painting "Starry Night" is doing the same sort of thing as someone today who would burn up the completed painting. The two acts are cut from the same cloth.

Now my intent is not to provide a precise and detailed allegory about what detail of the creation process represents conception, birth, etc. That is not the intent of the general illustration. My point is that talk about "destroying paintings" need not be construed only as destroying a completed painting in its final form. There is also the possibility of destroying a painting in the sense of willfully disrupting the process of an artist in the process of making a painting. And, perhaps, there is room for St. John Chrysostom's horrified, "Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation." Now is this rhetorical exaggeration? Quite possibly; Noonan studies various penitentials, all from before the Great Schism, and although there is not always a penance assigned for

contraception by potion, two assign a lighter penance than for homicide, one assigns the same penance, and one actually assigns a penance of four years for homicide and *seven* for contraception. Contraception could bear a heavier penance than murder.

It is somewhat beside the point to work out if we *really* have to take St. John Chrysostom literally in saying that contraception is worse than homicide. I don't think that is necessary. But it is not beside the point that the Fathers seem to treat a great deal of continuity between contraception, abortion, and infanticide, and seem not to draw terribly sharp oppositions between them. Whether or not one assigns heavy-handed penalties from contraception, I can't think of a way to read the Fathers responsibly and categorically deny that contraception is cut from the same cloth as abortion and infanticide. The point is not exactly an exact calculus to measure the relative gravity of the sins. The point is that they are all connected in patristic writing.

First, we need to study the purpose of marriage as we find it in the Scriptures and in the writings of the Greek Fathers. Second, we will reflect on the official teaching authority of the Orthodox Church on this question of contraception. Third, we will offer a moral opinion as to the legitimacy of the practice of contraception from an Orthodox viewpoint. And finally, we will discuss the Orthodox notion of synergism and its implications for the moral question of contraception.

II. THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE.

Although the purpose of marriage is never treated systematically in the Scriptures or in the Fathers according to our contemporary viewpoint and questions, it is possible to infer the thoughts of these classical authors on the purpose of marriage. In general, what we find is that there is the presupposition that human sexual activity within marriage and the procreation of children are not seen as completely the same reality. And furthermore, both Scripture and the Fathers consistently counsel the faithful to live in such a way that human sexuality can be expressed within marriage.

The claim in the last sentence is true; more has been argued from St. John Chrysostom. But Orthodoxy does view celibacy and marriage as more compatible than some assume today. At least by the letter of the law, Orthodox are expected to be continent on fasting days and on days where the Eucharist is received, meaning a minimum of almost half days of the year, including one period approaching two months. I don't know what degree of *oikonomia* is common in pastoral application, but an Orthodox might want to drop another shoe besides saying "both Scripture and the Fathers consistently counsel the faithful to live in such a way that sexuality can be expressed in marriage."

The Scriptures present us with a Christian doctrine of marriage most clearly in Genesis and in the writings of St. Paul. In Genesis 2:18, God said that it was not good for man to be alone, but that he should have a helpmate which he then gave to Adam in the person of his wife, Eve. Is this help meant by God to be only social and religious?

Apparently the possibility that marriage could, as in the patristic world, be not only an affective matter of what people but a union of pragmatic *help* encompassing even the economic is not considered.

For a detailed answer to "How else could that be?" in terms of a relationship including quite significant pragmatic *help*, see Stephen Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*, Ann Arbor: Servant 1980. To someone who has read and digested that book, there seem to be an awful lot of assumptions going into what marriage is allowed to be for the husband and wife.

Or is it also intended by God to be a physical help provided to a man in terms of sexual complementarity?

Does "physical help" simply boil down to the C-word, as Zaphiris seems to mean? Are there no other possibilities? And why is "physical help" just something a wife gives a husband and not something a husband gives a wife? The euphemism sounds like the wife should be kind enough to join a pity party: "It causes him so much pleasure, and it causes me so little pain." I would like to propose a much more excellent alternative: *making love*.

Perhaps it is also possible that "physical help" should also include assistance with errands, or provision, or getting work done as part of a working household? Besides Stephen Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor: Servant 1980), Proverbs 31:10-31 describes the ideal helpmate who perhaps has children but is not praised for beauty or as any basic sex toy: she is praised, among other things, as a powerful and effective helpmeet. In the praises, physical beauty is mentioned only in order to deprecate its significance.

In reading Clark, it seems a natural thing to offer a wife the praises of the end of Proverbs. Zaphiris's presuppositions make that kind of thing look strange. But the defect is with Zaphiris.

However we answer these questions, one thing is certain: the question of procreation as such is not raised by the author. Yet, procreation itself is encouraged by the author of Genesis 1:28, when God orders human beings to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Just as the author of the Pentateuch never makes an explicit connection between the creation of Eve and the practice of human procreation, so likewise St. Paul in the New Testament never makes this connection.

In the case of St. Paul, it is a question of sexual relations of continence within marriage or of marriage as opposed to virginity, but never exactly the question of procreation in any of these cases. Paul considers marriage and virginity as charisms within the life of the Church. He exhorts believers to the practice of virginity if they have this charism; if not, he encourages them to marry. This raises a subsequent question: "Does St. Paul encourage marriage first of all to promote the procreation of children or rather make up for human weakness which is experienced in sexual passion?" While I acknowledge that procreation of children is one of the reasons for marriage which Christian theology has consistently taught, it has never been the only reason for Christian marriage.

If we follow St. Paul closely, it is apparent that he encourages a man to marry, not simply to procreate children, but for other reasons, the most prominent of which 679 would be to avoid fornication (cf. I Cor. 7:2). It is because human persons have the right

I would like to make a comment that sounds, at first, like nitpicking about word choice:

Rights-based moral calculus is prevalent in the modern world, sometimes so that people don't see how to do moral reasoning without seeing things in terms of rights. But the modern concept of a "right" is alien to Orthodoxy.

See Kenneth Himes (ed.) et al., *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington: Georgetown University Press 2005), chapter 2 (41-71) for an historical discussion including how the concept of rights became incorporated into Catholic moral reasoning from the outside. The change was vigorously resisted as recently as Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), today the subject of embarrassed explanations, but what Catholics apologetically explain is often closer to Orthodoxy than the modern Catholic explanation of what Catholicism really teaches. Even in modern Catholicism, officially approved "rights" language is a relatively recent development, and there are attempts to use the concept differently from the secular West.

Armenian Orthodox author Vigen Guorian's *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1987, page number not available)

briefly complains about the modern idea of placing human dignity on no deeper basis than rights; I would refer the reader to my homily "Do We Have Rights?" (http://jonathanscorner.com/no_rights/) for moral-ascetical reasoning that rejects the innovation.

The reason why I am "nitpicking" here is that there is a subtle difference, but a profound one, between saying that sex is good within marriage (or at least permissible), and saying that husband and wife have a right to sexual pleasure, and this entitlement is deep enough that if the sexual generation of children would be undesirable, the entitlement remains, along with a necessity of modifying sex so that the entitled sexual pleasure is delivered even if the sexual generation of children is stopped cold.

Zaphiris never develops the consequences of rights-based moral reasoning at length or makes it the explicit basis for arguing for an entitlement to sexual pleasure even if that means frustrating sexual generation. However, after asserting a married right to sex, he not only fails to discourage this reasoning, but reaches a conclusion identical with the one this reasoning would reach.

to be married and to perform sexual activity within that specific context that Jesus Christ and St. Paul have condemned explicitly the practice of fornication (cf. Mt 5:32, 19:9; Acts 15:20; I Cor. 5:1, 6, 13, 18). Thus, in our study of the Christian tradition on marriage and the possibility of contraceptive practices within marriage, we must keep clearly in view this particular function of marriage as an antidote to fornication.

We find a similar sensitivity in the writings of Paul to the human need for sexual gratification in marriage when he counsels Christian couples on the practice of continence within marriage. "The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwards, you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan" (I Cor. 7:4-5). In this passage, there is no question of procreation, but only of the social union between husband and wife within Christian marriage. While, on the positive side, Paul affirms that Christian marriage is a sign of the union between Jesus Christ and the Church and that the married couple participates in the unity and holiness of this union, more negatively he also sees in marriage an antidote or outlet for the normal human sexual passions. In this context, St. Paul always counsels marriage as preferable to any possibility of falling into fornication.

In saying this, St. Paul is obviously not opposed to procreation as the end of marriage. The bearing of children was naturally expected to result

from the practice of sexual intercourse within marriage as he counseled it. Abstinence from regular sexual intercourse was encouraged only to deepen the life of prayer for a given period of time. This limiting of abstinence to a specific period of time shows well Paul's sensitivity to the demands of human sexual passions and his elasticity of judgment in giving moral counsel. Thus, from the exegesis of Genesis of St. Paul, the whole contemporary question of the explicit connection between sexual intercourse within marriage and the procreation of children was simply not raised in the same form in which it is today.

I would like to take a moment to look at the story of Onan before posing a suggestion about exegesis.

I suggest that in the Bible, especially in portraying something meant to horrify the reader, there are often multiple elements to the horror. The story of Sodom portrays same-sex intercourse, gang rape, and extreme inhospitality. There is a profoundly naive assumption behind the question, "Of same-sex intercourse, gang rape, and extreme inhospitality, which *one* are we *really* supposed to think is the problem?" In this case, it seems all three contributed to something presented as superlatively horrifying, and it is the combined effect that precedes Sodom's judgment in fire and sulfur and subsequently becoming the Old Testament prophet's "poster city" for every single vice from idolatry and adultery to pride and cruelty to the poor. The story of Sodom is written to have multiple elements of horror.

There is one story where contraception is mentioned in the Bible, and it is one of few where Onan joins the company of Uzzah, Ananias, Sapphira, Herod (the one in Acts), and perhaps others in being the only people named in the Bible as being struck dead by God for their sins. This is not an august company. Certainly Onan's story is not the story of a couple saying, "Let's just focus on the children we have," but a story *that* forceful in condemning Onan's sin, *whatever* the sin properly consisted in, has *prima facie* good claim to be included a Biblical text that factors into a Biblical view of contraception. The story is relevant, even if it is ambiguous for the concerns of this question.

Likewise, in something that is not translated clearly in most English translations, the New Testament (Gal 5:20, Rev 9:21) *pharmakoi* refers to "medicine men" who made, among other things, contraceptive and abortifascient potions, in a world that seemed not to really separate drugs from magic. English translations ordinarily follow the KJV in translating this only with reference to the occult sin, so that it does not come across clearly that the Bible is condemning the people you would go to for contraceptives. This is ambiguous evidence for this discussion: it is not clear whether it

is only condemning the occult practices, condemning what the occult practices were used for, or condemning both at the same time, but the question is significant.

Granted, not every Biblical text touching marriage is evidence against contraception. There are other relevant passages like Gal 5:21-33 which discuss the love in marriage with no reference to fecundity, but if one wants to understand the Bible as it relates to contraception, it is surprising not to mention passages that directly impinge on it, ambiguously but raising the question of whether contraception is a grave sin.

Zaphiris's footnote:

1. Cf. *Stromata*, III, 82, 4.

Turning from the writings of Paul to those of the Greek Fathers, we will see that there is a continuity of Orthodox tradition in this understanding of the purpose of marriage. First, let us consider the statement of Clement of Alexandria who raises this problem as a theologian and as a pastor of the faithful. When he comments on I Cor. 7:2, he uses neither the allegorical nor the spiritual method of exegesis, but rather the literal interpretation of this Pauline text. Through this methodology, Clement, in spite of his usual idealism, recommends marriage over fornication and counsels sexual intercourse within marriage over the possibility of serving the temptor through fornication.[1]

Zaphiris's footnote

2. See H. Crouzel, *Virginite et mariage selon Origine* (Paris-Bruges, 1963), pp. 80-133.

679 We find a similar line of thought in his successor, Origen. Although Origen accepts procreation as the end of marriage, he also sees in marriage the legitimate concession to human weakness in its sexual passions.[2]

Likewise Methodius of Olympus continues this interpretation of St. Paul in a very clear statement on the subject: "... The apostle did not grant these things unconditionally to all, but first laid down the reason on account of which he has led to this. For, having set forth that 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman' (I Cor. VII, 1) he added immediately 'nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife' (I Cor. VII, 2)—that is 'on account of the fornication which would arise from your being unable to restrain your passions.'..." Afterwards the author notes that Paul speaks "by permission" and "not of command," so that Methodius comments: "For he receives command respecting chastity and not touching of a woman, but permission respecting those who are unable to chasten their appetites."

Zaphiris's footnote

3. Cf. *The Banquet of the Virgins*, III, 12.

Methodius applies similar logic to the possibility of the second marriage, in that he permits the second marriage, not specifically for the procreation of children, but "on account of the strength of animal passion, he [Paul] allows one who is in such condition may, 'by permission' contract a second marriage; not as though he expressed the opinion that a second marriage was in itself good, but judging it better than burning . . ." According to Methodius, the apostle speaks here, first saying that he wished all were healthy and continent, as he also was, but afterwards allowing a second marriage to those who are burdened with the weaknesses of the passions, goaded on by the uncontrolled desires of the organs of generations for promiscuous intercourse, considering such a second marriage far preferable to burning and indecency.[3]

4. See A. Moulard, *Saint Jean Chrysostome, le defenseur du mariage et l'apotre de la virginite* (Paris, 1923), pp. 72ff.

The moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers, St. John Chrysostom, also does not stress the procreation of children as the goal of marriage. On the contrary, he adheres to the Pauline texts and to the apologists for virginity and concludes that marriage does not have any other goal than that of hindering fornication.

"The moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers" wrote the passage cited in the paper above:

"Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit? Where are the medicines of sterility? Where is there murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. Do you see that from drunkenness comes fornication, from fornication adultery, from adultery murder? Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God, and fight with his laws? What is a curse, do you seek as though it were a blessing?... Do you teach the woman who is given to you for the procreation of offspring to perpetrate killing?... In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife."

There is arguably a degree of ambiguity in the Church Fathers. However, the ambiguity is of a far lesser degree. The Fathers argued most vehemently against opponents who believed the procreation of *any* children was morally wrong;

contraception was seen as a duty in all intercourse, and not a personal choice for one's convenience. See Augustine as cited on page 6 above. Acknowledging that the Fathers addressed a different situation, this does not mean that, since the Fathers did not address the situation of a couple not wishing to be burdened by more children for now, the patristic arguments are inapplicable. An injunction against suicide may say something about self-mutilation even if, in the initial discussion, there was no question of mutilations that were nonlethal in character.

There is some element of something in the Fathers that can be used to support almost anything: hence Sarah Coakley's *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell 2002) teams up St. Gregory of Nyssa with Judith Butler, who is a lesbian deconstructionist and "bad writing" award winner, in pursuing the "gender fluidity" that is greatly sought after by queer theory and feminism (157-61). For that matter, I think there is a stronger case for Arianism, from the Bible, than Zapyris makes from the Church Fathers on contraception, and it involves less "crossing fingers." For the record, I believe the conclusions of both arguments I have brought up are heresy, but there is a reason I brought them up. We are in trouble if we only expect the truth to be able to pull arguments from the Scripture and the Fathers, or believe that an argument that draws on the Scripture and the Fathers is therefore trustworthy. My point is not so much whether Zaphiris is right or wrong as the fact that there's something that can be pulled from the Fathers in support of everything, either right *or* wrong. His argument needs to be weighed on its merits. (Or demerits.)

There is some more complexity to the discussion; I have left many things out of the shorter article, but the much even of what I have left out would make the point more strongly. Hence Noonan discusses a view that sex during pregnancy is not licit because it will not be fruitful, discusses the Stoic protest of "even animals don't do this," mentions a third-century dissenter from this view (Lactantius) who allowed sex during pregnancy only as an ambivalent concession, and then the well-read researcher writes, "This... is the only opinion I have encountered in any Christian theologian before 1500 explicitly upholding the lawfulness of intercourse in pregnancy" (Noonan 1986, 78.). Properly taken in context, this would support a much stronger position than I have argued, and one less attractive today.

Is the issue complex? There's a lot here to understand. Granted. But in this case, "complex" does not mean "nothing but shades of grey," and I am at a loss for a good, honest reason to claim to provide an overview Patristic theology as relevant to contraception, while at the same time failing to mention how it condemned contraception.

III. THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ON CONTRACEPTION

While there is not a defined statement on the morality of contraception within Orthodoxy,

To modify what I wrote above: I am not sure exactly what Zaphiris means by "defined." The Church is not considered to have "defined" *any* position on morals in the sense of infallibly pronounced doctrines. In Orthodoxy, the Seven Ecumenical Councils may create canons that are morally binding, but irreversible doctrinal declarations are mostly connected to Christology. Under that definition of "defined", the Orthodox Church would not have "defined" a ruling against contraception, *regardless* of its moral status. Neither would she have "defined" a ruling against rape, murder, or any other heinous offenses, even as she unambiguously condemns them.

This is one of several passages that raises questions of slippery rhetoric, perhaps of sophistry. Assuming that the above understanding of "defined" applies (a question which I am unsure of even if it seems that an affirmative answer would be consistent with the rest of the document), his claim is technically true. But it is presented so as to be interpreted as stating that the Orthodox Church has no real position on the matter, unlike other moral questions where the Orthodox Church would presumably have defined a position. This understandable inference is false. The Patristic witness, and arguably the Biblical witness, in fact do treat contraception as suspicious at best. If so, this is a case of Zaphiris saying something technically true in order to create an impression that is the opposite of the truth. That is very well-done sophistry.

Zaphiris continues with a small, but telling, remark:

there is a body of moral tradition which has a bearing on this question.

This short claim is also true. More specifically, there is a body of moral tradition which has a bearing on this question and tends to view contraception negatively.

First, the Church vigorously denounces any obvious case of pure egotism as the motivating force in Christian sexuality within marriage. Any married couple within the Orthodox Church who want absolutely no children sins grievously against both the Christian dispensation and against the primordial purpose of human life which includes the procreation or, as the Greek Fathers prefer, the "immortality" of the human species.

It seems that Zaphiris may be, for reasons of rhetoric and persuasion, providing a limit to how much he claims, so as to be more readily accepted. Zaphiris provides no footnotes or reference to sources more specific than the "Greek Fathers" to buttress this claim, and does not provide an explanation for certain questions. One such question is

why, if marriage is not morally required and celibates are *never* obligated to provide that specific support for the "immortality" of the human species, such obligation is binding on *all* married couples. Are all celibates exempt from "the primordial purpose of human life," and if so, why is it permissible to fail to meet such a foundational purpose of human life? I do not see why Zaphiris's logic justifies his making the more palatable claim that some openness towards children is mandatory.

This raises the question of whether he has a consistent position arising from his reading, or whether he is simply inventing a position and claiming he got it from the Greek Fathers.

According to the Greek Fathers, to refuse to transmit life to others is a grievous sin of pride in which the couple prefers to keep human life for themselves instead of sharing it with possible offspring.

Zaphiris's footnotes:

5. See, e.g., *Didache*, II, i-3, V, 2, VI, 1-2; Pseudo-Barnabas, *Epist.*, XIX, 4-6, Saint Justin, 1 *Apolog.*, XXVII, 1-XXIX,1; Athenagoras, *Supplic.*, XXXV; *Epist. Ad Diogn.*, 5,6; Tertullian, *Apolog*, IX, 6-8; *Ad Nationes*, I, 15; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, XXX, 2; Lactance, *Divinarum Institutionum*, VI, 20.

6. In this regard, we should stress the fact that the Greek Fathers forbid every induced abortion of a human fetus because abortion involves tampering with a human soul. In fact, the soul is not the product of the sexual act of the parents, but is rather the manifestation of the love of God or the result of a special direct or indirect action of God (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI, 135, et *Eclogae prophetae*, 50, 1-3). A study of the means of the transmission of the soul is beyond the scope of the present paper so that we do not try to explain it here. What is important is to emphasize that the parents cannot destroy any human life—even embryonic—because the embryo carries the soul which is transmitted by God.

7. We must stress the fact that a few non-Christian philosophers took issue with the pro-abortion majority and condemned abortion. Cf. Seneca, *De Consolatione ad Helviani*, XVI, 3; R. Musunius, p. 77; Desimus Junius Juvenalis, *Satire*, VI, 595f.; Philon of Alexandria, *Hypothetia*, VII, 7 (apud Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VIII, 7, 7).

8. Among other Greek Fathers, see Clement of Alexandria, *Eclogae prophetae*, 50, 1-3.

Secondly, the Orthodox Church, following the teachings of the Fathers, [5] is totally opposed to any form of the abortion of unborn children. Human life belongs exclusively to God and neither the mother nor the father of the fetus has the right to destroy that life.[6] When the Fathers of the Church

debated against the non-Christian philosophers[7] of the first centuries, they considered abortion as murder because the life of the fetus is animate being. [8]

(Note, for the closing claim, that the reason Zaphiris provides is articulated in a fashion which does not apply to contraception, at least not directly: destroying a painting is wrong precisely because an existing and completed painting is a work of art. What the rhetoric says, avoids saying, and leaves the reader to infer, seems to be exquisitely crafted sophistry.)

Thirdly, the Orthodox Church has universally condemned infanticide as immoral, following the same line of theological reasoning.

Zaphiris's footnote:

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Fourthly, it is important to stress that the Orthodox Church has not promulgated any solemn statements through its highest synods on the whole contemporary question of contraception. In general, I think it is accurate to say that, as long as a married couple is living in fidelity to one another and not allowing an immoral egotism to dominate their sexual relations, the particularities of their sexual life are left to the freedom of the spouses to decide.

Finally, it is important to note that the Orthodox Church looks to the medical profession itself to come to some unanimity in its biological research on the effects of contraception for human health. At the moment, the world of science does not furnish the world of theology such a unanimous body of opinion as would allow the Church prudently to formulate unchangeable moral teaching on this point. 682

There is probably a higher class academic way of making this point, but there is a classic anecdote, rightly or wrongly attributed:

Winston Churchill to unknown woman: "Would you sleep with me for a million pounds?"

Unknown woman: "Would I!"

Winston Churchill: "Would you sleep with me for five pounds?"

Unknown woman: "Exactly what kind of woman do you think I am?"

Winston Churchill: "We've already established that. We're just negotiating over the price."

This claim is not a claim that the theological status of contraception is to be determined by the medical profession. The paragraph quoted above means that the theological status of contraception has already been established, with the "price" left to the medical profession to work out.

IV. A THEOLOGICAL OPINION ON THE QUESTION OF CONTRACEPTION

Zaphiris's footnote:

10. Clement of Alexandria, e.g., probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy, defines marriage as "gamos oun esti synodos andros kai gynaikos e prote kata nomon epi gnesion teknon sporai," i.e. marriage is primarily the union of a man and a woman according to the law in order to procreate legitimate children (cf. *Stromata*, II, 137, 1).

From the material we have surveyed above, it should be obvious that there can be no question of entering into marriage without the intention of procreating children as part of the marriage and still remain faithful to the Orthodox moral tradition.[10]

Pay very, *very* close attention to footnote 10, immediately above. When a Church Father says that marriage is for the procreation of legitimate children, Zaphiris mentions this only in a footnote and immediately *apologizes* for it, explaining it away it as "probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy." Are we really talking about the same "Greek philosophy" as Zaphiris describes above as only rarely having people speak out against abortion?

Zaphiris's footnote:

11. When the patristic theologians comment on the Pauline doctrine of I Cor. 7:4-5, they consistently stress the temporary character of the sexual abstinence which was permitted by St. Paul to the marriage partners. This temporary period would be all that a husband and wife should agree to in

order to avoid the temptation to evil (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 79, 1).

However, it seems to me that a different question is raised when we consider the case of a couple who already have three or four children and cannot realistically face the possibility of begetting more children and providing adequately for their upbringing and education. Either they can act fairly irresponsibly and beget more children or they can abstain from sexual intercourse with the constant threat that Satan may tempt the couple to some form of adultery.

I see plenty of precedent for this kind of heart-rending plea in Margaret Sanger's wake. Ordinarily when I see such a line of argument, it is to some degree connected with one of the causes Margaret Sanger worked to advance. I am more nebulous on whether the Fathers would have seen such "compassion" as how compassion is most truly understood; they were compassionate, but the framework that gave their compassion concrete shape is different from this model.

I might comment that it is almost invariably first-world people enjoying a first-world income who find that they cannot afford any more children. Are they really that much less able than people in the third-world to feed children, or is it simply that they cannot afford more children *and* keep up their present standard of living? If this choice is interpreted to mean that more children are out of the question, then what that means is, with apologies to St. John Chrysostom, a decision that luxuries and inherited wealth make a better legacy for one's children than brothers and sisters.

If the first practice of continued sexual intercourse is pursued, there is the likelihood of an unwanted pregnancy in which case the child ceases to be a sign of their shared love, but risks being a burden which causes only anxiety and even hostility. It is not common that people in this situation of despondency opt for the clearly immoral act of abortion. If this radical action is avoided, and the parents go through with the birth of an unwanted child, there is still the danger that they will subsequently seek a divorce.

Apart from economic or possible emotional problems which accompany economic pressures in family life, there is the equally concrete problem that the health of one of the parents or the health of the possible child might be jeopardized should conception occur.

To limit as far as possible the moral, religious, social, economic, cultural, and psychological problems which arise with the arrival of an unwanted child—both for the parents and for the larger community—I believe that the use of contraceptives would be, if not the best solution, at least the

only solution we have at our disposal today. I cannot distinguish between natural and artificial means because the morality of both is the same. If someone uses either a natural or an artificial means of birth control, the intention is the same, i.e., to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. The use of contraceptives can facilitate a sexual life which enjoys a minimum of anxiety.

With these reflections on the current situation of family life and based on the above understanding of St. Paul and the Fathers, I ask myself what is better: to practice abstinence from the act of sexual intercourse, an act made holy by the blessing of God, or to practice a controlled sexual life within marriage and avoid the temptation of Satan? As we know, sexual intimacy within marriage is a very important aspect of the relationship between husband and wife. With the use of contraceptives this sexual intimacy can be practiced without fear of unwanted pregnancy or without the danger of adultery which may result from the practice of abstinence.

Here contraceptives appear to "save the day" in terms of marital intimacy, and the question of whether they have drawbacks is not brought to the reader's attention. Zaphiris is interested, apparently, in answering the question, "What can be made attractive about contraception?" There are other ways of looking at it.

There was one time I met Fr. Richard John Neuhaus; it was a pleasure, and very different from the stereotypes I keep hearing about neoconservatives here at my more liberal Catholic school, Fordham.

At that evening, over beer and (for the others) cigars I asked about the idea that I had been mulling over. The insight is that concepts ideas and positions having practical conclusions that may not be stated in any form. I asked Fr. Neuhaus for his response to the suggestion that the practice of ordaining women is a fundamental step that may ripple out and have other consequences. I said, "It would be an interesting matter to make a chart, for mainline Protestant denominations, of the date they accepted the ordination of women and the date when they accepted same-sex unions. My suspicion is that it would not be too many years."

He responded by suggesting that I push the observation further back: it would be interesting to make a chart for American denominations of the date when they allowed contraception, and the more nebulous date when they started to allow divorce.

Fr. Neuhaus's response raises an interesting question for this discussion. There might be greater value than Zaphiris provides in answering the question, "What are the practical effects, both positive and negative, for sexual intimacy that happen when a couple uses contraception?" There is room to argue that intimacy premised on shutting down that aspect of sharing may have some rather unpleasant effects surfacing in odd places. Fr. Neuhaus seemed to think before suggesting a connection between

contraception and divorce. But this is not the question Zaphiris is answering; the question he seems to be answering is, "How can we present contraception as potentially a savior to some couples' marital intimacy?" This is fundamentally the wrong question to ask.

Zaphiris's footnote:

12. This spiritual union and the physical union are not opposed to one another, but are complementary. As an Orthodox theologian, I cannot treat physical union and spiritual union as dialectically opposed realities, which would result from an opposition between matter and spirit. Rather than getting trapped in this typically Western problem, I follow the theological stress of Orthodoxy; this opposition between matter and spirit is resolved through the Logis, and matter and spirit are affirmed to be in extraordinary accord and synergy.

The use of contraceptives can contribute to the possibility of a couple's having a permanent physical and spiritual union. The practice of contraception can contribute to the harmony between the man and wife which is the *sine qua non* of their union. Furthermore, the practice of contraception can facilitate a balance between demographic expansion on our planet and cultivation of its natural resources. This is absolutely essential if we are to prevent future misery and human degradation for future generations. Furthermore, the church itself, which always desires to promote the economic, social, educational, psychological, and religious well-being of its members and of all persons, should permit the practice of contraception among its faithful if it is to be true to its own task.

There was one webpage I saw long ago, comparing the 1950's and 1990's and asking whether it was still possible to make ends meet. The author, after comparing one or two of other rules of thumb, compared what was in a 1950's kitchen with what was in a 1990's kitchen, and concluded, "We're not keeping up with the Joneses any more.... We're keeping up with the Trumps."

St. John Chrysostom was cited in an academic presentation I heard, as presenting an interesting argument for almsgiving: in response to the objection of "I have many children and cannot afford too much almsgiving," said that having more children was a reason to give *more* alms, because almsgiving has salvific power, and more children have more need for the spiritual benefit of parental almsgiving.

Besides finding the argument interesting, there is something that I would like to underscore, and it is not simply because this would be a family size with contraception forbidden. This is in the context of what would today be considered a third world

economy—what we know as first world economy did not exist until the West discovered unprecedentedly productive ways of framing an economy. An hour's work would not buy a burger and fries; a day's work might buy a reasonable amount of bread, and meat was a rarity. Those whom St. Chrysostom was advising to give more alms since they had more children, were living in what would be considered squalor today. Or in the West the year of Zaphiris' publication, or perhaps before that.

Why is it that today, in such a historically productive economy, we have suddenly been faced with the difficulty of providing for a large family? Why does the first world present us with the (new?) issue of providing for as many children as a couple generates? My suspicion is that it is because we have an expected baseline that would appear to others as "keeping up with the Trumps." The question in Zaphiris is apparently not so much whether children can be fed, whether with a first world diet or with straight bread, as whether they can be given a college education, because, in a variation of Socrates' maxim, a life without letters after one's name is not worth living.

I would raise rather sharply the conception of what is good for human beings: as Luke 12:15 says, a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. The Orthodox ascetical tradition has any number of resources for a well-lived life. There are more resources than most of us will ever succeed in using. The Orthodox ascetical tradition is not only for people who consider themselves rich. Is contraception really justified just because the average middle-class family cannot afford to bring up more than a few children in the lifestyle of keeping up with the Trumps?

This personal theological-moral opinion which I have outlined and which suggests that we take active human measures regarding family life and the future of society does not at all imply that I reject the full importance of the action of divine providence as important—it is probably the most important factor in the human future. On the contrary, I want to suggest the cooperation of human reason with divine providence; for the Greek Fathers, human reason itself is a participation in the divine revelation. The discoveries and inventions of humankind are themselves permitted by God who governs the human spirit through the Logos without suppressing human freedom.

Furthermore, we must not forget that the physiology of the woman is itself a kind of preventative to the occurrence of pregnancy. During her menstrual cycle, as is well known, she is fertile only part of the time. On the side of the male physiology, it is only by chance, and certainly not the result of every ejaculation of semen, that one of the millions of sperm swims to the ovum with final success so that conception occurs. I believe that the physical make-up of the reproductive system of both female and male shows that God did not intend that every act of human sexual intercourse should result in a

pregnancy. Consequently, I believe that the contraceptive pill does not produce an abnormal state in woman, but rather prolongs the non-fecund period which comes from God.

Having arrived at this moral opinion which would allow the use of contraceptives by Orthodox couples, it is important to conclude by underscoring several basic points. First, as an Orthodox theologian, I feel that I must respect the freedom of a married couple to ultimately make the decision themselves after I have done my best to school them in the sacredness of marriage, the importance of their union within the saving Mystery of Jesus Christ, and their role in peopling the communion of saints.

684 Secondly, it is important, from an Orthodox point of view, to recognize in the practice of sexual continence a primarily spiritual reality. That is, sexual continence should be practiced only when a couple feels that this is being asked of them by God as a moment within their mutual growth in holiness and spirituality. Any imposition of continence as a physical discipline entered into for baser motives such as fear is not the kind of continence which is counseled to us by the Gospel.

This makes an amusing, if perhaps ironic, contrast to *Humanae Vitae*. Here Zaphiris more or less says that "continence" for the sake of having sexual pleasure unencumbered by children is not *really* continence. Which I would agree with. Zaphiris says that the pill (abortifascient, incidentally, on some accounts today) is merely regulating a natural cycle, while crying "foul!" at the Catholic claim that contraceptive timing is a spiritually commendable "continence." The Catholic position is the mirror image of this, rejecting the idea that the pill (even if it were not abortifascient) is merely regulating a natural cycle, and classifying the pill among what Catholic canon law calls "poisons of sterility." Both *Humanae Vitae* and Zaphiris make a shoddy argument for one of these two methods of contraception and cry "Foul!" about shoddy argument on the other side.

Despite the fact that Zaphiris presents himself as hostile to *Humanae Vitae* and rising above its faults, the two documents seem to be almost mirror images, more similar than different.

Zaphiris's footnotes:

13. As we know, the Encratites (e.g. Tatian, Cassien, and Carpocrates) condemned marriage because they considered every act of sexual intercourse as sinful. It was sinful because it did not come from God (cf. Epiphanius of Salamine, *Adv. Haer.*, I, III, 46). For them, sexuality was also condemned because of its supposed relationship to original sin. The fleshly union allowed

by marriage only further propagated this original sin in the offspring. Thus, because sexuality was not divine, Jesus Christ came to suppress it (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 91, 1; 92, 1). In their doctrine, through the suppression of the fleshly union, Jesus Christ opposed the Gospel of the New Testament to the Law of the Old Testament which had allowed sexual intercourse in marriage. The followers of the encratic movement said that they did not accept sexuality, marriage, or procreation because they did not feel that they should introduce other human beings into the world and in their stead as their immediate successors in the human race since they would only endure suffering and provide food for death (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 45, 1).

14. Cf. Joseph Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility, Situation Ethics at Work*, (London, 1967), especially pp. 34ff.

Thirdly, I want to make it quite clear that I am not proposing a complete and unqualified endorsement of the practice of contraception. Rather I am trying to find that same kind of middle ground which the ancient church followed in condemning both the extremes of sexual puritanism among the Encratites,[13] who found in sex something contrary to the holiness of God, and the opposite extreme of pagan debauchery which sought to find all human meaning in the practices of sexual excess. Within this Christian context, I exhort doctors to be faithful to the individual holiness of every Christian man and woman and to shun any irresponsible practice of automatically counseling the use of contraceptives in every situation for the sake of mere convenience and dehumanizing utilitarianism. Also, I want to make it quite clear that I in no way support the "new morality" with its ethic of sexual activity outside the bounds of matrimony, which is sometimes facilitated by doctors who furnish contraceptives quite freely to the young and uninstructed.

V. THE QUESTION OF CONTRACEPTION IN RELATION TO HUMANS' ROLE AS CO-LEGISLATORS WITH GOD IN THE WORLD

The roots of the Orthodox teaching on marriage are to be found in St. Paul's statement about the love between Christ and the church, and St. John Chrysostom's view that marriage should be likened to a small church which, like the great church of 684 God, is "one, holy, universal and apostolic." The relationship between husband and wife parallels the earthly church and the eternal church, or the relationship between the visible and the invisible church. These are not two different churches; on the contrary, there is one church with two dimensions: earthly or terrestrial, and eternal or celestial. The two are inextricably linked. Similarly, marriage constitutes for the

Orthodox faith both a terrestrial and a celestial reality, for marriage is both a work of human love and a sacramental means of salvation. Moreover, insofar as every divinely created being, including man and woman, is created according to the Logos, marriage reflects the Divine Logos.

For Paul, marriage is a striking manifestation (exteriorization) of the union between Jesus Christ and his church (Eph. 5:21-33). The Old Testament prophets saw marriage as a dimension of God's covenant with the people. A husband's relationship with his wife is the same as the creature's relationship with the Creator; faithfulness in one is faithfulness in the other and, as with the faithfulness (cf. Hos. 1:1-3, 5; Jer. 3:1ff.; Ezek. 16:1ff., 23:1ff.; Isa. 50:1ff., 54:1ff.), so too Paul, in the New Testament, pronounced marriage a holy means (mysterion or sacrament) of Christ's grace. The marriage of man and woman participates in the marriage of Christ and the church.

Eastern Orthodox theologians view the relationship between God and human beings as a creative collaboration. It is our freedom that makes us co-creators with God in the world, and co-legislators with God in the moral order. As creatures, we are obliged to obey the law set down by the Creator, but insofar as our obedience is an expression of our freedom, we are not passive objects of God's law, but rather creative agents of it. Our reason is joined to God through the Logos (the Divine Reason). When we choose to exercise our reason in the moral life, we cooperate with God's creative work on earth. This cooperation or collaboration the Greek Fathers spoke of as synergism (*synergeia*). The person and work of Jesus Christ is the fullest embodiment of this synergistic union of God and humanity.

It is in the light of the synergistic union between God and humanity that the Eastern church understands and resolves the problems of contraceptives, especially the use of the pill.

I could interrupt more to ask many more questions like, "Is this what the Eastern Church should teach to be faithful to her tradition, or what Zaphiris wants the framing metaphor for the Eastern teaching to be as a change to its prior tradition?"

The question we should ask now is: Does our freedom to devise and employ contraceptives, including the pill, violate "natural law" as Roman Catholic teaching states? We are compelled to answer that the encyclical of Pope Paul VI (*Humanae vitae*) is lacking because it does not acknowledge the role of man and woman as God's co-creators and co-legislators on earth. The Eastern Orthodox view of contraception, unlike that of the Latin church, is that our capacity to control procreation is an expression of our powers of

freedom and reason to collaborate with God in the moral order. A human being is viewed not only as a subject which receives passively the "natural law," but also as a person who plays an active role in its formulation. Thus the natural law, according to Eastern Orthodox thinkers, is not a code imposed by God on human beings, but rather a rule of life set forth by divine inspiration and by our responses to it in freedom and reason. This view does not permit the Eastern Orthodox Church to conclude that the pill, and artificial contraceptives generally, are in violation of natural law.

There are a couple of things that are significant here.

First the argument being made about being co-legislators is a point of cardinal importance and one that should *ideally* be supported by at least *one* footnote. There is an *absolute* lack of footnotes or even mention of names of authors or titles of text in this section's quite significant assertions about the Eastern Church. (This raises to me some questions about the refereeing here. My teachers usually complain and lower my grade when I make sweeping claims without adding footnotes.)

Second, to employ a Western image, Christian freedom is comparable to a sonnet: total freedom within boundaries. Hence, in a slightly paraphrased version of one of the sayings of the Desert Fathers, "A brother asked an old monk, 'What is a good thing to do, that I may do it and live?' The old monk said, 'God alone knows what is good. Yet I have heard that someone questioned a great monk, and asked, 'What good work shall I do?' And he answered, 'There is no single good work. The Bible says that Abraham was hospitable, and God was with him. And Elijah loved quiet, and God was with him. And David was humble, and God was with him. Therefore, find the desire God has placed in your heart, and do that, and guard your heart.'"

(http://jonathanscorner.com/christmas_tales/christmas_tales10.html , as seen on 14 May, 2007) There is great freedom in Orthodoxy, but freedom within bounds. Things such as "Do not murder," "Do not commit adultery," and "Do not steal," are boundaries absolutely consistent with the Desert Fathers saying above. There is great freedom within boundaries, and in fact the boundaries *increase* our freedom.

What Zaphiris presents is a great, stirring, poetic hymn to our cooperation with the Creator as co-creators, presented as a reason not to require a certain bound. (It is my experience that sophistry is often presented more poetically than honest arguments.) Perhaps this would be a valid move if there were no serious issues surrounding contraception, but as it is, it follows the logical fallacy of "begging the question": in technical usage, "begging the question" is not about raising a question, but improperly taking something for granted: more specifically, presenting an argument that assumes the very point that it is supposed to prove. It is begging the question to answer the question, "Why is contraception permissible?" by eloquently proclaiming,

"Contraception is a magnificent exercise of Orthodox freedom, because Orthodox freedom is magnificent and contraception is permissible within the bounds of that freedom." The whole point at issue is whether contraception is permissible; to argue this way as a way of answering that question is sophistry.

(I might suggest that it is an "interesting" exercise of our status as co-creators with God to try hard to shut down the creative powers God built into sex. Perhaps the suggestion is not indefensible, but it is in need of being defended, and Zaphiris never acknowledges that this interpretation of our status as co-creators needs to be defended, or buttress his specific interpretation.)

686 The conception of natural law in *Humanae vitae* contains a deterministic understanding of human marital and sexual life. According to this understanding, any and every human (or artificial) intervention into the biological processes of human being constitutes a violation of God's law for humanity. Hence, contraception as an artificial interruption or prevention of the natural event of procreation is inherently a violation of God's law. *Humanae vitae*, moreover, goes on to state that each act of coitus is, according to the law of nature, an "*actus per se aptus ad generationem*."

While the Eastern Orthodox Church fully acknowledges the role of procreation in the marital sexual act, it does not share the deterministic understanding of this act as expressed by *Humanae vitae*, which ignores love as a dimension of great value in sexual intercourse between husband and wife. Indeed, this love is viewed by the Eastern church as the marriage partners' own response to the love of God for human beings, a human love as the marriage partners' own response to the love of God for human beings, a human love which is also a paradigm of Christ's love for the church. Finally, one must say that the deterministic Roman Catholic conception of marital sexuality, rooted as it is in scholastic medieval teaching, cannot very well deal with crucial contemporary problems such as over-population, food shortage, poverty, and insufficient medical resources.

The Roman Catholic position on human sexuality and procreation is based on the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, and these in turn are decisively influenced by Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle's view was that every object in the physical universe possesses an intelligible structure, a form which is composed of an intrinsic end and the means or "drive" to realize that end. When a thing is behaving, or being used, according to its end—as a frying pan used to fry fish—then that thing is acting properly or "naturally"; however, when a thing is not acting, or being used, according to its intrinsic

end—as when a frying pan is used to prop open a faulty window—then that object is acting, or being used, improperly or "unnaturally."

There is a much bigger problem than a singularly unflattering illustration of the distinction between natural and unnatural use.

Unless one counts Zaphiris's example above of a theologian saying that marriage is intended for procreation, with footnoted clarification that this is "probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy," the surrounding passage (about Thomas Aquinas's discussion of whether contraception is unnatural) is the first time that Zaphiris mentions a theologian presenting an argument against contraception. And it is a Latin after the Great Schism interpreted in terms of Scholastic influence.

The following inference is not stated in so many words, but the trusting reader who is trying to be sympathetic will naturally draw an understandably wrong conclusion: "Arguments that contraception enter the picture when Aquinas as a Latin Scholastic imported Aristotelian philosophy." Again, this is not stated explicitly, but much of sophistry, including this, is the impression that is created without technically saying anything false. (This is how sophistry works.)

This will lead the trusting reader to expect another further conclusion: since (so it appears) arguments against contraception, and especially the idea of contraception being unnatural, *enter* the picture with Latin Scholasticism, any Orthodox who brings such argument against contraception is under Western influence. People who have fallen under Western influence should perhaps be answered gently and charitably, but the Western influence is not something one should listen to and accept. Again, this is *not* stated in so many words, but it is precise the rhetoric appears to be aimed at.

Incidentally, whatever Aquinas may have gotten from Aristotle, the Greek Fathers had ideas of unnatural vice *without* the help of Latin Scholasticism. There is a firmly embedded concept of unnatural vices, including witchcraft as well as "unnatural vice." Jude 7 charges the men of Sodom with unnatural lust (sarkos heteras). The salient question is not whether the Greek Fathers have an understanding of *some* sins as unnatural, but whether contraception is a sin and, if so, whether it is among the sins classified as unnatural. But it is *not* automatically due to Western influence for an Orthodox to make claims about unnatural sin.

St. Thomas attempted to synthesize Aristotle's logic of means-ends with the biblical story of the divine creator of the universe. For Aquinas, God is the author of the intelligible structure present in each finite or earthly object. When a finite being behaves according to its intrinsic end, it acts "naturally" as Aristotle thought, but according to Aquinas it also acts in accord with the divine will for that creaturely being. So it is with human sexuality and

procreation. Aquinas believed that the intrinsic end of all sexuality (human and non-human) is procreation. Procreation may not necessarily result from each act of coitus, but this does not mean that the sexual (human) partners have disobeyed God for, if their aim in sexual union was procreation, they have behaved in accord with the divine will governing this creaturely reality. But if that intrinsic aim of sexuality-procreation is subverted, either by substituting pleasure for procreation as the aim, or by introducing artificial devices or means to inhibit or prevent procreation, then sexuality is practiced "unnaturally" or sinfully, and God is disobeyed.

The wedding of Aristotle's means-ends logic to the biblical Creator meant for Aquinas that sexuality, as every other earthly vitality, is governed by laws setting forth God's intention for each creaturely being, which are knowable to every creature for 686 the proper conduct of its life on earth. When the law governing sexuality and procreation is disobeyed, then, according to Aquinas' theology, the Creation itself is undermined and God's own creative will is defied.

* * *

If a fuller anthropological understanding of human beings is advanced, such that people are viewed as free, rationally and spiritually, as well as biologically, a different judgment on contraception must then be made, one certainly different from that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Zaphiris is driving his persuasive effect further. He is driving home further the impression that if a misguided fellow Orthodox tells you that contraception is sin, he is presumably one of those poor saps, an Orthodox who has fallen under Western influence, and if this misguided fellow Orthodox perhaps specifies that this is because contraception frustrates the purpose of sex, this is someone under the spell of the Roman Church, who is to be dealt with as one ordinarily deals with the pseudomorphosis of Western influence yet again corrupting Orthodoxy.

It is the belief of Eastern Orthodox theology that only such an anthropology is consistent with the dignity the Bible bestows on humans as *imago Dei*.

Note that earlier some of what Zaphiris said *earlier* was presented as a "theological opinion," not necessarily binding on the consciences of other Orthodox Christians even if he was trying to make a case for it. But here we seem to have shifted to something that is binding on all Orthodox Christians: "It is the belief of Eastern Orthodox theology that only such an anthropology," apparently meaning the

anthropology implied in the last section which makes at least one sweeping claim without footnotes or even the name of an author or text, that is binding on the consciences of Orthodox Christians. Earlier, perhaps the view of St. John Chrysostom might have been acceptable, at least as a theological opinion. Here it begins to look like a blunt declaration implying that Chrysostom's position is heretical. Is the implication, "If anybody disagrees with this, let him be anathema?" *Is the author specifically anathematizing his own patron saint?*

This dignity is revealed afresh by Jesus Christ who, as both divine and human in freedom, reason, spirit, and flesh, incarnates the complex anthropology of all human beings.

Speaking from this anthropological conception of humanity, we should distinguish three principle aspects in the use of contraceptives—the psychological, the medical, and the moral. From the psychological point of view, contraceptives are permissible only when their use is the result of a common decision reached by both partners. The imposition of contraceptives by one partner in the sexual act must be regarded as immoral inasmuch as it abridges the freedom and possibly violates the conscience of the other partner. Any use of contraceptives which does not respect the psychological condition of both partners and of the sexual act itself must be judged immoral. What should guide sexual partners in the use or non-use of contraceptives is their freedom and reason, their spiritual dignity as creatures of God.

Zaphiris's footnote:

15. [Footnote not recorded in my copy.]

From the medical point of view, we have mentioned above the conditions under which contraceptives are permissible. It is important to emphasize here that moral questions are not part of the technical judgments made by medical doctors about the use or non-use of contraceptives.[15] As we have said, the use of the pill is not a permanent sterilization but a temporary state of sterility induced for reasons that may be social or economic or psychological or demographic or physiological.

Contrary to Roman Catholic teaching, the pill does not violate natural law. Its function is not to bring about a permanent state of sterilization but rather a temporary suspension of fertility. And this decision to suspend fertility, when made by both marital partners with reason and freedom and spirit, is a decision made perfectly consistent with God's will for human beings on earth.

* * *

688 There is an authentic moral question in the use and non-use of contraceptives. It is no less true that marriage as a sacramental mystery contains a powerful moral dimension. When marital partners engage in contraception, the Orthodox Church believes that they must do so with the full understanding that the goal God assigns to marriage is both the creation of new life and the expression of deeply felt love.

Note: Love is something you deeply *feel*. I do not find this notion in the Bible nearly so much as in the literature of courtly love. This conception of love is (one infers from Zaphiris) not only permissible but mandatory.

Moreover, the Orthodox Church believes that the relationship of man and woman in marriage is essentially a relationship of persons. This means that sexual life must be guided by the meaning of relationship and personhood.

Though it is obvious that procreation is a physical phenomenon, the Eastern church understands the decision of the married couple to have a child to be a moral, even more, a spiritual decision. The Pope's encyclical, *Humanae vitae*, in our judgment, committed a significant error. The authors of the encyclical sought to distinguish our procreative power from all other powers that make us human but, in fact, they isolate our procreateness and set it apart from the human personality. Such an isolation does little justice to the complexity. If conjugality has as its goal *per se* aptitude for procreation, then this is a virtual denial that sexual is permissible during a woman's infertile periods. We have said, and now repeat, that conjugality can and should continue, whether or not procreation is a practical possibility. In contrast to *Humanae vitae*, Orthodox thinkers do not believe that human beings are subjects bound by "natural law" in the deterministic Roman Catholic sense, but rather persons living and acting freely in the natural world.

It now appears, at least to the uninitiate or those liable to misconstrue things, that existentialist personalism is the teaching of the Orthodox Church. And apparently not just a theological opinion: one is bound to subscribe to it.

* * *

Zaphiris's footnote:

16. For one Orthodox discussion of the question of insemination, see the excellent book of Prof. Chrysostomos Constantinidis, *Technete Gonipoiesis kai Theologia* in *Orthodoxia*, XXXIII (1958), 66-79, 174-90, 329-335, 451-468; XXXIV (1959), 36-52, 212-230.

Eastern Orthodoxy recognizes that men and women can only truly be God's co-creators on earth through the responsible use of freedom and reason. The question of responsibility becomes crucial in such cases as permanent sterilization, artificial insemination,[16] and euthanasia. The Eastern Orthodox Church cannot and will not legislate vis-a-vis the enormously important and complicated questions raised by these cases.

I'm at this point imagining the Battle Hymn of the Republic playing in the background: "Glory, glory, Hallelujah! His truth goes marching on!" This is very stirring rhetoric, but sits ill with some of my sources and seems to be something he doesn't document well.

These questions are regarded by the Orthodox Church as *theologoumena*, that is, theologically discussable issues. The Eastern church seeks always to respect one's freedom of decision, but it also seeks through its own ethical inquiry to guide people in making responsible decisions.

There is a lot of great rhetoric for this perspective in Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*. I am suspicious of this rhetorical version of growing to autonomous adult responsibility in its Catholic forms, and I don't see why it needs to be incorporated into Orthodoxy.

The Eastern church's refusal to provide specific answers to some concrete moral questions is based on a fundamental theological principle—the belief that no one can specify where human freedom ends and divine will begins.

Notwithstanding that Zaphiris has done *precisely* that, *not* by forbidding contraception altogether, but by specifying multiple lines which contraception may not pass. And, apparently, specified a line where Orthodox condemnation of contraception may not pass. But this is impressive rhetoric none the less.

Synergism means the collaboration of human beings with God in the continuing creation of the world. We must struggle to understand the right and wrong uses of our freedom, guided by the divine spirit. Our freedom is a

mystery of God's own will and freedom. Therefore, no theologian—Eastern Orthodox 689 or otherwise—can specify what finally constitutes the divine-human collaboration. Practically speaking, we can know when any given act, having taken place we can never be certain of the responsible and creative use of our freedom. We cannot determine a priori the movement of the human spirit any more than we can determine a priori the movement of the divine spirit. It is certain that, unless we recognize continually the Lordship of God in the world—the Creator judging all the actions of the creatures, we cannot speak truly of a divine-human synergism.

The church is an instrument of the work of the Holy Spirit on earth, and must seek to relate the scriptural revelation of God to the moral situation in life which we constantly confront. When the church accepts this responsibility, it enables the participation of human beings in the on-going history of salvation. In this fashion, the church witnesses simultaneously to the sacred will of God and to the urgency of human moral life. Thereby the church avoids both antinomianism on the one side and the moral reductionism of "situation ethics" on the other side.

Many ethical approaches are presented as meant to steer a middle course between problematic extremes, including ones we might like and ones we might like. See an attempted middle road between forcing queer positions onto the Biblical text and forcing conservative positions onto the Biblical text in Patricia Beattie Jung, "The Promise of Postmodern Hermeneutics for the Biblical Renewal of Moral Theology," in Patricia Beattie Jung (ed.), *Sexual Diversity and Catholicism: Toward the Development of Moral Theology*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2001. I haven't seen this phenomenon before in Orthodoxy, but it is common in the liberal Catholic dissent I've read. The dissenter adopts a rhetorical pose of being eager to seek a measured middle course that doesn't do something extreme, and does not give unfair advantage to any position. But this is done in the course of agitating for change on a point where the Catholic teaching is unambiguous. Jung, for instance hopes for a versions Catholic ethics more congenial to lesbian wishes, but she always takes the rhetoric of moderate and reasonable efforts that will respect Scripture and Catholic Tradition. (Again, I am comparing Zaphiris to Catholic dissent because I have not seen what he is doing here in Orthodoxy before, but have seen it *repeatedly* in liberal Catholic dissent.)

Zaphiris's footnote:

17. This is an expression used by Nicholas Cabasilas, an Eastern Orthodox theologian of the Byzantine era. The notion of God's *maniakos eros* is discussed by Paul Evdokimov, *L'amour fou de Dieu* (Paris, 1973).

We must conclude here by saying that God's fantastic love for human beings—*maniakos eros*[17]—has divinised all creation. With this divinisation, God achieves the purpose of bringing all beings to God's own self. We play a role in this great work of salvation through the creativeness and freedom which God has bestowed on us. These dynamic capacities of our being cannot finally be identified and understood outside the scope of the Christian doctrines of humanity (anthropology), of Christ (Christology), and of salvation (soteriology). The ultimate purpose of our synergistic relation to God is our own regeneration, as the New Testament states (cf. Rom. 8:28; Phil. 2:13; I Cor. 3:9).

Zaphiris's footnotes:

8 I Cor 2:7.

9 Rom 12:2.

Moreover, synergism has an ecclesiological dimension, and secondarily a moral dimension. Our role as co-legislators on earth with God can only fully be exercised in relationship to the church, which is the instrument of the communication of the Holy Spirit to humans in their creativeness. This means for Eastern Orthodoxy that the legislative and creative actions of men and women are a liturgy of the church itself. When we live in relation to the church's body, we live within "God's wisdom: a mysterious and hidden wisdom framed from the very beginning to bring us to our full glory." [18] The ecclesio-anthropo-soteriological value of this human liturgy is contained in the relation which exists between God's revelation and our activity. The harmonious cooperation between God and humans makes it possible for our legislative and creative acts to be "what is good, acceptable, and perfect." [19]

We have offered these remarks in the hope that they can contribute to a common basis for an ecumenical discussion on the contemporary human problem of contraception.

Orthodox who are concerned with ecumenism may wish to take note of this statement of authorial intent.

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Study and discussion questions

1. What view concerning marriage and sexuality do we find in the Scriptures? In the early Christian writers?
2. Discuss the author's interpretation of the biblical and patristic views of marriage, sexuality, and procreation.

3. What implication concerning contraception can be derived from biblical and patristic concepts of marriage, sexuality, and procreation?
4. What are the official teachings of the Orthodox Church on contraception?
5. How do these teachings compare with Protestant and Roman Catholic teachings?
6. Under what circumstances does the author believe contraception to be theologically permissible? Discuss.
7. What is synergism?
8. How is contraception linked with synergism?
9. How is the resulting view of contraception within Orthodoxy a contrast to the Roman Catholic view?
10. Why does the Eastern Orthodox Church avoid concrete and decisive answers to problems such as contraception?

I have never seen Bible study/"The Secret"/book discussions questions posed like this in a refereed journal before. I suspect that these will lead people to say things that will help cement the belief that the truth is more or less what has been presented in this account. This seems in keeping with other red flags that this is doing more than just providing a scholarly account of what Orthodox believe. Perhaps this is part of why this paper's label as a "theological opinion"—about as close as Orthodoxy gets to the idea of "agreeing to disagree" on spiritual matters—has been accepted as a statement of what the Orthodox Church believes, period.

I believe this document has problems, and if as I expect it is a major influence in the "new consensus" allowing some contraception in the Orthodox Church, this constitutes major reason to re-evaluate the "new consensus."

There could conceivably be good reasons to change the ancient tradition of the Orthodox Church from time immemorial to almost the present day. Maybe. But this is not it. (And if these are the best reasons Zaphiris found to change the immemorial tradition of the Church, perhaps it would be better not to do so.)

Paradise

O Lord,
Have I not seen,
How thou hast placed me in Paradise?

And how have I said,
That a first monastic command,
Is, "Go home and spend another year with your family?"
While I have spent a few?
The obedience is not limited,
By a count of years,
But by obedience,
This being a first *obedience*.

Gifts I have fought as chance left me,
Bloodied, but more deeply bowed:

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?
It hurteth thee to kick against the goads.

I stand, or sit,
Not scholar, nor user experience professional,

Making use of a life of leisure,
Learning leisure well, to lord it over leisure,
Once I made a vow before a wonder-working icon in Brooklyn,
That I might receive a doctorate,
Earned or honorary,
And since then have prayed that my vow not be granted,
An honorary doctorate not to receive,
Because I do not want it enough to even travel,
To give the icon a kiss of veneration!

An Invitation to the Game is an icon,
Of children in a proletariat of excessive leisure,
Excessive leisure being a training ground,
Before a new life in a new world begins.

God the Spiritual Father looks after,
Each person he has made,
As a spiritual father looks after each disciple,
God looketh after each,
In the situations he placed each:

"Life's Tapestry"

Behind those golden clouds up there
the Great One sews a priceless embroidery
and since down below we walk
we see, my child, the reverse view.
And consequently it is natural for the mind to see mistakes
there where one must give thanks and glorify.
Wait as a Christian for that day to come
where your soul a-wing will rip through the air
and you shall see the embroidery of God
from the good side
and then— everything will seem to you to be a system and order.

What have I to add,
To words such as these?
This time is a time of purification and training,
And as in times past,

In an instant, I may be taken to a monastery,
As I was taken to study theology,
Six months' work to obtain student loans,
Falling into place one business day before leaving.
Thou teachest me,
And I know thou art willing to save:
Whether or not my plans are the best.
Whether I ever reach monasticism,
Thou art potent to save.
I might need to seek monasticism:
God can save me with or without.

So I learn patience,
Fly through FluentU and learn Russian,
And here I sit,
In a place thou hast opened my eyes to see as Paradise,
And with lovely food pantries,
And visits to pets at a lovely cat shelter,
And thou ever ministerest to me.

Though thousands around me be addicted to television,
And ten thousands can't stop checking their cell phones,
Thou hast delivered me,
And taught me to lord it over technologies,
Perchance a prophet in the way,
To the technology user who still suffers,
To those who remain entangled in the Web.
Thou hast delivered me from mortal danger:
Perhaps thou givest me more time to repent.
Or perhaps thou givest merely,
More time to repent.
Glory to God for all things!

Thou givest me simple pleasures,
Who knew tidying up a besmudged keyboard could be fun?
Whither I go, thou art with me;
Thou preparest a table before family and friends.

"World" refers not to God's creation,
But to our collections of passions,
Seeing through a glass, darkly,
What bathes in the light of Heaven:
Hell is a state of mind,
But Heaven is reality itself.

I am perhaps not worthy of praise,
To say such things in middle-class comfort.
I seek monasticism, to be a novice,
Which is meant to be exile,
Yet an abbot's work,
Is to help me reach freedom from my passions,
And what true joy I have in luxury,
Only know further in monastic exile.
Years I have waited:
Now I am willing to wait years more.
Only if I may pursue repentance,
On such terms as it is offered me.
Glory to God who has allowed me such luxury!
Glory to God who has allowed me such honors!
Glory to God who has shown me that these avail nothing,
And seek the true fame,
Fame before God himself!

Be thou glorified, O God, in me,
Though I know nothing,
Though I am nothing,
Be none the less glorified in me.
The Infinite can do the Infinite in the finite:
Be thou therefore glorified and praised in me,
Though I am nothing before thee,
Yet thou grantest me breath and life,
Joy,
And ever offerest me salvation.

Glory be to God on high!
Glory be to God for Paradise!

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"The Good Parts"

Which Paradise is in all things!
Glory to God for all things!

Amen.

A Pet Owner's Rules

God is a pet owner who has two rules, and only two rules. They are:

1. I am your Owner. Enjoy freely the food and water which I have provided for your good!
2. **Don't drink out of the toilet.**

That's really it. Those are the only two rules we are expected to follow. And we still break them.

Drunkenness is drinking out of the toilet. If you ask most recovering alcoholics if the time they were drunk all the time were their most joyful, merry, halcyon days, I don't know exactly how they'd answer, if they could even keep a straight face. Far from being joyful, being drunk all the time is misery that most recovering alcoholics wouldn't wish on their worst enemies. If you are drunk all the time, you lose the ability to enjoy much of anything. Strange as it may sound, it takes sobriety to enjoy even drunkenness. Drunkenness is drinking out of the toilet.

Lust is also drinking out of the toilet. Lust is the disenchantment of the entire universe. It is a magic spell where suddenly nothing else is interesting, and after lust destroys the ability to enjoy anything else, lust destroys the ability to enjoy even lust. Proverbs says, "The adulterous woman"—today one might add, "and internet porn" to that—"in the beginning is as sweet as honey and in the end as bitter as gall and as sharp as a double-edged sword." Now this is talking about a lot more than pleasure, but it is

talking about pleasure. Lust, a sin of pleasure, ends by destroying pleasure. It takes chastity to enjoy even lust.

Having said that lust is drinking out of the toilet, I'd like to clarify something. There are eight particularly dangerous sins the Church warns us about. That's one, and it isn't the most serious. Sins of lust are among the most easily forgiven; the Church's most scathing condemnations go to sins like pride and running the poverty industry. The harshest condemnations go to sins that are deliberate, cold-blooded sins, not so much disreputable, hot-blooded sins like lust. Lust is drinking out of the toilet, but there are much worse problems.

I'd like you to think about the last time you traveled from one place to another and you enjoyed the scenery. That's good, and it's something that greed destroys. Greed destroys the ability to enjoy things without needing to own them, and there are a lot of things in life (like scenery) that we can enjoy if we are able to enjoy things without always having to make them mine, mine, mine. Greed isn't about enjoying things; it's about grasping and letting the ability to enjoy things slip through your fingers. When people aren't greedy, they know contentment; they can enjoy their own things without wishing they were snazzier or newer or more antique or what have you. (And if you do get that hot possession you've been coveting, greed destroys the ability to simply enjoy it: it becomes as dull and despicable as all your possessions look when you look at them through greed's darkened eyes. It takes contentment to enjoy even greed: greed is also drinking out of the toilet.

Jesus had some rather harsh words after being unforgiving after God has forgiven us so much. Even though forgiveness is work, refusing to forgive one other person is drinking out of the toilet. Someone said it's like drinking poison and hoping it will hurt the other person.

The last sin I'll mention is pride, even though all sin is drinking out of the toilet. Pride is not about joy; pride destroys joy. Humility is less about pushing yourself down than an attitude that lets you respect and enjoy others. Pride makes people sneer at others who they can only see as despicable, and when you can't enjoy anyone else, you are too poisoned to enjoy yourself. If you catch yourself enjoying pride, repent of it, but if you can enjoy pride at all, you haven't hit rock bottom. As G.K. Chesterton said, it takes humility to enjoy even pride. Pride is drinking out of the toilet. All sin is drinking out of the toilet.

I've talked about drinking out of the toilet, but Rule Number Two is not the focus. Rule Number One is, "I am your owner. Enjoy freely of the food and water I have given you." Rule Number Two, "Don't drink out of the toilet," is only important when we break it, which is unfortunately quite a lot. The second rule is really a footnote meant to help us focus on Rule Number One, the real rule.

What is Rule Number One about? One window that lets us glimpse the beauty of Rule Number One is, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to a mountain, 'Be uprooted and thrown into the sea,' and it will be done for you." Is this exaggeration? Yes. More specifically, it's the kind of exaggeration the Bible uses to emphasize important points. Being human sometimes means that there are mountains that are causing us real trouble. If someone remains in drunkenness and becomes an alcoholic, that alcoholism becomes a mountain that no human strength is strong enough to move. I've known several Christians who were recovering alcoholics. And had been sober for years. *That* is a mountain moved by faith. Without exception, they have become some of the most Christlike, loving people I have known. That is what can happen when we receive freely of the food and drink our Lord provides us. And it's not the only example. There has been an Orthodox resurrection in Albania. Not long ago, it was a church in ruins as part of a country that was ruins. Now the Albanian Orthodox Church is alive and strong, and a powerhouse of transformation for the whole nation. God is on the move in Albania. He's moved mountains.

To eat of the food and drink the Lord has provided—and, leaving the image of dog food behind, this means not only the Eucharist but the whole life God provides—makes us share in the divine nature and live the divine life. We can bring Heaven down to earth, not only beginning ourselves to live the heavenly life, but beginning to establish Heaven around us through our good works. It means that we share in good things we don't always know to ask.

Let's choose the food and drink we were given.

"Physics"

I included *Aristotle's Physics* when I originally posted *An Orthodox Bookshelf*, then read most of the text and decided that even if the Fathers' science was largely Aristotelian physics, reading the original source is here less helpful than it might appear. The Fathers believed in elements of earth, air, fire, and water, and these elements are mentioned in the Theophany Vespers, which are one of the primary Orthodox texts on how the cosmos is understood. However, even if these are found in Aristotelian physics, the signal to noise ratio for patristic understanding of science is dismal: *Aristotle's Physics* could be replaced with a text one tenth its length and still furnish everything the Fathers take from it.

I would like to take a moment to pause in looking at the word "physics." It is true enough that historically Aristotelian physics was replaced by Newton, who in turn gave way to Einstein, and then quantum physics entered the scene, and now we have superstring theory. And in that caricatured summary, "physics" seems to mean what it means for superstring theory. But I want to pause on the word "physics." Orthodox know that non-Orthodox who ask, "What are your passions?" may get a bit more of an earful than they bargained for. "Passions" is not a word Orthodox use among themselves for nice hobbies and interests they get excited about; it means a sinful habit that has carved out a niche for itself to become a spiritual disease. And "physics", as I use it, is not a competitor to superstring theory; etymologically it means, "of the nature of things," I would quote C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*:

"I am a star at rest, my daughter," answered Ramandu. "When I set for the last time, decrepit and old beyond all that you can reckon, I was carried to this island. I am not so old now as I was then. Every morning a bird brings me a fire-berry from the valleys in the Sun, and each fire-berry takes away a little of my age. And when I have become as young as the child that was born yesterday, then I shall take my rising again (for we are at earth's eastern rim) and once more tread the great dance."

"In our world," said Eustace, "a star is a huge ball of flaming gas."

"Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of."

What is a star? I would answer by quoting an icon, of the creation of the stars. The text on the icon does not refer to Genesis at all, but Job 38:7, "...when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?":



The stars in the icon are connected with the six-winged seraphim, the highest rank of angels. The Heavens are an icon of Heaven, and the icon says something very different than, "What are stars if we view them as reductionists do?"

And this article is not intended to compete with physics as it is now understood, or to defend patristic Aristotelian physics against its challengers, or to demonstrate the compatibility of theology with the present state of scientific speculation: words that I choose carefully, because theology is about divine revealed doctrine while science is the present state of speculation in a very careful system of educated guesses, and scientific theories will not stop being discarded for newer alternatives until science is dead. It is therefore somewhat of a strange matter to demonstrate the compatibility of theology with science, as conforming timeless revealed doctrines to the present best educated guess that is meant to be discarded.

Of the nature of things

The central mystery in the nature of things is the divine nature. *No man can see God and live*, and the divine essence is not knowable to any creature. The divine energies are available, and indeed can deify creation, but the central mystery around which all else revolves is God's unknowable essence and nature.

This is the central mystery around which everything else revolves, but the divine essence is not part of a larger system, even as its largest part. God lies beyond the created order, and perhaps the greatest failure of Aristotelian physics to understand the nature of things lies in its tendency towards materialism, its sense that you understand things by looking down. Some have said, in introducing *Michael Polanyi's theories of personal knowledge*, that behavioralism in psychology does not teach, "There is no soul;" rather, it induces students into investigation in such a way that the possibility of a soul is never even considered. And Aristotelian physics started a trajectory that has lingered even when the specifics of Aristotelian physics were considered to be overturned: you understand the nature of things by looking at them materially. Aristotelian physics, in asking, "What is the nature of this?" leads the listener so as to never even consider an answer of, "Because that is how it functions as a satellite of God." And the entire physis or nature of every created being is as a satellite of God: the atheist who says "The very notion of a God is incoherent," does so with the breath of God.

Headship and harmony with nature

Many Westerners may identify the goal of harmony with nature with the East, but the concept as we have it is essentially Western in nature. Orthodox monasticism may look a lot like harmony with nature to the West: it often takes place in rustic

surroundings, and animals are not afraid of monastics: deer will eat from a monk's hand. But there is a fundamental difference between this and the Western concept of harmony with nature: the harmony does not come from our taking out cue from plants and animals. Monks and nuns are to take their cue from God, and harmony with animals comes from how they take their cue from God.

All creation bears some resemblance to God, and God himself is called the Rock. For every creature there is a *logos* or idea in God's heart, that is what that creature should strive to be. But there is a distinction among creation. Some are given the image of God: men and angels, and we exist in a fuller and deeper sense than creatures that do not bear such an image. God exists in a unique and deepest sense, and if we say that God exists, we cannot say that we exist in the same sense, and if we say that we exist, we cannot say that God exists in the same sense. Those who are given the image, who have a human or angelic mind, are more fully nature than those creatures who have do not exist in the same way on the same level. And we who bear the royal image, even if liturgical asceticism removes barriers between us and the rest of Creation, are to take our cue from God our head.

Getting past "the politics of envy"

The concept of headship is a difficult and perhaps touchy one, not least because the only place where people think it applies is the husband being the head of the wife. But it is written into the cosmos in larger letters. St. Maximus the Confessor spoke of five divisions that are to be transcended:

Head Body

Man Woman

Paradise The inhabited world

Heaven Earth

Spiritual creation Tangible creation

God Creation

All these differences are ultimately to be transcended, and many more not listed. But the project of transcending them assumes there are differences to start off with, which we do not transcend by closing our eyes and pretending they are not there. And this feature of creation runs aground what might be called "the politics of envy", whose central feature is an equality that boils down to saying, "I don't want anybody to be better than me."

And this brings me to the point of inequality. Not only are the politics of envy toxic, but unequal treatment bears something that the politics of envy would never imagine. The kindest and most courteous acts are most often not those that treat the other as an equal, but those that treat the other as not equal. The man who buys six

dozen roses for his wife does not treat her as an equal: the thought would not occur to him to buy six dozen roses for one of his fellow workmen. The mother who holds and comforts a child after a scrape extends a courtesy that would not be extended quite so far for an adult capable of managing moods and life's scrapes. The greatest courtesies are extended precisely at the point when someone in a position of headship treats someone else, not as an equal, but as the head's body as in the chart above. The same is implied for authority, or some of the more painful social lessons having to do with profound giftedness. Perhaps people may say "Treat me as an equal" instead of "treat me well," but it has been my own experience that treating people as equals in an area where they request equality has given social explosions that I could have avoided if I were wise enough to realize that the point where I was asked, "Treat me as an equal," were precisely the situations which demanded the wisdom not to treat people as intellectual equals that could handle the full force of what I was thinking, but extend some of the most delicate courtesy and social graces. Exactly what is needed is hard to say, but precisely what is not needed is to say, "Great, I've found someone gifted in exactly the same way I am," and launch into the full force of your deepest thought. God does not create two blades of grass alike. He has never created two humans who are equal, but after each, he broke the mould.

Microcosm and mediator

Mankind was created to be a microcosm, summarizing both the spiritual and tangible creation, and a mediator. All the Orthodox faithful participate in a spiritual priesthood, and its sigil is the sacramental priesthood that a few identify. We are called to mediate and help transcend the differences above. Our worship of the God who is Light, and ourselves being the light of the world, is as the vanguard of Creation returning to the Creator, the firstfruits of a world created by and for God.

Symbols

I would like to close on an understanding of symbol. Men are symbols of God; that is what it means to be made in the image of God. The material world is best understood, not as things operating under mathematical laws, but as having a symbolic dimension that ultimately points back to God. The theory of evolution is not a true answer to the question, "Why is there life as we know it?" because it does not address the question, "Why is there life as we know it?" If it is true, it is a true answer to the question, "How is there life as we know it?" The sciences answer questions of "How," not questions of "Why," and the world is best understood as having a symbolic dimension where the question of "Why?" refers to God and overshadows the question of "How?"

Even if physics answers its questions with accuracy, it does not answer the deepest questions, and a deeper level has three kinds of causation, all of them personal. Things are caused by God, or by humans, or by devils. When we pray, it is not usually for an exception to the laws of physics, but that nature, governed by personal causes on a deeper level, may work out in a particular way under God's governance. And the regular operations of physics do not stop this.

Miracles

Miracles are very rare, if we use the term strictly and not for the genuine miracle of God providing for us every day. But the readings for the Theophany Vespers repeat miracles with nature, and they present, if you will, nature at its most essential. Most of the matter in the universe is not part of icons of Christ, his Mother, and his Saints, and yet even outside of men icons are a vanguard, a firstfruit of a creation that will be glorified. Mankind is at its most essential in Christ himself, and the natural world is at its most essential as an arena for God's power to be displayed. And God's display of power is not strictly a rarity; it plays out when bread comes out of the earth, when The Heavens declare the glory of God / And the firmament sheweth his handywork. / Day unto day uttereth speech / And night unto night sheweth knowledge.

Sweet Lord, You Play Me False

All of this may be true, but there is an odor of falsity built in its very foundations, to provide an Orthodox "physics" (or study of "the nature of things") analogous to Aristotle's original "physics." Anselm famously wrote the "Monologion" (in which Anselm explores various arguments for God's existence) and the "Proslogion" (in which Anselm seeks a single and decisive proof of God's existence). Once I told an Anselm scholar that there had been a newly discovered "Monophagion," in which Anselm tries to discern whether reasoning can ever bring someone to recognize the imperative of eating, and "Prospagion," in which Anselm gets hungry and has a bite to eat. For those of you not familiar with Greek, "prospagion" means "a little smackerel of something."

This work is, in a sense, an exploration about whether philosophy can bring a person to recognize the necessity of eating. But that's not where the proof of the pudding lies. The proof of the pudding lies in the eating, in the live liturgical life that culminates in the Eucharist, the fulcrum for the transformation and ultimate deification of the cosmos. The proof of the pudding lies not in the philosophizing, but in the eating.

A Picture of Evil

Once upon a time, there was a king. This king wished that his people know what evil was, so that his people could learn to recognize and flee from it. He issued a summons, that, in a year, all of his artists should come to him with one picture, to show what was evil. The best picture would be displayed to the people.

In a year, they all appeared at the king's palace. There were very few artists in the kingdom, but those who were there were very skillful, and worked as they had never worked before. Each brought a picture beneath a shroud.

The king turned to the first artist who had come. "Jesse, unveil your picture, and tell us its interpretation."

Jesse lifted the cloth. Against a background of blackened skulls was a dark green serpent, the color of venom and poison, with eyes that glowed red. "Your Majesty, it was the Serpent whose treacherous venom deceived man to eat of the forbidden fruit. The eye is the lamp of the body, and the Serpent's eye burns with the fires of Hell. You see that beyond the Serpent are skulls. Evil ensnares unto death and outer darkness."

The court murmured its approval. The picture was striking, and spoke its lesson well. The king, also, approved. "Well done, Jesse. If another picture is chosen, it will not be because you have done poorly. Now, Gallio, please show us your work."

Gallio unveiled his painting. In it was a man, his face red and veins bulging from hate. In his hand, he held a curved dagger. He was slowly advancing towards a woman, cowering in fear. "Your Majesty, man is created in the image of God, and human life is sacred. Thus the way we are to love God is often by loving our neighbor. There are few

blasphemies more unholy than murder. You have asked me for a picture to show what evil is, that your subjects may flee from it. This is evil to flee from."

The court again murmured its approval, and the king began to shift slightly. It was not, as some supposed, because of the repellent nature of the pictures, but because he had secretly hoped that there would be only one good picture. Now, it was evident that the decision would not be so simple. "Gallio, you have also done well. And Simon, your picture?"

Simon unveiled his picture, and people later swore that they could smell a stench. There, in the picture, was the most hideous and misshapen beast they had ever seen. Its proportions were distorted, and its colors were ghastly. The left eye was green, and taller than it was wide. The right eye was even larger than the left, red, bloodshot, and flowing with blood; where there should have been a pupil, a claw grotesquely protruded. It was covered with claws, teeth, fur, scales, blood, slime, tentacles, and bits of rotted flesh; several members of the court excused themselves. "However it may be disguised, evil is that which is sick, distorted, and ugly."

There was a long silence. Finally, the king spoke again. "I see that there are three powerful pictures of evil, any one of which is easily a masterpiece and well fit to show to the people. Barak, I know that you have been given artistic genius, and that perhaps your picture will help me with this difficult decision. Unveil your picture."

Barak unveiled his picture, and an awestruck hush fell over the court. There, unveiled, was the most beautiful picture they had ever seen.

The picture was in the great vault of a room in a celestial palace. It was carved of diamond, emerald, ruby, jasper, amethyst, sardonyx, and chrysolite. Through the walls of gem, the stars shone brightly. But all of this was nothing, compared to the creature in the room.

He carried with him power and majesty. He looked something like a man, but bore glory beyond intense. His face shone like the sun blazing in full force, his eyes flashed like lightning, and his hair like radiant flame. He wore a robe that looked as if it had been woven from solid light. In his left hand was a luminous book, written in letters of gold, and in his right hand was a sharp, double edged sword, sheathed in fire and lightning.

The king was stunned. It took him a long time to find words, and then he shouted with all of his might.

"You fool! I ask you for a picture of evil, and you bring me this! It is true that fools rush in where angels fear to tread, and that, like unthinking beasts, they do not hesitate to slander the glorious ones. What do you have to say for yourself and for this picture? I shall have an explanation now, or I shall have your head!"

Barak looked up, a tear trickling down his cheek. "Your Majesty, do you not understand? It is a picture of Satan."

A Pilgrimage from Narnia

Wardrobe of fur coats and fir trees:
Sword and armor, castle and throne,
Talking beast and Cair Paravel:
From there began a journey,
From thence began a trek,
Further up and further in!

The mystic kiss of the Holy Mysteries,
A many-hued spectrum of saints,
Where the holiness of the One God unfurls,
Holy icons and holy relics:
Tales of magic reach for such things and miss,
Sincerely erecting an altar, "To an unknown god,"
Enchantment but the shadow whilst these are realities:
Whilst to us is bidden enjoy Reality Himself.
Further up and further in!

A journey of the heart, barely begun,
Anointed with chrism, like as prophet, priest, king,
A slow road of pain and loss,

Giving up straw to receive gold:
Further up and further in!

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner,
Silence without, building silence within:
The prayer of the mind in the heart,
Prayer without mind's images and eye before holy icons,
A simple Way, a life's work of simplicity,
Further up and further in!

A camel may pass through the eye of a needle,
Only by shedding every possession and kneeling humbly,
Book-learning and technological power as well as possessions,
Prestige and things that are yours— Even all that goes without saying:
To grow in this world one becomes more and more;
To grow in the Way one becomes less and less:
Further up and further in!

God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man,
That men and the sons of men might become gods and the sons of God:
The chief end of mankind,
Is to glorify God and become him forever.
The mysticism in the ordinary,
Not some faroff exotic place,
But here and now,
Living where God has placed us,
Lifting where we are up into Heaven:
Paradise is wherever holy men are found.
Escape is not possible:
Yet escape is not needed,
But our active engagement with the here and now,
And in this here and now we move,
Further up and further in!

We are summoned to war against dragons,
Sins, passions, demons:
Unseen warfare beyond that of fantasy:
For the combat of knights and armor is but a shadow:
Even this world is a shadow,

Compared to the eternal spoils of the victor in warfare unseen,
 Compared to the eternal spoils of the man whose heart is purified,
 Compared to the eternal spoils of the one who rejects activism:
 Fighting real dragons in right order,
 Slaying the dragons in his own heart,
 And not chasing (real or imagined) snakelets in the world around:
 Starting to remove the log from his own eye,
 And not starting by removing the speck from his brother's eye:
 Further up and further in!

Spake a man who suffered sorely:
 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time,
 Are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, and:
 Know ye not that we shall judge angels?
 For the way of humility and tribulation we are beckoned to walk,
 Is the path of greatest glory.
 We do not live in the best of all possible worlds,
 But we have the best of all possible Gods,
 And live in a world ruled by the him,
 And the most painful of his commands,
 Are the very means to greatest glory,
 Exercise to the utmost is a preparation,
 To strengthen us for an Olympic gold medal,
 An instant of earthly apprenticeship,
 To a life of Heaven that already begins on earth:
 He saved others, himself he cannot save,
 Remains no longer a taunt filled with blasphemy:
 But a definition of the Kingdom of God,
 Turned to gold,
 And God sees his sons as more precious than gold:
 Beauty is forged in the eye of the Beholder:
 Further up and further in!

When I became a man, I put away childish things:
 Married or monastic, I must grow out of self-serving life:
 For if I have self-serving life in me,
 What room is there for the divine life?
 If I hold straw with a death grip,

How will God give me living gold?
Further up and further in!

Verily, verily, I say to thee,
When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself,
And walkedst whither thou wouldst:
But when thou shalt be old,
Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee,
And carry thee whither thou wouldst not.
This is victory:
Further up and further in!

Plato: The Allegory of the... *Flickering Screen?*

Socrates: And now, let me give an illustration to show how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened:—Behold! a human being in a darkened den, who has a slack jaw towards only source of light in the den; this is where he has gravitated since his childhood, and though his legs and neck are not chained or restrained any way, yet he scarcely turns round his head. In front of him are images from faroff, projected onto a flickering screen. And others whom he cannot see, from behind their walls, control the images like marionette players manipulating puppets. And there are many people in such dens, some isolated one way, some another.

Glaucon: I see.

Socrates: And do you see, I said, the flickering screen showing men, and all sorts of vessels, and statues and collectible animals made of wood and stone and various materials, and all sorts of commercial products which appear on the screen? Some of them are talking, and there is rarely silence.

Glaucon: You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Socrates: Much like us. And they see only their own images, or the images of one another, as they appear on the screen opposite them?

Glaucon: True, he said; how could they see anything but the images if they never chose to look anywhere else?

Socrates: And they would know nothing about a product they buy, except for what brand it is?

Glaucon: Yes.

Socrates: And if they were able to converse with one another, wouldn't they think that they were discussing what mattered?

Glaucon: Very true.

Socrates: And suppose further that the screen had sounds which came from its side, wouldn't they imagine that they were simply hearing what people said?

Glaucon: No question.

Socrates: To them, the truth would be literally nothing but those shadowy things we call the images.

Glaucon: That is certain.

Socrates: And now look again, and see what naturally happens next: the prisoners are released and are shown the truth. At first, when any of them is liberated and required to suddenly stand up and turn his neck around, and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the images; and then imagine someone saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision, -what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is asking him to things, not as they are captured on the screen, but in living color -will he not be perplexed? Won't he imagine that the version which he used to see on the screen are better and more real than the objects which are shown to him in real life?

Glaucon: Far better.

Socrates: And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take and take in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

Glaucon: True, he now will.

Socrates: And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and hindered in his self-seeking until he's forced to think about someone besides himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? He will find that he cannot simply live life as he sees fit, and he will not have even the illusion of finding comfort by living for himself.

Glaucon: Not all in a moment, he said.

Socrates: He will require time and practice to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the billboards best, next the product lines he has seen advertised, and then things which are not commodities; then he will talk with adults and children, and will he know greater joy in having services done to him, or will he prefer to do something for someone else?

Glaucon: Certainly.

Socrates: Last of he will be able to search for the One who is greatest, reflected in each person on earth, but he will seek him for himself, and not in another; and he will live to contemplate him.

Glaucon: Certainly.

Socrates: He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and is absolutely the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

Glaucon: Clearly, he said, his mind would be on God and his reasoning towards those things that come from him.

Socrates: And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

Glaucon: Certainly, he would.

Socrates: And if they were in the habit of conferring honours among themselves on those who were quickest to observe what was happening in the world of brands and what new features were marketed, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honours and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer, "Better to be the poor servant of a poor master" than to reign as king of this Hell, and to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?

Glaucon: Yes, he said, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.

Socrates: Imagine once more, I said, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness, and seem simply not to get it?

Glaucon: To be sure.

Socrates: And in conversations, and he had to compete in one-upsmanship of knowing the coolest brands with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went with his eyes and down he came without them; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would give him an extremely heavy cross to bear.

Glaucon: No question. Then is the saying, "In the land of the blind, the one eyed man is king," in fact false?

Socrates: In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is crucified. Dear Glaucon, you may now add this entire allegory to the discussion around a matter; the den arranged around a flickering screen is deeply connected to the world of living to serve your pleasures, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the spiritual transformation which alike may happen in the monk keeping vigil or the mother caring for children, the ascent of the soul into the world of spiritual realities according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the Source of goodness appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally, either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

Glaucon: I agree, he said, as far as I am able to understand you.

The Post-Scientific Theory of Post-Darwinian Post-Evolution

A disturbance followed when it was noticed that [scientists] had left the whole of evolutionary theory outside in the unscientific badlands as well. But special arrangements were made to pull it in without compromising the principle.

-Mary Midgley, *Science as Salvation*

Anybody here from the English department? The English department is a special place. If you want to find a Marxist, don't go to the political science department. Nary a Marxist will you find there. Go to the English department. If you want to find a Freudian, don't go to the psychology department. Nary a Freudian will you find there. Go to the English department. If you want to find a Darwinist, don't go to the biology department. Nary a Darwinist will you find there. Go to the English department. The English department is a living graveyard of all the dead and discredited ideologies that have been cast off by other departments.

-Yours Truly, *Firestorm 2034*

It may raise eyebrows to say that Darwin's theory of evolution is no longer live in the academy, but I assert that the claim is straightforwardly true. Or to be precise, *evolution* may be believed by some people whose commitment to the theory greatly exceeds their scientific competency, but no biologist I can ever recall speaking with believes in *evolution*.

If we look at the term 'evolve' or 'evolution', as in "The idea slowly evolved in her head," Darwin's theory of evolution is a proper theory of *evolution*, saying that life forms are constantly morphing into something different, so one would expect a fossil record of slow changes that accumulate over time, somewhat like the size and shape of a human being evolves from a ball-like fertilized egg to a person who has come into proper adulthood. And that is why Darwin's biggest opponents in his day were paleontologists, because paleontologists said that the fossil record as it was known then didn't show much recorded *evolution*. And Darwin said, "Give it some time until we know the fossil record better," and that might have been the right decision at the time. However, we've had over a century of additional research into the fossil record, and the "hostile record" as I called it has only become more hostile to being accounted for as a result of *evolution*.

Biologists I have asked have said, "We've progressed," and what they mean by that is that they have recognized and acknowledged that what has happened is not *evolution* in any straightforward sense of the term, but that the fossil record reflects long periods of very little change worthy of the name, interrupted by brief periods of rapid change without preserved intermediate forms. The technical term for this is "punctuated equilibrium," informally abbreviated to "punk eek." As my biology teacher at IMSA said, "Evolution is like baseball. It has long periods of boredom interrupted by brief periods of intense excitement."

I do not deny that what biologists teach is much closer to the fossil record than Darwin, but the surviving reference to "neo-Darwinian evolution" is a retaining of terms whose meaning has been rejected. No biologist I have ever known has said that **"evolution" has kept her maiden name**, but "neo-Darwinian evolution" is not a theory of evolution in any sense of the term. It might, I admit for the sake of argument, be *true*, but what it is not is a theory of evolution. And that takes it further from Darwinian evolution than any of the other theories of evolution that competed with Darwinian evolution in Darwin's day.

I might briefly state that "Darwinian" or "neo-Darwinian" as an adjective for a theory of punctuated equilibrium labelled as *evolution* comes from roots where there were multiple theories of evolution in some competition. As a child in school taught out of the prestigious BSCS Blue, one other theory of evolution given in the text's "history of

science" treatment, included theories like Lamarckian evolution, which states that if an organism does a lot of something, it will get better at it, *and that these changes are inherited by offspring* where the Darwinian claim is due to genetics and an environment that filters for what works over what doesn't work. And today's "neo-Darwinian" theory of "evolution" is closer on this score to Darwin's framing of evolution than any of its nineteenth-century competitors I am aware of. But "neo-Darwinian evolution" is not just post-Darwinian; I argue above that it is post-evolution.

Having fired that salvo, I would like to move on, not too much to look at how Darwinism came heavily mixed up with racism and racist eugenics (whose Margaret Sanger said, "Colored people are like human weeds" and spoke at KKK rallies--there is every consistency between Darwinism and an attitude of merciless hostility to other races), but to look at how scientific this post-scientific theory is. And here I am not interested in the special arrangements that were made to include evolution in science without compromise of principle.

Philosopher of science Karl Popper said, in essence, that to be a scientific theory, you have to have some skin in the game. Various camps like Marxism could explain all sorts of things; Karl Popper articulated a criterion of "falsifiability" that said that a real scientific theory *can't* explain some experimental outcomes. The more striking and unexpected an experimental outcome a theory predicts, and turns out right where the incumbent is wrong, the better it augurs for the theory.

Karl Popper made a case study of Marxism, and said that it was originally a falsifiable scientific theory because it made certain predictions. When those predictions turned out very wrong, they modified the theory so nothing really could prove it wrong, and in Popper's estimation, they saved it by making it no longer a scientific theory.

(Have you read my Theory of Evolution Tries to be More Like Superstring Theory, Dismantles own falsifiability? It is noised in some quarters that Karl Popper picked on the academic powerhouse of Marxism because if he were to launch such an attack on "evolution" as science, he would have been called a Creationist and so picking on the powerhouse of Marxism was deemed the less encumbered approach.)

A mathematician's objection

Here I am not relying on my graduate education so much as my undergraduate degree in math with two overkill probability/statistics classes, and I am relying less on my bachelor's than the math contests I participated in, and often placed, and a little less on all those math contests than a lower level math class where the teacher told us that we should make a rough gauge idea of what a result should be in using a calculator, because it is easy enough to mistype and get a very wrong answer. So if I was going to divide seven by twelve, I should know that six is half of twelve and so the result should be a bit more than one half. If I accidentally hit "*" instead of "/" and get an answer of

eighty-four, I should recognize a wildly inaccurate result when I see it, and try again, this time more carefully.

This was not welcome advice, but I see its wisdom today, and it informs my incredulity in conversations with people trying to convince me of "evolution."

The basic assertion I have so far been given, for why punk eek changes so little for long periods of time and then abruptly produced new life forms, is that when things are stable, things are working and there is little incentive to change, while when things are chaotic, the incentive is much greater. What is left completely unaddressed is the statistical ability of a breeding population to acquire and retain beneficial genetic changes so as to meet the higher incentive to change.

There was one discussion with fellow IMSA alumni in relation to evolution I asked, "Suppose that I claim the ability to guess lottery numbers, and I am right once. *How odd*. Suppose I succeed in a second or a third time. And on another note, suppose for the sake of argument that we can rule out fraud. If we suppose that I can only guess one lottery number per minute, that I can only guess lottery numbers for forty hours per week, and that I will die of old age at seventy if nothing else gets me first. Is there any number of successful guesses I could make before you would believe I can guess lottery numbers?" The answer I got was "...No more than a dozen!"

We were discussing the Cambrian explosion, when several new creatures appeared that were so different that they each belonged to their own phylum. I said a lot of weird things occurred over time, and I was willing for the sake of argument to admit optimally convenient mutagen exposure, so we would never really run out of mutations. Speaking conservatively, I posited that a random mutation would have a 90% chance of being harmful and a 10% chance of being beneficial (a microbiology grad student said he would place the chances of harm as much greater--and incidentally, he was the one partner in the discussion who answered with a non-committal "You seem well-read" instead of shockedly shutting me down altogether), and I would posit for one organism, again speaking conservatively, estimate a thousand beneficial mutations necessary to produce a viable organism of a new species (how a breeding pool could acquire and sustain such beneficial changes was left unaddressed). The figure would be inestimable higher to get a new phylum). On that count, we are talking the odds of one viable creature of a new species as being similar to the odds of winning a lottery over one hundred times in a row. The answer to that line of argument received an interlocutor's response of, "There are some things we may never know."

(Also, some people cried "Foul!" about fraud being ruled out. But in the analogy, fraud would correspond to an intelligence manipulating creatures that did not arise by evolution to appear to have arisen by evolution. This may not be the Christian God, but nobody in the discussion was entertaining a belief that an intelligence manipulated available evidence to give a false impression that evolution occurred.)

I was originally drawn in to the Intelligent Design movement by reading its texts (see *The Evolution of a Perspective on Creation and Origins*). Since then, I have accepted that those texts were from the Disco Toot concocting a neo-Creation "Science" that would attract academics... but, though this leaves me as a churchman without a church, evolutionists' efforts to draw me in have driven me away and brought loud warning bells to my horse sense about statistics. Tuskless elephants, like Darwin's pepper moth example, are not about the generation of new species but a shift in the proportion of two already existing phenotypes. Worse, I have been told, as an example of why beneficial genetic change is easy, I have been told that Indian prostitutes have developed HIV resistance in a single generation.

Generating helpful new genetic change is not statistically easy. Generating helpful new genetic change is statistically hard. And since I read Intelligent Design founding texts, no attempt to convince me that helpful genetic change is easily acquired have done anything but sound like loud warning bells to my horse sense about how statistics work.

And this is a second objection to calling punk eek "science." The discipline of biology may be on the whole less mathematical than the other hard sciences of physics and chemistry. Pure math is what is called "data free," while physics for instance has various constants which are not negotiable in their theories (for instance, a gravitational constant of -9.8 meters per second squared). Biology is more data-rich than either of the other two: the sheer amount of anatomy of various organisms that a biology grad student is expected to know alone dwarfs the level of data in chemistry or physics, and this is without looking at other areas such as biochemical mechanisms that a biologist needs to be conversant in. I do not count it as a strike against biology that it is the furthest of the three from being data-free, but in physics or chemistry as hard sciences make sense mathematically and statistically, and it is a liability of "evolution" if accepting it includes swallowing a pill of statistical hogwash.

I would like to pause to give a couple of humanistic notes.

First, one grad school roommate from Czechoslovakia (not specifically a biologist) commented that Darwin's singular place among English-speaking biologists may partly be a local loyalty to an English-speaking scientist. He, in the land of Gregor Mendel, said that he had been taught Mendelian genetics as the central biological theory. If I had read "Evolution is the one theory in biology without which nothing else makes sense," some form of genetics is also a theory without which nothing else makes sense. And for that matter, genetics is a theory without which "evolution" does not make sense, but "evolution" is not a theory without which genetics does not make sense. I'm not sure Gregor Mendel's signal contribution of dominant and recessive genes is that central, but genetics such as Mendel studied is the foundation variations of evolution are built on.

I would also be remiss not to mention C.S. Lewis's objection to evolution, an objection that it disturbed and alarmed him how difficult it was to make people see. On purely philosophical grounds, (naturalist) "evolution" could not possibly be true. It explains why we could have brains good enough to find food, procreate, and avoid being hunted to extinction. It does not, in any sense, explain why we could have brains good enough to posit a true theory of evolution. It is a straightforward implication of "evolution" that romantic love is a biochemical reaction that could not rise to the dignity of error; but by the same stroke all explanation (including "evolution") is a biochemical reaction that could not rise to the dignity of error. We need to have some sort of impressive "special flower" status to formulate a true theory of evolution that denies us "special flower" status.

It has been suggested in response or anticipation to such objection that natural selection may favor finding beliefs that are true, but the objection seems to me ill-considered. Over 99% of people who have ever lived have never seen a written word. Darwin's theory of evolution and its successors have not been available to anyone to believe except within the last two hundred years, and when it has been available it has been believed (or just available) to a minority of the whole world population. The subspecies of modern man, *Homo sapiens sapiens* has been around for hundreds of thousands of years, with our genus *Homo* around for maybe a few million. Timewise, evolution and successors have been available for less than one tenth of one percent of the time our subspecies has been around. Over 99% of people who have ever lived have believed that what we now call nature is spiritual in some wise. Post-Darwinian post-evolution is a mind-bogglingly parochial belief to our species as a whole. If natural selection selects for finding true beliefs, it has only hit its mark in a very parochial conditions; over 99.9% of people who have ever lived have had our naturally selected brains perform the way natural selection calls for.

One of the critiques lobbied by naturalists and evolutionists about some Christian theories is the "God of the gaps" objection. The objection asserts that unfalsifiable religious explanation is lodged in the gaps that modern science has not been able to cover yet. All things considered, present theories of "evolution" are now an "evolution of the gaps," where life forms evolve in the gaps of our knowledge of the fossil record, and if over a century of progressive increase in knowledge of the fossil record has smaller gaps between periods of equilibrium, unfalsifiable evolution is just asserted to have taken place in those much smaller and rarer gaps. This does not make evolution wrong on philosophical grounds per se; but like Marxism it has been defended on grounds that render it unfalsifiable, which amounts to abdicating from the throne of science. It is not grounds to deny that evolution might be true, but it is grounds to deny that evolution might remain a scientific theory.

Conclusion

Fr. Seraphim of Platina may have erred by importing Protestant doctrine on origins. He did not err in this: in today's Western culture, the theory of "evolution" is not doing the work of science. It is doing the work of naturalist philosophy, and should be recognized as such.

I would suggest that at least for Orthodox, the discussion would be advanced just a little by stopping using the term "evolution" when in university biology departments *all* theories of evolution, and all serious openness to believe in evolution, have been dead so long they no longer even smell bad.

We've curated fruit flies for hundreds of thousands of generations and, while we can induce a mutation that causes antennae to grow from their eyes, but we have not yet bred a new species. The only species I know that is newer than Darwin's theory is a *radiotolerans* or radiation-tolerant bacterium that evolved at Chernobyl after the meltdown. And, for reasons I won't discuss here, that is the kind of exception that proves a general rule.

It might be productive to change vocabulary to more precise, and speak not of "evolution," but of a post-scientific theory of post-Darwinian post-evolution.

I invite you to use the newer, up-to-date term. Enjoy!

A Professional Courtesy to a Fellow Poet

"Invictus," rough draft:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears,
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years,
Finds and shall find me unashamed.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,

I am the master of my fate.
I am the captain of my soul.

I therefore wish to extend this classic poem a very minor professional courtesy:
"Invictus," sent back for revisions and extended some degree of Professional Courtesy

Out of the pitch black of my sin and vice,
Chosen only of my own free will,
I thank the God beyond all knowing
For my yet still fighting soul.

In the cunning net of His Providence,
I have spurned kindnesses for my good,
Gifts I have fought as chance left me,
Bloodied, but more deeply bowed:

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?
It hurteth thee to kick against the goads.

Beyond this life of pleasure and pain,
Lie the Gates of Heaven and Hell,
Battered I still make my choice,
Seeking neither to bolt nor bar,
From inside, the gates of Hell.

Narrow is the path and strait the gate:
The entrance to Glory beyond,
All trials and tests named in the scroll,
Thy Grace my wounds have bound with salve.

I thank the ranks of men made gods,
Who cheer me on to join their choir,
Thou blessest me beyond any fate,
That I could ever know to ask.

Thy Glory is to transfigure me,
To Live, Thou Thyself:

I AM the Master of my Fate!

I AM the Captain of my Soul!

(I also know what that means!)

S.D.G.

A Public Act of Repentance

COVID Injections: The Greatest Breakthrough in Human Health Since DDT!

I, C.J.S. Hayward, publicly repent of having taken a first dose of a COVID vaccine.

I have in general been suspicious about the genuine helpfulness of vaccines; I wrote "Eight-Year-Old Boy Diagnosed with Machiavellian Syndrome by Proxy (MSBP)" and it was well-received among those who are skeptical about whether vaccines are overall helpful.

Then I was hit from all sides, from family at home and slapped down at church, including being informed my heirarch Archbishop PETER had spoken with many Orthodox doctors and chose to be publicly vaccinated. I wrote and then took down, in the interest of not becoming heretical, one post critical of Archbishop PETER when my spiritual father helped me to see that if I was not in formal dissent, getting awfully close. And as I was reminded in Lenten reading, it is not helpful to criticize one's spiritual authorities: not a monastic priest, not a spiritual father, and all the more not the bishop I answer to in the end. I asked, and received, a blessing to receive vaccination from my spiritual father.

As the time approached, I was aware of unending doubt about my rightness to receive a vaccine, and Rom 14.23). I do not want to give the debate in that passage in cultural context, but after having seen my Archbishop to whom I answer set an example of receiving the vaccine, and receiving a blessing and assurances from my spiritual father to receive the vaccine personally, I still had constant, nagging doubts about whether I should receive the vaccine, and that Biblical discussion was at the forefront of

my mind, along with a thought about stopping COVID being justification to make an exception. I claim no confused ideas about the Biblical principle, nor any sense of mixed messages from my conscience, nor anything else of that sort. And I furthermore would point out that my spiritual father is big on listening to that inner voice; he has never to my knowledge put me in a position previously of choosing between obeying that still, small voice and obeying him—and while Orthodox spiritual direction usually requires obedience, he has been clear, when I asked a blessing to have my confessions heard by cathedral clergy, that this is not full monastic spiritual direction and that I do not owe him monastic-style obedience. He allowed me to choose freely whether I wanted to receive the vaccine, so I cannot blame him for how I exercised my freedom. (I see very little mitigating factors once I recognized consciously that something was wrong.)

I sinned by taking the first dose of a vaccine, when my conscience was not in a state where I could legitimately take the vaccine. I do not here make any evaluation of the vaccines in general or specific people; I mentally asked, "What could go wrong?"

I don't know all of what could have gone wrong. What I did realize after paying the price for drinking a sugary drink two weeks later was that when I received the vaccine, I was told at the top of an information sheet that if certain vaguely COVID-like symptoms if they lasted for longer than 72 hours, and it was two weeks later and I was ignoring significant and ongoing COVID-like symptoms, including muscle pains, headache, nausea, and by the way the swelling at the injection site is still visible. And (as of two and a half weeks later) they weren't going away. I received, in the language of Romans 1, received in my person a due penalty for my error.

At about two weeks, my conscience was overwhelmingly strong that I should cancel my second dose. It was getting stronger and stronger, and then by chance I read a friend's comment in a paper and while he is not a religious authority I answer to, unexpected words brought my struggle against my conscience to the forefront of my attention. I canceled it and haven't had any social consequences yet. But my doctor's office gave what I regard as at best excusable advice that I go ahead with the second dose as originally planned. The people giving the vaccines warn people not to have a vaccine within 14 days of receiving any other vaccine or any COVID. My primary told me to go right ahead and receive the vaccine in a few days even when I had significant and ongoing COVID symptoms that prompted her office to ask me to take a COVID test before coming in to the office.

I've been in a mind fog. I don't know if the COVID symptoms are permanent; they do seem to be lasting just a little long even by the standards of a real, honest, legitimate COVID infection, let alone reasonable aftereffects for a vaccine. And tomorrow's concerns are not my concern today; tomorrow's concerns will be my concerns when tomorrow comes.

The adverse reactions are only part of the picture of why I am repenting; I ignored something very clear and mentally asked, "What could go wrong?" and I believe both that God is just to allow me to experience COVID symptoms now, and that ignoring conscience or clear thinking and asking, "What could go wrong?" (in other words, asking in my heart "But what could possibly go wrong?" has historically been a *dangerous* position for me to be in spiritually.

However, while I absolutely cannot judge Archbishop PETER for his research, actions, or conclusions, repentance of my own actions is in my heart.

I, Christos Hayward, publicly repent of receiving the first dose of a vaccination.
Epilogue, July 9 2021

I am, by the grace of and generosity of God, my archbishop and his school, a seminary student.

The seminary has assigned some texts to read, and the hardest had been about, for instance, Old Believer and Old Calendarist schisms. The canonical Orthodox authority who in large measure pushed Old Believers into schism was being an incredible jerk towards people who were trying to mind their own business. The canonical Orthodox authority who led people to become Old Calendarists was a Freemason, among other disqualifications, and was something like the Messianic fantasy of a PC-USA radical in the office of an Orthodox bishop. In these and I believe other meetings, I was left with a terrible sense that I would have really liked to sit down for a meal with the non-canonicals (one high-ranking non-canonical bishop radiated the Uncreated Light from his prison cell), while the canonical figures, not so much. (Or to be less diplomatic about it, they mostly left me wanting to puke.)

The USA's Assembly of (Orthodox) Bishops, I have been told, has come out presenting the somewhat bloodstained COVID vaccines as desirable, definitely permitted and encouraged by example even if there has not been a strict requirement made. And... I am willing to see a decision like the OCA decision described in "Contraception, Orthodoxy, and Spin Doctoring" where a jurisdiction advocated and allowed a practice St. John Chrysostom bluntly called "worse than murder" and tried to explain his horror about it. I have been asked if I had a heirarch's blessing to write that. I'm willing to hold a position, if it comes to that, that I do not share with my bishop and perhaps not anyone in the Assembly.

I have told my spiritual director that if it comes to a choice between not receiving any further vaccination and being admitted to housing, I am willing to go homeless. However, I am not willing to go non-canonical. Never mind if I believe COVID injections are the greatest breakthrough in human health since DDT. If I have to choose between remaining not fully vaccinated and remaining canonical, I will take as many injections as are demanded of me rather than forfeit my status as a canonical Orthodox Christian.

(Also, as far as vaccine complications, I had a blood clot from my leg migrate to my lung. The ER doctor said I was lucky to get to the hospital before it killed me.)

Refutatio Omnium Haeresium

Michael? (Who Is Like God?)

"Religion and Science" is not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution

A rude awakening

Early in one systematic theology PhD course at Fordham, the text assigned as theology opened by saying, "Theologians are scientists, and they are every bit as much scientists as people in the so-called 'hard sciences' like physics." Not content with this striking claim, the author announced that she was going to use "a term from science," *thought experiment*, which was never used to mean a *Gedanken* experiment as in physics, but instead meant: if we have an idea for how a society should run, we have to experimentally try out this thought and live with it for a while, because if we don't, we will never know what would have happened. ("Stick your neck out! What have you got to lose?"—"Your head?") The clumsiness in this use of "a term from science" was on par with saying that you are going to use "an expression from American English", namely *rabbit food*, and subsequently use "rabbit food" as obviously a term meaning food made with rabbit meat.

In this one article were already two things that were fingernails on a chalkboard to my ears. Empirical sciences are today's prestige disciplines, like philosophy / theology / law in bygone eras, and the claim to be a science seems to inevitably be *how to mediate prestige to oneself and one's own discipline*. When I had earlier run into claims of, "Anthropologists are scientists, and they are every bit as much scientists as people in the

so-called 'hard sciences,' like physics," I had winced because the claim struck me as not only annoying and untrue, but self-demeaning. But it simply had not occurred to me that theologians would make such a claim, and when they did, I was not only shocked but embarrassed: why should theology, once acclaimed the queen of scholarly disciplines, now seek prestige by parroting the claim to be every-bit-as-much-a-science-as-the-so-called-"hard-sciences"-like-physics (where "so-called" seemed to always be part of the claim, along with the scare quotes around "hard sciences")? To make my point clearer, I drew what was meant to be a shocking analogy: the claim that theologians are "scientists, and every bit as much as people in the so-called 'hard sciences' like physics" was like trying to defend the dignity of being a woman by saying, "Women are male, and they are just as much male as people who can sire a child."

This "physics envy" looks particularly strange next to the medieval Great Chain of Being as it moved from the highest to the lowest: "God, Angels, Man, Animals, Plants, Rocks, Nothing". Theology is the study of God and Man; no discipline is given a more noble field. And however much other disciplines may have "physics envy", no other discipline looks lower than physics, the science that studies Rocks and Nothing. There may be something pathetic about an anthropologist trying to step up on the pecking order by claiming to be "just as much scientists as people in the so-called 'hard sciences' like physics." Yet on the lips of a theologian, it bears a faint hint of a CEO absurdly saying, "CEOs are janitors, and they are every bit as much janitors as the people responsible for cleaning wastebaskets."

Furthermore, the endemic claim I saw to introduce a "term from science" was, so far as I could remember:

- Rarely if ever used in any correct fashion. The *one* exception I can remember being Wolfhart Pannenberg's illustration of a point by talking about fields such as one finds in the study of electricity and magnetism: the non-scientist theologians in the room said they were having real trouble understanding the illustration conceptually, which would make it seem somewhat dubious as an illustration to help get a point across.
- Always reflect an effort to claim some of science's prestige. I remember the "you're being quaint" smiles I got when I suggested that a point that Pannenberg was trying to make by comparing something to a field as defined in physics, seemed in fact to be a point that could have been much better made by a comparison to the Force from *Star Wars*. Why the patronizing smiles? The job of the example from physics was to mediate prestige as well as to illustrate a concept that could have been better explained without involving a particularly slippery concept from physics.

A first response

Examples of this kind of "science" abounded, and I was perhaps not wise enough to realize that my clumsy attempts to clarify various misrepresentations of science were perhaps not well received because I was stepping on the Dark and Shameful Secret of Not Being Scientific Enough, and reminding them of an inferiority they were trying hard to dodge. And my attempts to explain "Not being a scientist does not make you inferior" seemed to have no soil in which to grow. In an attempt to start an online discussion, I wrote a piece called "Rumor Science":

I really wish the theology students I knew would either know a lot more about science, or a lot less, and I really wouldn't consider "a lot less" to be disappointing.

Let me explain why. When I was working on my master's in math, there was one passage in particular that struck me from Ann Wilson Schaef's *Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System*. Perhaps predictably given my being a mathematician in training, it was a remark about numbers, or rather about how people interact with numbers.

The author broke people down into more or less three groups of people. The first—she mentioned artists—was people that can't count to twenty without taking off their shoes. She didn't quite say that, but she emphasized artists and other people where math and numbers simply aren't part of their consciousness. They don't buy into the mystique. And they can say, and sincerely mean, that numbers don't measure everything. They aren't seriously tempted to believe otherwise.

The second group—she mentioned business people—consists of people for whom math works. Even if they're not mathematicians, math works for them and does useful things, and they may say that numbers don't measure anything, but it is well nigh impossible to believe—saying and meaning that numbers don't measure everything is like saying that cars are nice but they can't get you places.

And the third group in the progression? She mentioned scientists, but what she said was that they know math in and out and know it so well that they know its limitations and therefore they can say and mean that numbers don't measure everything. And in the end, even though the "scientist" and the "artist" represent opposite extremes of mathematical competence, they both know there are things numbers can't measure while the second, middle group for mathematical competence are in a position where they expect numbers to do things that numbers can't do.

I was flattered, but I really think it stuck with me for more reasons than just the fact that she included me in one of the "good" groups. There is a sort of *Karate Kid* observation—"Karate is like a road. Know karate, safe. Don't know karate, safe. In the middle, *squash, like a grape!*"—that is relevant to theology and science. It has to do with, among other things, Godel's Incompleteness Theorem, the question of evolution, and the like (perhaps I should mention the second law of thermodynamics). My point in this is not that there is an obligation to "know karate", that theologians need to earn degrees in the sciences before they are qualified to work as theologians, but that there is something perfectly respectable about "don't know karate."

I'd like to start by talking about Godel's Incompleteness Theorem. Now a lot of people have heard about Godel's Incompleteness Theorem. Not many major mathematical theorems have had a Pulitzer prize-winning book written around them (and by the way, *Godel, Escher, Bach* has been one of my favorite books). Nor do many theorems get summarized in Newsweek as an important theorem which demonstrates that mathematical "proofs" are not certain, but mathematical knowledge is as relative as any other knowledge.

Which is a crass error. The theological equivalent would be to say that Karl Barth's unflattering remarks about "religion" are anti-Christian, or that liberation theology's preferential option for the poor means that special concern for the poor is optional and to be dealt with according to personal preference. And saying that about liberation theology is a theological "squash like a grape," because it is better to not know liberation theology and know you don't know than believe that you understand liberation theology and "know" that the word "option" implies "optional." *It's not what you don't know that hurts you, but what you know that ain't so.*

For the record, what Godel's Incompleteness Theorem means is that for a certain branch of mathematics, there are things that can be neither proven nor disproven—which made his theorem a shocker when there was a Tower of Babel effort to prove or disprove pretty much anything. It proves that some things can never be proven within certain systems. And it has other implications. But it does *not* mean that things that are proven in mathematics are uncertain, or that mathematical knowledge is relative. It says you can't prove everything a mathematician would want to prove. But there are still lots and lots and lots of interesting things that can be proven, and Godel's Incompleteness Theorem does not touch these proofs, nor does it mean that mathematical knowledge is merely relative in humanities fashion.

And I'd like to mention what happens when I mention Godel's *Completeness* Theorem:

Dead silence.

The same great mathematical logician proved another theorem, which does not have a Pulitzer prize winning book, which says that in one other branch of mathematics, besides the branch that Godel's Incompleteness Theorem speaks to, you can have pretty much what Godel's Incompleteness Theorem says you can't have in the other branch. In other words, you can—mechanically, for that matter, which is a big mathematical achievement—either prove or disprove every single statement. I'm not sure it's as important as Godel's Incompleteness Theorem, but it's a major theorem from the same mathematician and no one's heard of it.

There would seem to be obvious non-mathematical reasons for why people would want to be informed about the first theorem and not want to mention the second. I consider it telling (about non-mathematical culture). I know it may be considered a mark of sophistication to mention Godel's Incompleteness Theorem and share how it's informed your epistemology. But it hasn't informed my epistemology and I really can't tell how my theology would be different if I hadn't heard of it. And my understanding is that other mathematicians tend not to have the highest view of people who are trying to take account of scientific discoveries that an educated person "should" know. There are other reasons for this, including goofy apologetics that make the famous theorem a proof for God. But I at least would rather talk with someone who simply hadn't heard of the theorem than a theologian who had tried to make a "responsible" effort to learn from the discovery.

And my main example is one I'm less sure how to comment on, and not only because I know less biology than math. There was one almost flippant moment in England when the curate asked if anybody had questions about the upcoming Student Evolution conference that everybody was being urged to attend. I asked, "Is this 'Student Evolution' more of a gradual process, or more a matter of 'punk eek'?" (That question brought down the house.)

Punctuated equilibrium, irreverently abbreviated 'punk eek', is a very interesting modification of Darwinian theory. Darwinian *evolution* in its early forms posits and implies a gradual process of very slow changes—almost constant over very long ("geological") time frames. And that is a beautiful theory that flatly contracts almost all known data.

As explained by my Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy biology teacher, "Evolution is like baseball. It has long stretches of boring time interrupted by brief periods of intense excitement." That's punk eek in a nutshell, and what interests me most is that it's the mirror image of saying

"God created the world—*through evolution!*" It says, "Evolution occurred—*through punctuated equilibrium!*"

That's not the only problem; evolution appears to be, in Kuhnian terms (*Structure of Scientific Revolutions*), a theory "in crisis", which is the Kuhnian term for when a scientific theory is having serious difficulties accounting for currently given data and may well be on its way out the door. There are several ways people are trying to cope with this—preserving some semblance of a materialist explanation; there was the same kind of resistance going on before science acknowledged the Big Bang, because scientists who want a universe without cause and without beginning or creator heard something that sounded too much like "Let there be light!" They're very interesting, and intellectually dishonest.

Now I need to clarify; people seem to think you have to either be a young earth creationist or else admit evolution of some stripe. I believe in 13 billion years as the rough age of the universe, not six thousand years; I also believe in natural selection and something called "micro-evolution." (By the way, JPII's "more than a hypothesis" was in the original French "plus qu'un hypothese", alternately translatable as "more than one hypothesis", and the official Vatican translation takes this reading. One can say that micro-evolution is one of the hypothesis gathered under the heading of evolution.)

I wince when I see theologians trying their dutiful best to work out an obligation to take evolution into account as a proven fact: squash, like a grape. It's not just that science doesn't trade in proof and evolution is being treated like a revelation, as if a Pope had consulted the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences and canonized *The Origin of the Species* as a book of the Bible. Or maybe that's putting it too strongly. It would also be strong language to say that many theologians are adopting a carefully critical attitude to classic Church claims and part of their being critical means placing an embarrassingly blind faith in evolution. But that's truer than I'd want to admit.

What about the second law of thermodynamics?

I don't know what the first and third laws of thermodynamics say, and I can't say that I'm missing anything. I don't feel obligated to make the second law, which I am familiar with, a feature of my theology, but if I did, I would try to understand the first and third laws of thermodynamics, and treat it as physics in which those three laws and presumably other things fit into a system that needs to be treated as a whole. I don't know how I would incorporate that in my theology, but I'm supposing for the sake of argument that I would. I would rather avoid treating it the way people usually seem to

treat it when they treat that as one of the things that educated people "should" know.

I guess that my point in all of this is that some people think there's a duty to know science and be scientific in theology, but this is a duty better shirked. My theology is—or I would like it to be—closer to that of someone who doesn't understand science, period, than that of people who try to improve their theology by incorporating what they can grasp of difficult scientific concepts that the scientists themselves learned with difficulty.

Rumor science is worse than no science, and an ascientific theology is not a handicap. When I say that I would rather see theologians know either much more or much less science, I'm not hoping that theologians will therefore get scientific degrees. The chief merit for a theologian to know science is that it can be a source of liberation that frees people from thinking "We live in a scientific age so it would be better for theology to be scientific." I'm not sure I would be able to question that assumption if I knew much less science. But what I believe that buys me is not a better theology than someone scientifically innocent but freedom from the perceived need to "take science into account" in my theology so I can do the same kind of theology as someone scientifically innocent.

I'm not as sure what to say about ecological theology; I wrote "Hymn to the Creator of Heaven and Earth" at without scientific reference that I remember, and I believe there are other human ways of knowing Creation besides science. But an ecological theologian who draws on scientific studies is not trying to honor a duty to understand things an educated person should know, but pursuing something materially relevant. Science has some place; religion and science boundary issues are legitimate, and I don't know I can dissuade people who think it's progressive to try to make a scientific theology—although I really wish people with that interest would get letters after their name from a science discipline, or some other form of genuinely proper scientific credentials appropriate to a genuinely scientific theology.

There are probably other exceptions, and science is interesting. But there is no obligation to go from safely on one side of the road to a position in the middle because it is "closer" to a proper understanding of science. Perhaps liberation theologians want people to understand their cause, but it is better not to pretend to know liberation theology than to approach it in a way that leaves you "knowing" that the preferential option is optional. It isn't what you know that hurts you, but what you know that ain't so—and rumor science, with its accepted list of important scientific knowledge that scholars need to take into account, is one way to learn from what ain't so.

Science is the prestige discipline(s) today; you see psychology wishing for its Newton to lead it into the promised land of being a science in the fullest sense of the term. You don't see psychology pining for a Shakespeare to lead it into the promised land of being a humanity in the fullest sense of the term. And the social disciplines—I intentionally do not say social *sciences* because they are legitimate academic disciplines but not sciences—are constantly insisting that their members are scientists, but the claim that theologians are scientists annoys me as a scientist and almost offends me as a theologian. It should be offensive for much the same reason that it should be offensive to insist on female dignity by claiming that women are really male, and that they are just as much male as people who can sire a child.

It would be an interesting theological work to analyze today's cultural assumptions surrounding science, which are quite important and not dictated by scientific knowledge itself, and then come to almost the same freedom as someone innocent of science.

"My theology," ewwww. (While I was at it, why didn't I discuss plans for my own private sun and moon? I'm *not* proud of proudly discussing "my theology".) I know the text has a wart or two.

But the piece contains a suggestion: "rumor science" may be a red flag to a real problem in the place we give science.

Pondering Einstein, or at least dropping his name

That work left out the crowning jewel of scientific theories to ponder in "rumor science": Einstein's "theory of relativity." Some time later, in my science fiction short story / Socratic dialogue, "Within the Steel Orb," I wrote in fiction something that picked up what I had left out:

Art sat back. "I'd be surprised if you're not a real scientist. I imagine that in your world you know things that our scientists will not know for centuries."

Oinos sat back and sat still for a time, closing his eyes. Then he opened his eyes and said, "What have you learned from science?"

"I've spent a lot of time lately, wondering what Einstein's theory of relativity means for us today: even the 'hard' sciences are relative, and what 'reality' is, depends greatly on your own perspective. Even in the hardest sciences, it is fundamentally mistaken to be looking for absolute truth."

Oinos leaned forward, paused, and then tapped the table four different places. In front of Art appeared a gridlike object which Art recognized with a start as a scientific calculator like his son's. "Very well. Let me ask you a question. Relative to your frame of reference, an object of one kilogram rest mass is moving away from you at a speed of one tenth the speed of light. What, from your present frame of reference, is its effective mass?"

Art hesitated, and began to sit up.

Oinos said, "If you'd prefer, the table can be set to function as any major brand of calculator you're familiar with. Or would you prefer a computer with Matlab or Mathematica? The remainder of the table's surface can be used to browse the appropriate manuals."

Art shrunk slightly towards his chair.

Oinos said, "I'll give you hints. In the theory of relativity, objects can have an effective mass of above their rest mass, but never below it. Furthermore, most calculations of this type tend to have anything that changes, change by a factor of the inverse of the square root of the quantity: one minus the square of the object's speed divided by the square of the speed of light. Do you need me to explain the buttons on the calculator?"

Art shrunk into his chair. "I don't know all of those technical details, but I have spent a lot of time thinking about relativity."

Oinos said, "If you are unable to answer that question before I started dropping hints, let alone after I gave hints, you should not pose as having contemplated what relativity means for us today. I'm not trying to humiliate you. But the first question I asked is the kind of question a teacher would put on a quiz to see if students were awake and not playing video games for most of the first lecture. I know it's fashionable in your world to drop Einstein's name as someone you have deeply pondered. It is also extraordinarily silly. I have noticed that scientists who have a good understanding of relativity often work without presenting themselves as having these deep ponderings about what Einstein means for them today. Trying to deeply ponder Einstein without learning even the basics of relativistic physics is like trying to write the next Nobel prize-winning German novel without being bothered to learn even the most rudimentary German vocabulary and grammar."

"But don't you think that relativity makes a big difference?"

"On a poetic level, I think it is an interesting development in your world's history for a breakthrough in science, Einstein's theory of relativity, to say that what is absolute is not time, but light. Space and time bend before light. There is a poetic beauty to Einstein making an unprecedented absolute out of light. But let us leave poetic appreciation of Einstein's theory aside.

"You might be interested to know that the differences predicted by Einstein's theory of relativity are so minute that decades passed between Einstein making the theory of relativity and people being able to use a sensitive enough clock to measure the microscopically small difference of the so-called 'twins paradox' by bringing an atomic clock on an airplane. The answer to the problem I gave you is that for a tenth the speed of light—which is faster than you can imagine, and well over a thousand times the top speed of the fastest supersonic vehicle your world will ever make—is one half of one percent. It's a disappointingly small increase for a rather astounding speed. If the supersonic Skylon is ever built, would you care to guess the increase in effective mass as it travels at an astounding Mach 5.5?"

"Um, I don't know..."

"Can you guess? Half its mass? The mass of a car? Or just the mass of a normal-sized adult?"

"Is this a trick question? Fifty pounds?"

"The effective mass increases above the rest mass, for that massive vehicle running at about five times the speed of sound and almost twice the top speed of the SR-71 Blackbird, is something like the mass of a mosquito."

"A *mosquito*? You're joking, right?"

"No. It's an underwhelming, *microscopic* difference for what relativity says when the rumor mill has it that Einstein taught us that hard sciences are as fuzzy as anything else... or that perhaps, in Star Wars terms, 'Luke, you're going to find that many of the truths we cling to depend greatly on your own point of view.' Under Einstein, you will in fact not find that many of the observations that we cling to, depend greatly on your own frame of reference. You have to be doing something pretty exotic to have relativity make any measurable difference from the older physics at all."

"Rumor science": The tip of an iceberg?

But I would like to get on to something that is of far greater concern than "rumor science" as it treats Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem, the second law of thermodynamics, relativity, evolution, and so on. If the only problem was making a bit of a hash of some scientific theories, that would be one thing. But "rumor science" may be the tip of an iceberg, a telling clue that something may be seriously amiss in how theology has been relating to science. There is another, far more serious boundary issue.

There is something about the nature of academic theology today that may become clearer if we ask questions about the nature of knowledge and line up academic theology with Orthodoxy on the one hand and modern science on the other. The table below lists

a few questions connected with knowledge, and then a comparison between Orthodox Christianity, academic theology, and modern science in their own columns:

Question	Orthodox Christianity	Academic Theology	Modern Science
What is knowledge like?	<p>"Adam knew Eve..." The primary word in the Old and New Testaments for sexual union is in fact 'know', and this is a significant clue about the intimate nature of knowledge. Knowledge is, at its core, the knowledge that drinks. It connects at a deepest level, and is cognate to how Orthodox say of the Holy Mysteries, "We have seen the true Light!": to receive the Eucharist is to know.</p>	<p>Knowledge is <i>critical</i>, meaning <i>detached</i>: the privileged position is of the outsider who stands clear of a situation and looks into a window. The devout believer enjoys no real advantage in grasping his religion compared to the methodical observer who remains detached—and the ordinary believer may be at a marked <i>disadvantage</i>.</p>	<p>You can't know how stars age or the limitations of the ideal gas law from direct personal experience. Science stems from a rationalism cognate to the Enlightenment, and even if one rebels against the Enlightenment, it's awfully hard to know quarks and leptons solely by the intimacy of personal experience.</p>
What aspect of yourself do you know with?	<p>This may not be part of the standard Western picture, but the Orthodox, non-materialist understanding of mind holds that there is a sort of "spiritual eye" which knows and which grasps spiritual realities as overflow to its central purpose of worshipping God. The center of gravity for knowing is this spiritual eye, and it is the center of a whole and integrated person.</p>	<p>Good scholarship comes from putting all other aspects of the person in their place and enthroning the part of us that reasons logically and almost putting the logic bit on steroids. Continental philosophy may rebel against this, but it rebels after starting from this point.</p>	<p>We have a slightly more rigorous use of primarily logical reasoning and a subject domain that allows this reasoning to shine.</p>

Question	Orthodox Christianity	Academic Theology	Modern Science
<i>What should teachers cultivate in their students?</i>	<p>Logical and other "discursive" reasoning may have a place, but the seat of this kind of reasoning is a moon next to the light of the sun which is the spiritual eye, the <i>nous</i>.</p> <p>Teachers should induce students into <i>discipleship</i> and should be exemplary disciples themselves.</p>	<p>They should train students who will not be content with their teachers' interpretations but push past to their own takes on the matter.</p>	<p>They should train students to develop experiments and theories to carefully challenge the "present working picture" in their field.</p>
<i>What is tradition, and how does your tradition relate to knowing?</i>	<p>One may be not so much <i>under Tradition</i> as <i>in Tradition</i>: Tradition is like one's culture or language, if a culture and language breathed on by the Holy Spirit of God. Though the matrix of Tradition need not be viewed with legalistic fundamentalism, it is missing something important to fail to love and revere Tradition as something of a mother.</p>	<p>Something of the attitude is captured in what followed the telling of an anecdote about a New Testament Greek class where the professor had difficulties telling how to read a short text, until a classics student looked and suggested that the difficulty would evaporate if the text were read with a different set of accents from what scholars traditionally assigned it. The Greek professor's response ("Accents are not inspired!") was presented by the</p>	<p>As Nobel prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman observed, "You get to be part of the establishment by blowing up part of the establishment."</p>

<i>Question</i>	Orthodox Christianity	Academic Theology	Modern Science
<i>How much emphasis do you place on creativity?</i>	<p>It reflects some degree of fundamental confusion to measure the value of what someone says by how original it is. That which is true is not original, and that which is original is not true. Perhaps people may uncover new layers of meaning, but to measure someone by how many ideas he can claim as "mine" is a strange measure.</p>	<p>academic theologian retelling this story as full warrant to suggest that scholars should not view themselves as bound by <i>tradition</i> with its blind spots.</p> <p>Publish something <i>original</i>, or perish. Better to say something original but not true than not have any ideas to claim as "mine." If need be, rehabilitate Arius or Nestorius. (Or, if you are Orthodox, meet current fashions halfway and show that St. Augustine need not be a whipping boy.)</p>	<p>Continue to push the envelope. Are you an experimental physicist? If you cannot observe anything new by the layman's means of observation, pioneer new equipment or a clever experiment to push the envelope of what can be observed. Publish something <i>original</i> or perish.</p>
<i>Where does your discipline place its empiricism?</i>	<p>There is a very real sense of empiricism, albeit a sense that has very little directly to do with empirical science. Knowledge is what you know through the "spiritual eye" and it is a knowledge that can only be realized through direct participation. An "idle word" may be a word of that which you do not have this</p>	<p>Theologians are just as empirical as physicists, whether or not they know basic statistics. We have such quasi-scientific empiricism as can be had for the human and divine domain we cover; there is a great deal of diversity, and some of us do not place much emphasis on the empiricism of science,</p>	<p>As much as theology's empiricism is the empiricism of a knowledge of the "spiritual eye" and the whole person, our empiricism is an empiricism of detached, careful, methodical, reasoned investigation—the investigation of the reasoning faculty on steroids. Our science exhibits professionalism</p>

Question	Orthodox Christianity	Academic Theology	Modern Science
	<p>knowledge of, and this sin would appear to be foundational to the empiricism of science. We really do have an empiricism, but it might be better not to engender pointless confusion by claiming to be empirical when the empiricism known to the academy is pre-eminently that of empirical science, whether it is either actual or aspiring science.</p>	<p>but some of us have enough of scientific empiricism to do history work that stands its ground when judged by secular history's standards.</p>	<p>and a particular vision of intellectual virtue. Our empiricism corresponds to this vision, and no one has pushed this empiricism of the reasoning faculty further, and the unique technology founded on science is a testament to how far we have pushed this kind of empiricism.</p>

When they are lined up, academic theology appears to have a great many continuities with science and a real disconnect with Orthodox Christianity. Could academic theologians feel an inferiority complex about Not Being Scientific Enough? Absolutely. But the actual problem may be that they are entirely *too* scientific. I am less concerned that their theology is not sufficiently scientific than that it is not sufficiently *theological*.

Origins questions: can we dig deeper?

It is along those lines that I have taken something of the track of "join the enemy's camp to show its weaknesses from within" in exposing the blind spots of Darwinism, for instance. In the theologically driven short story "The Commentary," the issue is not really whether Darwinism is correct at all. The question is not whether we should be content with Darwinian answers, but whether we should be content with Darwinian *questions*.

Martin stepped into his house and decided to have no more distractions. He wanted to begin reading commentary, now. He opened the book on the table and sat erect in his chair:

Genesis

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

1:2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

1:3 And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

The reader is now thinking about evolution. He is wondering whether Genesis 1 is right, and evolution is simply wrong, or whether evolution is right, and Genesis 1 is a myth that may be inspiring enough but does not actually tell how the world was created.

All of this is because of a culture phenomenally influenced by scientism and science. The theory of evolution is an attempt to map out, in terms appropriate to scientific dialogue, just what organisms occurred, when, and what mechanism led there to be new kinds of organisms that did not exist before. Therefore, nearly all Evangelicals assumed, Genesis 1 must be the Christian substitute for evolution. Its purpose must also be to map out what occurred when, to provide the same sort of mechanism. In short, if Genesis 1 is true, then it must be trying to answer the same question as evolution, only answering it differently.

Darwinian evolution is not a true answer to the question, "Why is there life as we know it?" Evolution is on philosophical grounds *not* a true answer to that question, because it is not an answer to that question at all. Even if it is true, evolution is only an answer to the question, "*How* is there life as we know it?" If someone asks, "Why is there this life that we see?" and someone answers, "Evolution," it is like someone saying, "Why is the kitchen light on?" and someone else answering, "Because the switch is in the on position, thereby closing the electrical circuit and allowing current to flow through the bulb, which grows hot and produces light."

Where the reader only sees one question, an ancient reader saw at least two other questions that are invisible to the present reader. As well as the question of "How?" that evolution addresses, there is the question of "Why?" and "What function does it serve?" These two questions are very important, and are not even

considered when people are only trying to work out the antagonism between creationism and evolutionism.

Martin took a deep breath. Was the text advocating a six-day creationism? That was hard to tell. He felt uncomfortable, in a much deeper way than if Bible-thumpers were preaching to him that evolutionists would burn in Hell.

There is a hint here of why some people who do not believe in a young earth are no less concerned about young earth creationism: the concern is not exactly that it is junk science, but precisely that it is *too* scientific, assuming many of evolutionary theory's blindnesses even as it asserts the full literal truth of the Bible in answering questions on the terms of what science asks of an origins theory.

There is an Dilbert strip which goes as follows:

Pointy-haired boss: I'm sending you to Elbonia to teach a class on Cobol on Thursday.

Dilbert: But I don't know Cobol. Can't you ask Wally? He knows Cobol!

Pointy-haired boss: I already checked, and he's busy on Thursday.

Dilbert: Can't you reschedule?

Pointy-haired boss: Ok, are you free on Tuesday?

Dilbert: You're answering the wrong question!

Dilbert's mortified, "You're answering the wrong question!" has some slight relevance the issues of religion and science: in my homily, "Two Decisive Moments." I tried to ask people to look, and aim, *higher*:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.

There is a classic Monty Python "game show": the moderator asks one of the contestants the second question: "In what year did Coventry City last win the English Cup?" The contestant looks at him with a blank stare, and then he opens the question up to the other contestants: "Anyone? In what year did Coventry City last win the English Cup?" And there is dead silence,

until the moderator says, "Now, I'm not surprised that none of you got that. It is in fact a trick question. Coventry City has never won the English Cup."

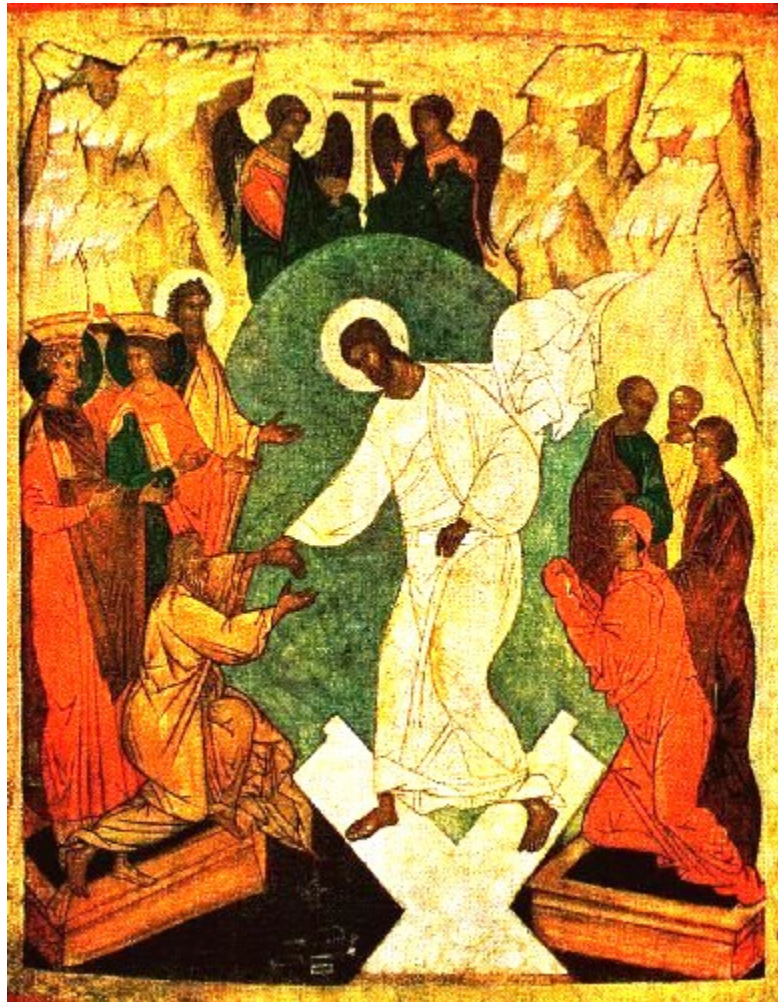
I'd like to dig into another trick question: "When was the world created: 13.7 billion years ago, or about six thousand years ago?" The answer in fact is "Neither," but it takes some explaining to get to the point of realizing that the world was created 3:00 PM, March 25, 28 AD.

Adam fell and dragged down the whole realm of nature. God had and has every authority to repudiate Adam, to destroy him, but in fact God did something different. He called Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Elijah, and in the fullness of time he didn't just call a prophet; he sent his Son to become a prophet and more.

It's possible to say something that means more than you realize. Caiaphas, the high priest, did this when he said, "It is better that one man be killed than that the whole nation perish." (John 11:50) This also happened when Pilate sent Christ out, flogged, clothed in a purple robe, and said, "Behold the man!"

What does this mean? It means more than Pilate could have possibly dreamed of, and "Adam" means "man": *Behold the man!* Behold Adam, but not the Adam who sinned against God and dragged down the Creation in his rebellion, but the second Adam, the new Adam, the last Adam, who obeyed God and exalted the whole Creation in his rising. Behold the man, Adam as he was meant to be. Behold the New Adam who is even now transforming the Old Adam's failure into glory!

Behold the man! Behold the first-born of the dead. Behold, as in the icon of the Resurrection, the man who descends to reach Adam and Eve and raise them up in his ascent. Behold the man who will enter the realm of the dead and forever crush death's power to keep people down.



An icon of the Resurrection.

Behold the man and behold the firstborn of many brothers! You may know the great chapter on faith, chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews, and it is with good reason one of the most-loved chapters in the Bible, but it is not the only thing in Hebrews. The book of Hebrews looks at things people were caught up in, from the glory of angels to sacrifices and the Mosaic Law, and underscores how much more the Son excels above them. A little before the passage we read above, we see, "To which of the angels did he ever say, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you?'" (Hebrews 1:5) And yet in John's prologue we read, "To those who received him and believed in his name, he gave the authority to become the children of God." (John 1:9) We also read today, "To which of the angels did he ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I have made your enemies a footstool under your feet?'" (Hebrews 1:13) And yet Paul encourages us: "The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under

your feet," (Romans 16:20) and elsewhere asks bickering Christians, "Do you not know that we will judge angels?" (I Corinthians 6:3) Behold the man! Behold the firstborn of many brothers, the Son of God who became a man so that men might become the Sons of God. Behold the One who became what we are that we might by grace become what he is. Behold the supreme exemplar of what it means to be Christian.

Behold the man and behold the first-born of all Creation, through whom and by whom all things were made! Behold the Uncreated Son of God who has entered the Creation and forever transformed what it means to be a creature! Behold the Saviour of the whole Creation, the Victor who will return to Heaven bearing as trophies not merely his transfigured saints but the whole Creation! Behold the One by whom and through whom all things were created! Behold the man!

Pontius Pilate spoke words that were deeper than he could have *possibly* imagined. And Christ continued walking the fateful journey before him, continued walking to the place of the Skull, Golgotha, and finally struggled to breathe, his arms stretched out as far as love would go, and barely gasped out, "It is finished."

Then and there, the entire work of Creation, which we read about from Genesis onwards, was *complete*. There and no other place the world was created, at 3:00 PM, March 25, 28 AD. *Then* the world was created.

I wince at the idea that for theologians "boundary issues" are mostly about demonstrating the compatibility of timeless revealed truths to the day's state of flux in scientific speculation. I wince that theologians so often assume that the biggest contribution they can give to the dialogue between theology and science is the rubber stamp of perennially agreeing with science. I would decisively prefer that when theologians "approach religion and science boundary issues," we do so as boundaries are understood in pop psychology—and more specifically *bad* pop psychology—which is all about you cannot meaningfully say "Yes" until it is your practice to say "No" when you should say "No": what theology needs in its boundaries with science is not primarily a question of what else we should seek to embrace, but of where theology has ingested things toxic to its constitution.

What gets lost when theology loses track (by which I do not mean primarily rumor science, but the three columns where theology seemed a colony of science that had lost touch with Orthodox faith) is that when theology assumes the character of science, it loses the character of theology.

The research for my diploma thesis at Cambridge had me read a lot of historical-critical commentary on a relevant passage; I read everything I could find on the topic in

Tyndale House's specialized library, and something became painfully obvious. When a good Protestant sermon uses historical or cultural context to illuminate a passage from Scripture, the preacher has sifted through pearls amidst sand, and the impression that cultural context offers a motherlode of gold to enrich our understanding of the Bible is quite contrary to the historical-critical commentaries I read, which read almost like phone books in their records of details I'd have to stretch to use to illuminate the passage. The pastor's discussion of context in a sermon is something like an archivist who goes into a scholar's office, pulls an unexpected book, shows that it is surprisingly careworn and dog-eared, and discusses how the three longest underlined passage illuminate the scholar's output. But the historical-critical commentary itself is like an archivist who describes in excruciating detail the furniture and ornaments in the author's office and the statistics about the size and weight among books the scholar owned in reams of (largely uninterpreted) detail.

And what is lost in this careful scholarship? Perhaps what is lost is why we have Bible scholarship in the first place: it is a divinely given book and a support to life in Christ. If historical-critical scholarship is your (quasi-scientific) approach to theology, you won't seek in your scholarship what I sought in writing my (non-scientific) "Doxology:"

How shall I praise thee, O Lord?

For naught that I might say,

Nor aught that I may do,

Compareth to thy worth.

Thou art the Father for whom every fatherhood in Heaven and on earth is named,

The Glory for whom all glory is named,

The Treasure for whom treasures are named,

The Light for whom all light is named,

The Love for whom all love is named,

The Eternal by whom all may glimpse eternity,

The Being by whom all beings exist,

יהוה

Ο ΩΝ.

The King of Kings and Lord of Lords,

Who art eternally praised,

Who art all that thou canst be,

Greater than aught else that may be thought,

Greater than can be thought.

In thee is light,

In thee is honour,
In thee is mercy,
In thee is wisdom, and praise, and every good thing.
For good itself is named after thee,
God immeasurable, immortal, eternal, ever glorious, and humble.
What mighteth compare to thee?
What praise equalleth thee?
If I be fearfully and wonderfully made,
Only can it be,
Wherewith thou art fearful and wonderful,
And ten thousand things besides,
Thou who art One,
Eternally beyond time,
So wholly One,
That thou mayest be called infinite,
Timeless beyond time thou art,
The One who is greater than infinity art thou.
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
The Three who are One,
No more bound by numbers than by word,
And yet the Son is called Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ,
The Word,
Divine ordering Reason,
Eternal Light and Cosmic Word,
Way pre-eminent of all things,
Beyond all, and infinitesimally close,
Thou transcendest transcendence itself,
The Creator entered into his Creation,
Sharing with us humble glory,
Lowered by love,
Raised to the highest,
The Suffering Servant known,
The King of Glory,
Ο ΩΝ.

What tongue mighteth sing of thee?
What noetic heart mighteth know thee,
With the knowledge that drinketh,
The drinking that knoweth,

Of the vovç,
 The loving, enlightened spiritual eye,
 By which we may share the knowing,
 Of divinised men joining rank on rank of angel.

Thou art,
 The Hidden Transcendent God who transcendest transcendence itself,
 The One God who transfigurest Creation,
 The Son of God became a Man that men might become the sons of God,
 The divine became man that man mighteth become divine.

Monty Python and Christian theology

I would like to start winding down with a less uplifting note. A few years back, I visited a friend who was a Christian and a big Monty Python fan and played for me a Monty Python clip:

God: Arthur! Arthur, King of the Britons! Oh, don't grovel! If there's one thing I can't stand, it's people groveling.

Arthur: Sorry—

God: And don't apologize. Every time I try to talk to someone it's 'sorry this' and 'forgive me that' and 'I'm not worthy'. What are you doing now!?

Arthur: I'm averting my eyes, O Lord.

God: Well, don't. It's like those miserable Psalms—they're so depressing. Now knock it off!

This is blasphemous, and I tried to keep my mouth shut about what my host had presented to me, I thought, for my rollicking laughter. But subsequent conversation showed I had misjudged his intent: he had not intended it to be shockingly funny.

He had, in fact, played the clip because it was something that he worried about: did God, in fact, want to give grumbling complaints about moments when my friend cried out to him in prayer? Does prayer annoy our Lord as an unwelcome intrusion from people who should have a little dignity and leave him alone or at least quit sniveling?

This is much more disturbing than merely playing the clip because you find it funny to imagine God bitterly kvetching when King Arthur tries to show him some respect. If it is actually taken as theology, Monty Python is really sad.

And it is not the best thing to be involved in Monty Python as theology.

One can whimsically imagine an interlocutor encountering some of the theology I have seen and trying to generously receive it in the best of humor: "A book that promises scientific theology in its title and goes on for a thousand pages of trajectories for other people to follow before a conclusion that apologizes for not actually getting on to any theology? *You have a real sense of humor!* Try to avoid imposing Christianity on others and start from the common ground of what all traditions across the world have in common, that non-sectarian common ground being the Western tradition of analytic philosophy? *Roaringly funny!* Run a theological anthropology course that tells how liberationists, feminists, queer theorists, post-colonialists, and so on have to say to the Christian tradition and does not begin to investigate what the Christian tradition has to say to them? *You should have been a comedian!* Yoke St. Gregory of Nyssa together with a lesbian deconstructionist like Judith Butler to advance the feminist agenda of gender fluidity? *You're really giving Monty Python a run for their money!*" ... until it gradually dawns on our interlocutor that the lewd discussion of sexual theology is not in any sense meant as an attempt to eclipse Monty Python. (Would our interlocutor spend the night weeping for lost sheep without a shepherd?)

There are many more benign examples of academic theology; many of even the problems may be slightly less striking. But theology that gives the impression that it could be from Monty Python is a bit of a dead (coal miner's) canary.

Scientific theology does not appear to be blame for all of these, but it is not irrelevant. Problems that are not directly tied to (oxymoronic) scientific theology are usually a complication of (oxymoronic) secular theology, and scientific theology and secular theology are deeply enough intertwined.

The question of evolution is important, and it is no error that a figure like Philip Johnson gives neo-Darwinian evolution pride of place in assessing materialist attacks on religion. But it is not an adequate remedy to merely study intelligent design. Not enough by half.

If theology could, like bad pop psychology, conceive of its "boundary issues" not just in terms of saying "Yes" but of learning to stop saying "Yes" when it should say "No", this would be a great gain. So far as I have seen, the questions about boundaries with science are primarily not scientific ideas theology needs to assimilate, but ways theology has assimilated some very deep characteristics of science that are not to its advantage. The question is less about what more could be added, than what more could be taken away. And the best way to do this is less the Western cottage industry of

worldview construction than a journey of repentance such as one still finds preached in Eastern Christianity and a good deal of Christianity in the West.

A journey of repentance

Repentance is Heaven's best-kept secret. Repentance has been called unconditional surrender, and it has been called the ultimate experience to fear. But when you surrender what you thought was your ornament and joy, you realize, "I was holding on to a piece of Hell!" And with letting go comes hands that are free to grasp joy you never thought to ask. Forgiveness is letting go of the other person and finding it is yourself you have set free; repentance is being terrified of letting go and then finding you have let go of needless pain. Repentance is indeed Heaven's best-kept secret; it opens doors.

I have doubt whether academic theology will open the door of repentance; it is a beginner's error to be the student who rushes in to single-handedly sort out what a number of devout Christian theologians see no way to fix. But as for theologians, the door of repentance is ever ready to open, and with it everything that the discipline of theology seeks in vain here using theories from the humanities, there trying to mediate prestige to itself science. Academic theologians who are, or who become, theologians in a more ancient sense find tremendous doors of beauty and joy open to them. The wondrous poetry of St. Ephrem the Syrian is ever open; the liturgy of the Church is open; the deifying rays of divine grace shine ever down upon those open to receiving them and upon those not yet open. The Western understanding is that the door to the Middle Ages has long since been closed and the age of the Church Fathers was closed much earlier; but Orthodox will let you become a Church Father, here now. Faithful people today submit as best they are able to the Fathers before them, as St. Maximus Confessor did ages ago. There may be problems with academic theology today, but the door to theology in the classic sense is never closed, as in the maxim that has rumbled through the ages, "A theologian is one who prays, and one who prays is a theologian." Perhaps academic theology is not the best place to be equipped to be a giant like the saintly theologians of ages past. But that does not mean that one cannot become a saintly theologian as in ages past. God can still work with us, here now.

To quote St. Dionysius (pseudo-Dionysius) in *The Mystical Theology*,

Trinity! Higher than any being,
 any divinity, any goodness!
 Guide of Christians
 in the wisdom of Heaven!
 Lead us up beyond unknowing light,
 up to the farthest, highest peak

of mystic scripture,
where the mysteries of God's Word
lie simple, absolute and unchangeable
in the brilliant darkness of a hidden silence.
Amid the deepest shadow
They pour overwhelming light
on what is most manifest.
Amid the wholly unsensed and unseen
They completely fill our sightless minds
with treasures beyond all beauty.
Let us ever seek the theology of living faith!

Religion Within the Bounds of Amusement

On the screen appear numerous geometrical forms—prisms, cylinders, cubes — dancing, spinning, changing shape, in a very stunning computer animation. In the background sounds the pulsing beat of techno music. The forms waver, and then coalesce into letters: "Religion Within the Bounds of Amusement."

The music and image fade, to reveal a man, perfect in form and appearance, every hair in place, wearing a jet black suit and a dark, sparkling tie. He leans forward slightly, as the camera focuses in on him.

"Good morning, and I would like to extend a warm and personal welcome to each and every one of you from those of us at the Church of the Holy Television. Please sit back, relax, and turn off your brain."

Music begins to play, and the screen shows a woman holding a microphone. She is wearing a long dress of the whitest white, the color traditionally symbolic of goodness and purity, which somehow manages not to conceal her unnaturally large breasts. The camera slowly focuses in as she begins to sing.

"You got problems? That's OK. You got problems? That's OK. Not enough luxury? That's OK. Only three cars? That's OK. Not enough power? That's OK. Can't get your way? That's OK. Not enough for you? That's OK. Can't do it on your own? That's OK. You got problems? That's OK. You got problems? That's OK. Just call out to Jesus, and he'll make them go away. Just call out to Jesus, and he'll make them go away."

As the music fades, the camera returns to the man.

"Have you ever thought about how much God loves us? Think about the apex of progress that we are at, and how much more he has blessed us than any one else.

"The Early Christians were in a dreadful situation. They were always under persecution. Because of this, they didn't have the physical assurance of security that is the basis for spiritual growth, nor the money to buy the great libraries of books that are necessary to cultivate wisdom. It is a miracle that Christianity survived at all.

"The persecution ended, but darkness persisted for a thousand years. The medievals were satisfied with blind faith, making it the context of thought and leisure. Their concept of identity was so weak that it was entangled with obedience. The time was quite rightly called the Dark Ages.

"But then, ah, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Man and his mind enthroned. Religion within the bounds of reason. Then science and technology, the heart of all true progress, grew.

"And now, we sit at the apex, blessed with more and better technology than anyone else. What more could you possibly ask for? What greater blessing could there possibly be? We have the technology, and know how to enjoy it. Isn't God gracious?"

There is a dramatic pause, and then the man closes his eyes. "Father, I thank you that we have not fallen into sin; that we do not worship idols, that we do not believe lies, and that we are not like the Pharisees. I thank you that we are good, moral people; that we are Americans. I thank you, and I praise you for your wondrous power. Amen."

He opens his eyes, and turns to the camera. It focuses in on his face, and his piercing gaze flashes out like lightning. With a thunderous voice, he boldly proclaims, "To God alone be the glory, for ever and ever!"

The image fades.

In the background can be heard the soft tones of Beethoven. A couple fades in; they are elegantly dressed, sitting at a black marble table, set with roast pheasant. The room is of Baroque fashion; marble pillars and mirrors with gilt frames adorn the walls. French windows overlook a formal garden.

The scene changes, and a sleek black sports car glides through forest, pasture, village, mountain. The music continues to play softly.

It passes into a field, and in the corner of the field a small hovel stands. The camera comes closer, and two half-naked children come into view, playing with some sticks and a broken Coca-Cola bottle. Their heads turn and follow the passing car.

A voice gently intones, "These few seconds may be the only opportunity some people ever have to know about you. What do you want them to see?"

The picture changes. Two men are walking through a field. As the camera comes closer, it is seen that they are deep in conversation.

One of them looks out at the camera with a probing gaze, and then turns to the other. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know, Jim." He draws a deep breath, and closes his eyes. "I just feel so... so empty. A life filled with nothing but shallowness. Like there's nothing inside, no purpose, no meaning. Just an everlasting nothing."

"Well, you know, John, for every real and serious problem, there is a solution which is trivial, cheap, and instantaneous." He unslings a small backpack, opening it to pull out two cans of beer, and hands one to his friend. "Shall we?"

The cans are opened.

Suddenly, the peaceful silence is destroyed by the blare of loud rock music. The camera turns upwards to the sky, against which may be seen parachutists; it spins, and there is suddenly a large swimming pool, and a vast table replete with great pitchers and kegs of beer. The parachutists land; they are all young women, all blonde, all laughing and smiling, all wearing string bikinis, and all anorexic.

For the remaining half of the commercial, the roving camera takes a lascivious tour of the bodies of the models. Finally, the image fades, and a deep voice intones, "Can you think of a better way to spend your weekends?"

The picture changes. A luxury sedan, passing through a ghetto, stops beside a black man, clad in rags. The driver, who is white, steps out in a pristine business suit, opens his wallet, and pulls out five crisp twenty dollar bills.

"I know that you can't be happy, stealing, lying, and getting drunk all of the time. Here is a little gift to let you know that Jesus loves you." He steps back into the car without waiting to hear the man's response, and speeds off.

Soon, he is at a house. He steps out of the car, bible in hand, and rings the doorbell.

The door opens, and a man says, "Nick, how are you? Come in, do come in. Have a seat. I was just thinking of you, and it is so nice of you to visit. May I interest you in a little Martini?"

Nick sits down and says, "No, Scott. I am a Christian, and we who are Christian do not do such things."

"Aah; I see." There is a sparkle in the friend's eye as he continues, "And tell me, what did Jesus do at his first miracle?"

The thick, black, leatherbound 1611 King James bible arcs through the air, coming to rest on the back of Scott's head. There is a resounding thud.

"You must learn that the life and story of Jesus are serious matters, and not to be taken as the subject of jokes."

The screen turns white as the voice glosses, "This message has been brought to you by the Association of Concerned Christians, who would like to remind you that you, too, can be different from the world, and can present a positive witness to Christ."

In the studio again, the man is sitting in a chair.

"Now comes a very special time in our program. You, our viewers, matter most to us. It is your support that keeps us on the air. And I hope that you do remember to send us money; when you do, God will bless you. So keep your checks rolling, and we will be able to continue this ministry, and provide answers to your questions. I am delighted to be able to hear your phone calls. Caller number one, are you there?"

"Yes, I am, and I would like to say how great you are. I sent you fifty dollars, and someone gave me an anonymous check for five hundred! I only wish I had given you more."

"That is good to hear. God is so generous. And what is your question?"

"I was wondering what God's will is for America? And what I can do to help?"

"Thank you; that's a good question.

"America is at a time of great threat now; it is crumbling because good people are not elected to office.

"The problem would be solved if Christians would all listen to Rush Limbaugh, and then go out and vote. Remember, bad people are sent to Washington by good people who don't vote. With the right men in office, the government would stop wasting its time on things like the environment, and America would become a great and shining light, to show all the world what Christ can do.

"Caller number two?"

"I have been looking for a church to go to, and having trouble. I just moved, and used to go to a church which had nonstop stories and anecdotes; the congregation was glued to the edges of their seats. Here, most of the services are either boring or have something which lasts way too long. I have found a few churches whose services I generally enjoy—the people really sing the songs—but there are just too many things that aren't amusing. For starters, the sermons make me uncomfortable, and for another, they have a very boring time of silent meditation, and this weird mysticism about 'kiss of peace' and something to do with bread and wine. Do you have any advice for me?"

"Yes, I do. First of all, what really matters is that you have Jesus in your heart. Then you and God can conquer the world. Church is a peripheral; it doesn't really have anything to do with Jesus being in your heart. If you find a church that you like, go for it, but if there aren't any that you like, it's not your fault that they aren't doing their job.

"And the next caller?"

"Hello. I was wondering what the Song of Songs is about."

"The Song of Songs is an allegory of Christ's love for the Church. Various other interpretations have been suggested, but they are all far beyond the bounds of good taste, and read things into the text which would be entirely inappropriate in holy Scriptures. Next caller?"

"My people has a story. I know tales of years past, of soldiers come, of pillaging, of women ravaged, of villages razed to the ground and every living soul murdered by men who did not hesitate to wade through blood. Can you tell me what kind of religion could possibly decide that the Crusades were holy?"

The host, whose face had suddenly turned a deep shade of red, shifted slightly, and pulled at the side of his collar. After a few seconds, a somewhat less polished voice hastily states, "That would be a very good question to answer, and I really would like to, but I have lost track of time. It is now time for an important message from some of our sponsors."

The screen is suddenly filled by six dancing rabbits, singing about toilet paper.

A few minutes of commercials pass: a computer animated flash of color, speaking of the latest kind of candy; a family brought together and made happy by buying the right brand of vacuum cleaner; a specific kind of hamburger helping black and white, young and old to live together in harmony. Somewhere in there, the Energizer bunny appears; one of the people in the scene tells the rabbit that he should have appeared at some time other than the commercial breaks. Finally, the host, who has regained his composure, is on the screen again.

"Well, that's all for this week. I hope you can join us next week, as we begin a four part series on people whose lives have been changed by the Church of the Holy Television. May God bless you, and may all of your life be ever filled with endless amusement!"

Repentance, Heaven's Best-Kept Secret

Rewards that are not mercenary

We must not be troubled by unbelievers when they say that this promise of reward makes the Christian life a mercenary affair. There are different types of reward. There is the reward which has no natural connexion with the things you do to earn it, and is quite foreign to the desires that ought to accompany those things. Money is not not the natural reward of love; that is why we call a man mercenary if he marries a woman for the sake of her money. But marriage is the proper reward for a real lover, and he is not mercenary for desiring it. A general who fights well in order to get a peerage is mercenary; a general who fights for victory is not, victory being the proper reward of battle as marriage is the proper reward of love. The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation.

-C.S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory"

I would like to talk about repentance, which has rewards not just in the future but here and now. Repentance, often, or perhaps *always* for all I know, bears a hidden reward, but a reward that is invisible before it is given. Repentance lets go of something we think is essential to how we are to be—men hold on to sin because they think it

adorns them, as the *Philokalia* well knows. There may be final rewards, rewards in the next life, and it matters a great deal that we go to confession and unburden ourselves of sins, and walk away with "no further cares for the sins which you have confessed." But there is another reward that appears in the here and now, and it is nothing that is real to you until you have undergone that repentance. It is like looking forward to washing with fear, wondering if you will be scraped up in getting mud off, and in a very real sense suddenly recognizing that you had not in mind what it was like to be clean.

Let me explain by giving some examples.

Discovering the treasure of humility

The first illustration I have is not strictly speaking an example of repentance, at least not that I have seen, but might as well be.

One of the hardest statements in the Bible that I am aware of is, "In humility consider others better than yourself" (Phil 2:3). It's a slap in the face to most of us, *including* me. But humility is only about abasing yourself up to a point. The further you go into humility, the less it is about dethroning "me, me, me," and the more it can see the beauty of others.

If it seems a sharp blow to in humility consider others better than yourself, let me ask you this: would you rather be with nobodies who are despicable, or in the company of giants? Pride closes the eyes to any beauty outside of yourself, and falsely makes them appear to have nothing worthy of attention. Humility opens the eyes to something of eternal significance in each person we meet.

There is one CEO at a place I worked who might as well have taken up the gauntlet of considering others better than himself. (I don't know about his spiritual practices as a whole; that's between him and his *shul*.) But on this point he has taken up the gauntlet, not of St. Paul necessarily, but of *humility*.

This CEO showed delight and some awe in each person I saw him meet. It didn't matter if you were near the top of the org chart, or at the absolute bottom; the CEO was delighted to see you. End of discussion. And he wanted to hear how you were doing, and not in a Machiavellian sense.

Now let me ask a question: who benefitted most from his respect at work (and, I can scarcely doubt, his respect outside of work)? Is it the ambitious leader, the low-level permanent employee, the timid intern? Certainly all these people benefitted, and though it was not so flamboyantly expressed, there is a thread of deep respect running through the whole organization, and some things work smoother than any other place I've been. There are a lot of people who benefit from the CEO's humility. *But I insist that the person who benefits most from the CEO's aptitude for respect is the CEO himself.* Others may enjoy kind treatment and perhaps be inclined to more modestly follow his example. But he is in that respect at least functioning the way a person

functions optimally, or to speak less abstractly, his state puts him in the presence of people he deeply respects and delights in again and again and again. To be proud is to be turned in on yourself, and he has something better: a spiritual orientation that lets him see the genuine beauty in others. (And, to be clear, the phenomenon also plays out more quietly among the rest of the organization.) Humility opens the eyes to the beauty of others. It also has other benefits; humility is less tempted to meet bad news with wishful thinking; the CEO is, I imagine, as sincerely wrong as often as the rest of us are sincerely wrong, but my suspicion is that he is less wrong, and less often wrong, than if he were to freely opt-in to being wrong by freely indulging in wishful thinking. This is another incidental advantage to humility, and perhaps there are others. But I insist that the person who benefits most from the CEO's humility is the CEO himself. And the reward for him looking on others with delight and awe is that he is put in a condition where he meets others filled with delight and awe. If that sounds like a tautology, *it is*. The reward for his seeing others through the eyes of humility is that he sees others through the eyes of humility: the biggest reward for humility is, quite simply, humility: *virtue is its own reward*.

Now humility may express itself in self-abasement, and another powerful gauntlet is thrown down when *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* or the *Philokalia* speak of "thirsting for the cup of dishonor as if it were honor." I will not treat that at length, beyond saying that it is a mighty door and opens to blessed humility.

What I do wish to point out is that pride turns you in on yourself, blinding you to beauty outside of you and making you fill a bag of sand with holes in satisfying your narcissism, or trying to. Humility opens you up to all the beauty around you, and if you repent of pride and despair of being able to gaze on yourself in fascination, you may be surprised by the joy of gazing on others in joy and fascination, or something better than the transient and fleeting fascination offered by narcissism.

But what if I can't find anything in a person to respect?

If you can't find anything in a person to respect, I submit that you are missing something about being human. To quote *Tales of a Magic Monastery*:

The Crystal Globe

I told the guestmaster I'd like to become a monk.

"What kind of monk?" he asked. "A real monk?"

"Yes," I said, "a real monk."

He poured a cup of wine, and said, "Here, take this."

No sooner had I drunk it than I became aware of a small crystal globe forming about me. It expanded until it included him.

Suddenly, this monk, who had seemed so commonplace, took on an astonishing beauty. I was struck dumb. I thought, "Maybe he doesn't know

how beautiful he is. Maybe I should tell him." But I really was dumb. The wine had burned out my tongue!

After a time, he made a motion for me to leave, and I gladly got up, thinking that the memory of such beauty would be well worth the loss of my tongue. Imagine my surprise when, when each person would unwittingly pass into my globe, I would see his beauty too.

Is this what it means to be a real monk? To see the beauty in others and be silent?

Plants and animals command respect, and not just in the sense articulated by green advocates. Empty space itself is itself interesting. *How?* It is empty space that is much of the study of quantum physics and superstring theory. A great many physicists have earned PhD's, and continue to research, based on the physical properties of empty space. And, more importantly, the whole of God is wholly present in any and every empty space. In that sense, empty space in Orthodox Christianity is more pregnant, more dignified, than what an atheist would consider to be everything that exists. So empty space is worth respecting. But more than that, inanimate things, rocks and such, exist on the level of empty space but fill the space: "Blessed be the Rock" lets an inanimate thing represent God. It exists; it is something rather than nothing, and for that reason it is worth respecting. Plants exist on one more layer than mere existence; they have the motion, the fire, of life inside them. And animals exist on these layers but exist more fully; they are aware of their surroundings and act. And you and I, and every person you have trouble respecting, exist on all of these layers and more: we are made in the image of God, the royal and divine image, with the potential of the angelic image and of theosis, and are all of us making an eternal choice between Heaven and Hell. Those who choose Hell represent a tragedy; but even then there is the dignity of making an eternal choice; Hitler and Stalin represent the dignity of eternal agency and making a choice between Heaven and Hell, and sadly using that choice to become an abomination that will ever abide in Hell. But they still tragically represent the grandeur of those who exist on several layers and use their free and eternal choice to eternally choose Hell. Some saint has said, "Be kind to each person you meet. Each person you meet is going through a great struggle," and all mankind, including those one struggles to respect, exist on several profound levels and are making an eternal choice of who they will permanently become. And respect is appropriate to all of us who bear the image of God, and have all of the grandeur of God-pregnant empty space, physical things, plants, animals, and a rational and spiritual and royal human existence, even if there is nothing *else* we can see in them to respect. Being appropriate to treat with respect is not something that begins when we find something good or interesting about a person: it begins long before that.

Returning from drunkennes to sobriety

In "A Pet Owner's Rules," I wrote,

God is a pet owner who has two rules, and only two rules. They are:

1. I am your owner. Enjoy freely the food and water which I have provided for your good!
2. **Don't drink out of the toilet.**

That's really it. Those are the only two rules we are expected to follow. And we still break them.

Drunkennes is drinking out of the toilet. If you ask most recovering alcoholics if the time they were drunk all the time were their most joyful, merry, halcyon days, I don't know exactly how they'd answer, if they could even keep a straight face. Far from being joyful, being drunk all the time is misery that most recovering alcoholics wouldn't wish on their worst enemies. If you are drunk all the time, you lose the ability to enjoy much of anything. Strange as it may sound, it takes sobriety to enjoy even drunkennes. Drunkennes is drinking out of the toilet.

Bondage to alcohol is suffering you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. If you reject bondage to alcohol and fight your way to sobriety with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous, the reward if you succeed is that you have rejected bondage to alcohol and fought your way to sobriety. The reward for sobriety regained is sobriety regained—and sobriety includes ways of enjoying life that are simply not an option when one is in bondage to alcohol. The virtue is its own reward.

Returning from covetousness to contentment

Advertising, in stimulating covetousness, stimulates and builds discontent. Covetousness may well enough say, "If I only get _____, then I'll be content." But that is fundamental confusion. Getting whatever _____ may be may bring momentary satisfaction, but the same spiritual muscles twisted to be discontent with what you had before, will make you become discontent with the _____ that you now think will make you happy.

What makes for contentment is learning to be content, and repenting of covetousness and being satisfied with what you have now gives the reward that is falsely sought in indulging covetousness. The reward for repenting of covetousness and

learning contentment is that you are freed from covetousness and blessed with contentment.

The virtue is the reward.

Returning from lust to chastity

Lust is the disenchantment of the entire universe; repenting of lust, like repenting of pride and occult-like escapism, opens one's eyes to beauty one cannot see. Lust greatly hinders the ability to appreciate and enjoy things; repentance from lust is occasion for the slow re-awakening of the eyes to everything that lust cannot see—which is a lot.

Returning from contraception to how God built marriages to work

I had a bit of a hesitation in including contraception, because in Orthodoxy "everybody knows" that such things as drunkenness are real sins, while "everybody knows" that contraception is debatable, and probably OK if one gets a blessing etc. And here what "everybody knows" is out-and-out wrong.

The Fathers universally condemn contraception, and the first edition of K.T. Ware's *The Orthodox Church* said point-blank, "The Orthodox Church forbids artificial methods of contraception," but subsequent versions moved further and further to permissiveness. But it is not the Orthodox Church that has changed her mind; it is only certain salad bar theology today that wishfully tries to believe that the Orthodox Church says contraception can be permitted.

St. John Chrysostom calls contraception point-blank "worse than murder," and counsels parents to leave their children brothers and sisters, and not mere things, as an inheritance. The Blessed Augustine blasts what is today called "natural family planning," and should be called "contraceptive timing", saying that the heretics who practice what is today called "periodic continence" to frustrate the fertility of sex thereby forbid marriage, earning the searing rebuke about forbidding marriage in 1 Tim 4:1-5, and says that where there is contraception, there is no wife, only a mistress. St. Maximus Confessor describes sex as being wrong when it is done for some other purpose than making a baby. In my researches, I have yet to hear of any Christian teacher or canonized saint from the first millennium stating or allowing that any form of contraception is permitted in any form. For that matter, I have yet to hear of any of the Reformation offering anything but condemnation to the sin of contraception.

Biologically speaking, the beginning, middle, and end of the purpose of sex is procreation. Sex is not intended merely for pleasure, but each pleasure, such as that of eating (for which we have made Splenda), exists to continue the species, whether through procreation or preserving individuals by nourishing their bodies with food. But I wish to state something more than just the condemnations of contraception, because the condemnations are the guardian of something basically human.

When I was studying in the Bronx, I was bombarded by posters from Planned Parenthood, which in their most forceful forms said, "Take *control* of your life!" And in general I am suspicious about the final honesty of advertising, but in this context the advertisement could hardly be more candid. Planned Parenthood's marketing proposition is that you can enjoy the pleasure of sex, perhaps increasingly overclocked by Viagra and ED drugs, while only having children when you individually opt-in, and retain your life in control as a pleasure-seeker. And that goes for Orthodox Christians as much as everyone else: perhaps abortion is out, but contraception, accidents excluded, is how people can pursue the pleasure of sex without the drag of unintended children.

But, before looking at monasticism, let me say that part of growing to full human stature is not being a permanent pleasure-seeker, and not being in control of oneself. In monasticism this is partly through things such as monastic obedience, an absolute obedience which frees monk or nun from fulfilling self-will. In marriage this comes from having children beyond the point where you can have control as a pleasure-seeker. In that sense disconnecting sex from making babies is in marriage what optional obedience would be for monasticism. It is easier, it is more palatable, and it all but neutralizes the whole point.

The benefit of repenting of contraception is not that God preserves pleasure-seeking. The benefit of repenting of contraception is that you grow to transcend yourself, and marriage reaches its full stature just as obedience to a spiritual physician helps monastics reach full human stature. Marriage and monasticism are different in many ways, and today I think marriage should be recognizing as having some of the status traditionally seen in monasticism. But the point of being an adult is to grow up, to grow by a crown of thorns, to transcend oneself, whether by marriage or by monasticism. The means may be very different, but the goal is self-transcendence, and the marketing proposition of contraception is to short-circuit that hard lesson and allow the adult to remain a sexually active pleasure seeker who does not grow any higher. And this is part of why I wince when I find people I know telling of their contraception; it is something of a missed opportunity, where people have marriage but do not use it to their full stature, opting instead for an "a la carte" version of marriage that is the equivalent of a "monasticism" that allows veto over obedience.

Returning from Gnosticism and escape to the here and now

When I read one title on Gnosticism, I was pulled up short by one passage. It described Gnosticism not as a set of ideas or hinging on ideas (it can be connected with many ideas), but on a mood, and more specifically that of despair. I was quite surprised by that because the appeal of Gnosticism is something enticing, something "sexy," of a sweet forbidden escape. But that is only an enticing bait if one wants escape because one has despair about the here and now that God has provided us.

Monks in the desert were perennially warned about escaping the here and now; it is tied to what was, and is, called the "demon of noonday." And a great many things today are laced with that sweetly-coated poison. It is not just gnosticism, which I shouldn't have researched, or the occult, or "metaphysics" in the occult sense, or Harry Potter, or *The Chronicles of Narnia*. And yes, I did say, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It is the story of people brought out of the everyday world into another world, and that is a classic bait, and one that is far from exhausted from the short list here.

The reward for rejecting the temptation to escape from the here and now is the discovery of the here and now as something one does not need to escape from. At an advanced level, one discovers that paradise is present wherever saints are; that is why crude settings at a monastery are genuinely sweeter than more luxurious settings where Mammon is worshiped. But, as in giving up pride, giving up escape sets the stage to enjoy what you wanted to escape from. Before you give it up, what you want is something that almost by definition is something you cannot have: whatever enters the here and now becomes one more dreary fixture of the here and now, maybe not instantly, but at least eventually. But like humility which opens the eyes of others pride cannot see, repenting of escapism in any form is rewarded by finding that one is in God's good Creation and escape is in fact *not* the best one can hope for: one hopes for engagement in worship of God, and that is what one is rewarded with. The reward for repenting and accepting virtue is that one steps out of escape and accepts virtue: the virtue is its own reward.

Moving on from grudges to forgiveness

Forgiveness is tied for some of us to repentance of unforgiveness. Perhaps some people forgive easily and quickly, or at least quickly. But when you do not forgive, or do not yet forgive, it seems falsely like you have something over the other person, and it seems like a treasure to hold on to. But it is no treasure. It is a piece of Hell: nursing a grudge is drinking poison and hoping it will hurt the other person.

Repentance is stepping out of Hell, and forgiveness is stepping outside of the moment of pain and moving on to other things that do not hurt. It is not easy; it is incredibly hard for some of us; but it is the first step in a journey of healing. And the reward is simply that we step out of the moment of hurt, back in the past, and start to leave the hurt behind.

...and being blindsided by reward

Some people speak of repentance as unconditional surrender, and it is in fact unconditional surrender. My godfather spoke of repentance as the most terrifying thing a person can experience, because God demands a blank cheque of us, and does not tell us how much he will expect.

But when, and only when, we have made that surrender, we are blindsided by rewards. God may give other rewards too; but he gives rewards. In repentance you realize, "I was holding on to a piece of Hell!" And you let go of Hell and grasp something much better!

Repentance is seen in Orthodoxy as awakening, and the reward is part of the awakening.

Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. To those who repent, a reward is promised!

Virtue is its own reward. And it is also the reward of repentance.

Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near!

The Retortion Principle

In a mailing list, I wrote of the list's beloved and missed founder, Graham Clinton:

I am in the process of remastering my paperback books, and came across the article at [A Strange Archaeological Find].

You can say that it's a work of art, but the reason I'm posting this is because after writing it, with repeated allegations of ironic hypocrisy, and asked him permission to post the whole work (including the posting of his that I replied to), he said, "I don't want toadies." In other words, he forcefully put something he really meant, and then responded majestically to a work picking his work apart from bit to bit.

I miss that.

The basic principle I was appealing might be called "the retortion principle" or "the self-referential incoherence principle." This principle is a theoretically modest principle, without the messianic fantasies of other winnowing forks, but it is pronounced in its effect and what it can winnow.

The now-unpopular "verification principle" says that we should only accept is verifiable from empirical data or by bare logic. And if we follow retortion, we find that the principle calls for its own rejection. It is, after something like a century, something we have no known way to verify apart from its standards.

If I may provide a pair of fictitious examples, compare the following two statements a Christian might make:

1. Everything we say should be documented to a particular Bible literal chapter and verse citation.

And:

2. Everything we say should be documented to a particular Bible literal chapter and verse citation (1 Cor 4:6).

There is a big difference between these two. The second example may or may not be true and it may or may not be a good and responsible analysis. I do not affirm its truth. But it does not disqualify *itself*.

By contrast, the first disqualifies itself immediately and without any need to check any external reference.

And I have seen many, many things that fail this winnowing fork, modest and limited as it may appear to be.

To provide one example, let me dismiss a couple of distractions for my purposes here, before showing an example C.S. Lewis seemed to be alarmed that others had so much difficulty seeing.

1. *First objection not really analyzed here:* The theory of evolution, which is no longer a theory of *evolution*, has new features developing in geological eyeblinks in ways that make no statistical sense that is apparently reconcilable to the fossil records. Once evolutionists mocked a "God of the gaps," where God lives in the areas unilluminated by present science. Now we have a "mechanism of producing new life forms of the gaps," that seem to find the generation of new life-forms only in the gaps of our understanding of the fossil record.
2. *Second objection not really analyzed here:* Some life-forms show mechanisms that are at least partly irreducible in their complexity, and it does not make sense statistically to assert that the basic Darwinian mechanism produces irreducibly complex biological mechanisms.

I do not ask you to avoid either objection; speaking as a mathematician, none of the people who have tried to convince me of today's "theory of evolution" have found a way to assert their claims in a way that is statistically believable. However, I am

mentioning these to ask that they be put aside as irrelevant to C.S. Lewis's concern with any form of Darwinian evolution.

C.S. Lewis's concern is essentially that if, as common biology implies, our thoughts and emotions and such all boil down to the biochemical, then we have reason to assert we have brains good enough to find food, *but not reason to assert that we have brains good enough to find out the theory of evolution*. A biological reaction is not, in and of itself, true. A biological reaction is not, in and of itself, false. A biological reaction is a biological reaction that is mistakenly classified as a sort of thing that can be "true" or "false." Romantic love is just biochemical, and the same razor that slices through romantic love cuts itself on the backswing. *The explanation explains away all explanation, including itself*.

This is to me, a subtle and harder-to-see case of the same principle of retortion, that we should reject blades that cut themselves off in the backswing. The verification principle is self-referentially incoherent. In regards to postmodernism, neat analysis may be easier once postmodernism has been dead for centuries, but it has been commented broadly that relativism is always relativism for others' principles, not one's own. In a footnote, C.S. Lewis's discussion of "The Green Book" in *The Abolition of Man*, discusses the authors' own values and assumptions, documented by repeated quotes, as being just what was fashionable in certain social circles at a particular time. The authors have cut off values and assumptions, and this in principle and not just practice, but they are free to let assertion of those opinions concretely trump the principle they have asserted, which cuts up all values into meaninglessness.

In a philosophical theology class, I mentioned some argument of retortion, and the professor commented that thesis are often known to use retortion. He did not say exactly why that may be, but one possible reason, perhaps tacit, is a gentlemen's agreement that people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. This leaves at least some theists free to throw stones, because some theists themselves live in thick-walled steel fortresses, at least as far as retortion is concerned. Right or wrong as theism may be, you do not need to contradict yourself from the start if you are to believe in the Christian God. You do need to contradict yourself from the start to be a materialist, because if materialism is true, no human biochemical state can in principle ever be true, *and that includes belief in materialism*.

I mention as possible a gentleman's agreement; I wish to go further and say that people with self-referentially incoherent beliefs have a vested interest in not having self-referential incoherence be the sort of thing one brings up in polite company. It is attractive to have a sweeping principle that cuts through all nonsense to a core of real, genuine truth, and there is something very grand in sentiment in saying we should only believe what is demonstrated from sensory data (no comments from the peanut gallery about how we believe in an external world that extends beyond a solipsistic self, please),

or logic itself. That sounds grand, striking, strong. Meanwhile, asking "Does it make a special exception in its own case?" is a much humbler-sounding question, not striking, not grand, but nonetheless a useful winnowing fork.

I would not make this argument central to any theism, and not to my own. I am Eastern Orthodox, and the Orthodox Way is much more about debugging one's own vices than debugging poor philosophy. But I would propose, as a footnote deeply buried in the main text, that we might not be justified as adulating something so grand as the verification principle, but in apologetics and engagement with people who believe differently, this footnote might be worth looking up.

Revelation and Our Singularity

My seminary has Holy Trinity Monastery's (of what jurisdiction I do not know) *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament*, five-star-reviewed on Amazon (a lone dissenter gave only four stars), and I decided in prayer to read the commentary on the Book of Revelation, which was translated by Fr. Seraphim and published by his St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood.

It helped, in part, to help me see why Fr. Seraphim is so respected in some quarters, and it does not strike me, as do other translations from the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, as being laced with an occult dimension or TMI that monks should normally flee from exposing to laity. It was, overall, a good and lucid translation of a classic commentary, but... I'm a little bit "not surprised" that the translation of Vladyka's commentary on Revelation was the one translation that appears to be Fr. Seraphim's doing. *It has certain fingerprints*. And at risk of irony as someone who dipped into the beginning of the commentary and then honed in on Revelation, it might gently be pointed out that Revelation is the one book of the New Testament that is intentionally not read in Orthodox services.

Among the positive points that may be mentioned, in a text that Fr. Seraphim chose to translate and that bears the Brotherhood's imprint, are that Revelation needs to be interpreted with extreme caution, and that responsible interpretation is layered. For instance, without any pretension of a single, exhaustive exegesis, he notes,

9:7-10 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

This description of the monstrous locusts causes some commentators to think that these locusts are nothing else than an allegorical description of human passions. Each of such passions, when it reaches a certain limit, has all the signs of these monstrous locusts. In describing the coming day of the Lord, the holy prophet Joel describes also the appearance before it of destroyers who in part remind one of these locusts.

I suppose that by these locusts one should likely understand the evil demons who have prepared themselves for battle with us, and as signs of victory, wear crowns when we submit to them as having received an evil victory through pleasure. The hair of women [in cultures where women covered their hairs, out of modesty—CJSH] testifies of the demons' love of pleasure and arousal to fornication; the teeth of lions indicate their hardheartedness; their tails, which are likened to those of scorpions indicate the consequences of sins, which produce the death of the soul, for *sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death* (Jas 1:15). (St. Andrew, Chapter 26)

But then he goes on:

Contemporary commentators, not without a certain reasonableness, find a kinship of these locusts with airplanes and their bombing attack.

This notes a similarity with admitted caution; Fr. Seraphim's translation earlier quotes the reference to hail, and earlier says, without such restraint, "Does this not refer to an aerial bombardment with its destructive and incendiary bombs," and follows with "Some people see also in this frightful mounted army tanks which spurt forth fire."

What is at issue here? It has been said, "Nothing is as dated as the future." And the text, should future scholars wish to date it, could date this text fairly closely by what technology it sees and what it has no hint of.

There is a counterbalance to "Nothing is as dated as the future." *Things fade in.* Prophecy collapses time without sharply distinguishing similar events that occur at different period, and when oca.org/saints, before the prophecies of St. Nilus, the party that posted St. Nilus's story wrote:

Saint Nilus has left a remarkably accurate prophecy concerning the state of the Church in the mid-twentieth century, and a description of the people of that time. Among the inventions he predicted are the telephone, airplane, and submarine. He also warned that people's minds would be clouded by carnal passions, "and dishonor and lawlessness will grow stronger." Men would not be distinguishable from women because of their "shamelessness of dress and style of hair." Saint Nilus lamented that Christian pastors, bishops and priests, would become vain men, and that the morals and traditions of the Church would change. Few pious and God-fearing pastors would remain, and many people would stray from the right path because no one would instruct them.

The person who assessed the text as referring to the mid-twentieth century was in fact not quoting a timeline given by St. Nilus but giving a gloss by the presumably mid-twentieth century author of his life, and St. Nilus did not in fact give any timeline or date that my historical sensitivities could recognize. I have read his prophecies, the real ones that tell what the wording of the Mark of the Beast will be, a point I have never seen on the urban legend channel. But things are fading in. The original life posted referred to the "radio," not the "telephone." As far as men being indistinguishable from women, we have far eclipsed the summary of the prophecy above, which has no concept of widespread sex-change attempts. As far as passions go, we now have a sewer's worth of Internet porn. The prophecy could apply as much to scuba diving even better than submarines, but the oca.org/saints wording has not been changed. The prophecies stated that wisdom would be found that would let men speak in one place and be heard across the world, a prediction which has faded in in the radio, then also the telephone, then also the Zoom chat. What next? Who knows if haptics might make a "remote touch" that offers some ghastly and obscene parody of a mother touching her baby, remotely and from a phone? As far as the morals and tradition of the Church, *contraception has transformed into being broadly seen as a legitimate option to Orthodox*. Examples could easily be multiplied, but I think it would be better to recognize the singularity we live in, a singularity that is unfolding on many dimensions (the gender rainbow, the river of blood from black-on-black murders ever since "Black Lives Matter" took to the forefront (could we please reverse course and go for "All Black Lives Matter?"), a singularity following a century that with artists like Picasso radically

transforming artistic conventions that a historian should regard as being like an eyeblink. Now changes are continuing to roll out, at an accelerating pace in a singularity. In a matter of weeks, models who were not half-starved began to be rolled out. Politically correct pictures of people usually did not show white people alone; they included a person of color. Now a further installment has been made: some pictures have a woman wearing Muslim hajibs, and increasingly common are wheelchairs to include people with disabilities (please note that most disabilities, including mine, do not have people using a wheelchair). And dominoes are falling: not only BLM, which seems to always and only be in reference to blacks needlessly killed by white police and by white police alone, but Islam's surge (with atheislam in which the West accepts under an iron yoke what it spurned under a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light), the cyber-quarantine, vaccines that will be socially mandated, transgender being in truth a prominent and well-integrated addition to what was once really just mostly "LGB", with schoolchildren being told "There's no right or wrong age to fall in love" (one archpriest called a spade a spade and said, "Putting the P in LGBTQP+"), and so on.

("Singularity" is intended by analogy to what the term means in physics. Gravity in physics has been compared to weighted balls moving on a level, stretched-out rubber sheet. Heavier balls stretch the fabric more than light balls, and they tend to draw each other in. They stretch the fabric, but don't break it. A black hole is when something stretches the fabric so singularly that the fabric of space folds in on itself, and you get potential wormholes etc. The difference between regular gravity and a singularity is loosely the difference between stretching the sheet by your weight on the one hand, and on the other hand ripping a hole in it.)

Furthermore, if I may offer what may seem an overly fine distinction, I think that matching up current events to details of Revelation is best avoided, but understanding that we are in a singularity and understanding that similarity may have value.

I had conversations with an adviser who really should have known better, who asked me, in asking if I was meeting basic duty, "Do you make allowances for greater ignorance in the past?" I answered:

I don't make allowances for greater ignorance in the past. Allowances for different ignorance in the past are more negotiable. And I would quote General Omar Bradley: "We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount."

I don't want to give an uncritical endorsement of the "Nature Connection" movement, as it seemed as I went through the eight shields thinking always, "This is overall good but I'm holding my nose at the spot we are in now," and eventually "I *don't* need Coyote as a totem."

However, any serious attempt to hear out nature connection, even as literature one does not give more than a willing suspension of disbelief, is that we have lost things that were known to past generations, and that surviving hunter-gatherers have an incredible richness in sensitivity to their surroundings and layers of patterns suburbanites can miss. And the advisor, in my opinion, had read too many ancient texts, and in the original, to have legitimate innocence in seeing the difference in knowledge as ancient Aramaic texts fail to reflect the victories of the Scientific Revolution.

I might briefly comment on the singularity we are in:

Recorded history does not really date past ten thousand years. The non-Neanderthal subspecies all living humans belong to dates back to perhaps forty times that length, and our genus dates back to two or four hundred times that length. Less than one percent of all humans who have ever lived have ever seen a written/printed word, let alone mass produced technology even on par with a pencil or knife.

I might comment briefly, if perhaps only to Jerry Root and other C.S. Lewis fans, that C.S. Lewis raised an objection to standard evolution that was a form of what is called self-referential incoherence. If evolution is true, then it explains why we have good enough brains to find food, avoid being eaten, and produce offspring... but not why we would have good enough brains to put together a true theory of evolution. Knowledge of evolution is no more than a biochemical reaction as romantic love is no more than a biochemical reaction, and it reflects philosophical confusion of a major order to say it is even theoretically possible that our theory of evolution could be true. This has been answered in part with a suggestion that evolution would select for brains that could find things that were true, but if that is the case, assuming evolution is true, it is an extremely parochial elite, less than 2% of the age of civilization and less than .0001% of the time people have been around that evolution has given anyone the kind of brains that evolution selects for. In my opinion that response to an objection shows serious philosophical muddle. And, incidentally, I believe that Fr. Seraphim was right, at least as regards popular culture, that evolution is not doing the job of a scientific theory, but the job of philosophy that allows atheism to account for what over 99% of humans have ever lived have seen as the work of some form of spirit.

Now before getting back to Fr. Seraphim, let me get back to my advisor. Elsewhere in our discussion, he hypothetically mentioned ancient prophecies of "mushroom clouds" that would "flatten cities," and benighted ancients failing to understand a reference to nuclear warfare that is neither particularly like toadstools in a forest, nor something that would make a smooth, level surface out of a city. I think I thought of, but did not mention, a suggestion that "mushroom clouds" are not the only way an ancient prophecy could describe global thermonuclear war; "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their

places" (Rev 6:14) could be read as a surprisingly straightforward ancient prophetic description of conditions of nuclear war.

And there are other comparisons that could be drawn. I intentionally don't want to belabor where tempting comparisons could be made, but the Internet and the whole locus of electronic technology could be described as fire from Heaven in "great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men," (Rev 13:13), and "With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." (Rev. 17:5), where a basic utility, a socially mandated technology, includes an endless sewer of porn if you want it, and really at least soft porn if you try to research innocent topics on YouTube. There is more I could belabor: SecondLife fascinates the public and has been called SecondWife, with stern moralists saying, "Fornicate using your OWN genitals!" And about Babylon being thrown into the sea, I believe that it will be at some point as easy to take down any technological Babylon as start a nuclear war, and that inadvertently. Read "The Damned Backswing" as written in fifteen feet high blinking neon about our stack of technologies.

(Fr. Seraphim quotes, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of this prophecy, God shall take away his share in the tree of life," and the commentary underscores that Revelation ends with "a strict warning not to distort the words of the prophecy under threat of the application of the plagues that are written in this book." I might suggest that it may be, if not exactly clear-cut wrong, at least in a gray area to add exact historical correspondences where fire and hail simply refer to aerial bombardment—or fire from Heaven (some people believe Elijah's "fire from Heaven" as being lightning), simply as neither more nor less than the lightning-like electricity that powers electronic gadgets. There are some points of contact, but it is not clear to me that it is right to make such a simple and complete identification of one historic detail with one text in Revelation.)

However, I present these to illustrate a temptation. *Nothing is as dated as the future.* An archaeologist of the future, if the Lord tarries (a point on which I am unclear and perhaps must be unclear), who found this article as somehow surviving the Digital Dark Ages and/or World War III, could closely date this article based on the major technologies I call out and the major technologies I don't show a hint of imagining. I wrote, *Recognize that it will be easier to get the people out of the cyber-quarantine than to get the cyber-quarantine, our new home, out of the people.* We have already with our Zoom chats laid practical foundations for George Orwell's 1984.

(And I might briefly state that I believe the examples I gave, if there is far future history to assess this article, will be much more dated than Einstein's simple prediction: "I know not what weapons World War III will be fought with, but World War IV will be

fought with sticks and stones." That kind of statement tells scarcely less but is far less dated.)

And I would like to state now a cardinal point:

I would be very careful about recognizing prophecies fulfilled in Revelation, but I would be much faster to observe ways in which we live within a singularity, *and that is a singularity on par with what is called a singularity in modern physics when a black hole is formed.*

There was a classic set of AT&T ads, dated to 1993, with the classic AT&T Death Star logo, looking like a dark vintage science fiction movie:

[See commercial online at tinyurl.com/you-will-and-the-company.]

And on a humor newsgroup someone followed up with:

Have you ever received an automated sales pitch,
while you were still in your pajamas?

Have you ever had thousands of calls all over
the world charged to your stolen account number?

Have you ever had your paycheck deleted
by faceless intruders from across the globe?

Have you ever had an employer know more about your
whereabouts and activities than your spouse?

Have you ever been snuffed to dust by a
satellite laser while lying on the beach?

YOU
WILL

And the company that will bring this to you
is AT&T

There was one thing that AT&T wasn't straightforward about: *No* technology is permanently exotic.

The AT&T commercial portrays a world of wonder. However, "YOU WILL" is not especially wondrous to those of us living in that dark science fiction reality. We do not wonder at electronic toll collection; we do not wonder at being able to access webpages on another continent. *No technology is permanently exotic, and we can obtain momentary relief by upgrading to the newest and hottest gadget, but then, alcoholics can obtain momentary relief of the living Hell of alcoholism by getting really drunk. The short-term fix does not work in the long run, and is in fact counterproductive.* As far as (anti-)social media go, we have delivered the equivalent of a tofu virtual chicken in every pot. *And tofu does not just feel and taste gross; it is nutritionally an absolutely terrible surrogate for real, honest animal protein.* And even the parody left out one point in retrospect: "Have you ever been drained at compulsively checking your phone at least a hundred times a day? YOU WILL, and the companies that will bring it to you include AT&T. *T."

A Bookshelf for Our Day

Let me give a few titles that I would strongly recommend reading, preferably in paper (kids, go ask your great-grandparents):

Francis Oakley, *The Medieval Experience: Foundations of Western Cultural Singularity*

I'm going to open this list with a dud. I am, or at least have been, a medievalist at heart; one of my books is a take on Arthurian legend, *The Sign of the Grail*, although I have since done something that is overdue. I have backed away from Arthurian legend as however enchanting it may seem if you don't know it, not being particularly edifying or profitable to explore.

It has been said that the singularity we live in now is the fruit of what developed in the Middle Ages. However, *The Medieval Experience* left me completely underwhelmed, and furthermore the more background knowledge I had of an area, the more hollow a failure to walk in another person's shoes the text appeared to be.

In the last real chapter, about precursors to feminism, the author quotes a non-medievalist Ibsen in words I wish to repeat in gory detail:

HELMER: To forsake your home, your husband, and your children! And you don't consider what the world will say.

NORA: I can pay no heed to that. I only know that I must do it.

"The Good Parts"

HELMER: This is monstrous! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

NORA: What do you consider my holiest duties?

HELMER: Do I need to tell you that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

NORA: I have other duties equally sacred.

HELMER: Impossible! What duties do you mean?

NORA: My duties towards myself.

HELMER: Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

NORA: That I no longer believe. I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are—or at least that I should try to become one.

It is a sign of feminism's hegemony that at least some women, despite every effort to want a career, ask "What is wrong with me?" because after all feminist direction they have received, they still can't dislodge a fundamental desire to get married and have kids. This last major chapter in *The Medieval Experience* falls squarely in the "She shall be saved *from* childbearing" camp, and all accounts of the good and/or improving state of women in the Middle Ages describes precursors to feminism's desire that a woman not be a homemaker. It doesn't just say that a woman should have other options besides being homemakers; it is that precursors to the good estate of women are always in terms of dislodging women from the role of wife and mother no matter how much women should want to be homemakers. And on this count, not a word of the book's account of proto-feminist tendencies shows the slightest acknowledgment and respect for some women wanting to be wives and mothers.

This book represents to me a missed opportunity. And for a book copyrighted in 1974, it doesn't seem to show the empathic understanding for today's singularity that it might, alongside failing to walk in a medieval mom's shoes. The original copyright year is the same year as Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the **Elimination** of Television*, and Mander's title remains salient several decades later and after profound increases in technology, but *The Medieval*

Experience is as a whole forgettable and gives remarkably little insight into the medieval experience as foundations of Western cultural singularity.

C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*

This book is a little bit more of a near miss.

I do not count it as a strike against this book that it takes some effort to appreciate; I am more than willing to recommend a book that will challenge its readers. But nonetheless, I see one or two major strikes against the book. Quite simply, it leads the reader to covet magic and many of its most tantalizing passages tantalize with magic from Atlantis. Furthermore, the character of Merlin is singularly riveting. One definition that has been used to describe the difference between a flat and a rounded character is, "A rounded character believably surprises the reader." Merlin comes awfully close to delivering nothing but believable surprises. And even if Ransom sharply limits Merlin's initiative, Merlin's presence is a problem. And I say that as someone who bore the nickname "Merlin" in high school.

However, this book is valuable in offering a sort of literary "YOU WILL" commercials, which admittedly did not portray how we are glued to mobile devices. The heroes are a delight to read about; the villains are more of a chore to read about, and the banality of evil comes through loud and clear. Furthermore, it is a description of a singularity, and on that point it is the closest work of fiction I know to a fictionalized telling of the singularity we are in.

On that score, *That Hideous Strength* is well worth the effort to appreciate.

Philip Sherrard, *The Rape of Man and Nature: An Enquiry into the Origins and Consequences of Modern Science*

A couple of comments about the author of this book. First, he is an important figure in the history of English-speaking Orthodoxy and did major work rendering the *Philokalia* in English. Second, he is a hypocrite and an old rogue. He has blasted the Western musical tradition, which an Orthodox might legitimately do, but one friend came to visit him and found him blasting out Wagner's opera, and that's Wagner's opera as in "Wagner's opera is not as bad as it sounds." I would also comment on how he writes.

The Rape of Man and Nature deals in caricatures and not the written equivalent of photorealism. However, this has usefulness if it is taken as caricatures and not a literal account of facts. It is a finding in psychology that people recognize someone more readily from a caricature than from a photograph,

and the caricature artist's job is to take the most striking and salient features in e.g. someone's face, and then portray them in exaggeration that yields a striking clarity. And if Sherrard is a caricature artist in *The Rape of Man and Nature*, he is an excellent caricature artist.

This book really is a close "near miss," and I would readily recommend it for people who want a little bit of a feel of what was lost in the Scientific Revolution, and of what developments contributing to our ongoing singularity lost alongside scientific and technical gains.

Jean-Claude Larchet, *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul*

I've mentioned other titles as near misses. This one doesn't just score a three point basket; it is nothing but net. (In more ways than one.)

I'm not going to try to list everything that is worth reading in this title. Buy it and read it yesterday.

C.J.S. Hayward, *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*

I'm not going to write at length about why I believe my work is relevant, but my suspicion is that this book and not the overlapping *The Best of Jonathan's Corner* will be my most lasting contribution, if (of course) the Lord tarries.

At the time of its writing, it has two stars on Amazon, two reviews, and no customer ratings. I would ask the interested reader to read what the Midwest Book Review has to say about it.

Looking back at C.S. Lewis

"These days of final apostasy" is not a new phrase; St. John Chrysostom in fact said that the world was breaking apart and coming to an end, but while antiquity ended, the world has continued.

The world has continued, and C.S. Lewis, on the eve of World War II, famously addressed students, "Life has never been normal. Humanity has always been on a precipice," although it may be that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night because the end of the world has been so insistently predicted over the ages that no one takes the message seriously.

I think it is worth understanding to what extent we live in a singularity, and we have multiple things that could be apocalyptic events: apart from the obvious threat of global thermonuclear war in a world where each city and each major university has a hydrogen bomb aimed at it, the Internet could collapse like an increasingly brittle house of cards, and take the economy down with it. Or things could continue to change and new societal vulnerabilities could develop. The pace of change has been accelerating,

and it might well continue accelerating until there is a step that is *sui generis*, on par with C.S. Lewis in the nonfiction fraternal twin to *That Hideous Strength: The Abolition of Man*, in which Lewis describes the final step in "man's victory over nature:"

The wresting of powers *from* Nature is also the surrendering of things *to* Nature...

Man's conquest of Nature, if the dreams of some scientific planners are realized, means the rule of a few hundreds of men over billions upon billions of men. There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows the triumphal car...

Man's conquest of Nature turns out, in the moment of its consummation, to be Nature's conquest of Man. Every victory we seemed to win has led us, step by step, to this conclusion. All Nature's apparent reverses have been but tactical withdrawals. We thought we were beating her back when she was luring us on. What looked to us like hands held up in surrender was really the opening of arms to enfold us for ever.

I do not know how the world will end, or whether the apocalypse will turn out to be anything like any of the possibilities I mentioned. There has already passed a moment when a nuclear power ordered a military officer to launch global thermonuclear war. That was during the Cuban missile crisis, and all of us are alive today only in the wake of a soldier who refused to obey an unconditional order. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ says, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" God provided a way out of global thermonuclear war then, and he may shelter us, at least for a time, from a meltdown of the Internet. We live and die as God allows, and he may sustain us still. He may give us more to repent. Since Christ's First Coming, his Second Coming has always been imminent, and part of what I omitted from C.S. Lewis's passage above is a reality that has not literally been fulfilled even when *That Hideous Strength's* Pragmatometer is live in what is fed to us by the Internet:

The final stage is come when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by an education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, has obtained full control over himself.

It is my own opinion that "a perfect applied psychology" is by definition a pipe dream, a materialist's explanation of spiritual phenomena such as is discussed in "How

to Think About Psychology: An Orthodox Look at a Secular Religion." But it is possible that Nature's final conquest of Man as described above will come without needing all-powerful eugenics, prenatal conditioning, or a perfect applied psychology. Pipe dreams have already become real. And one world government is an increasingly real possibility on more grounds than technology.

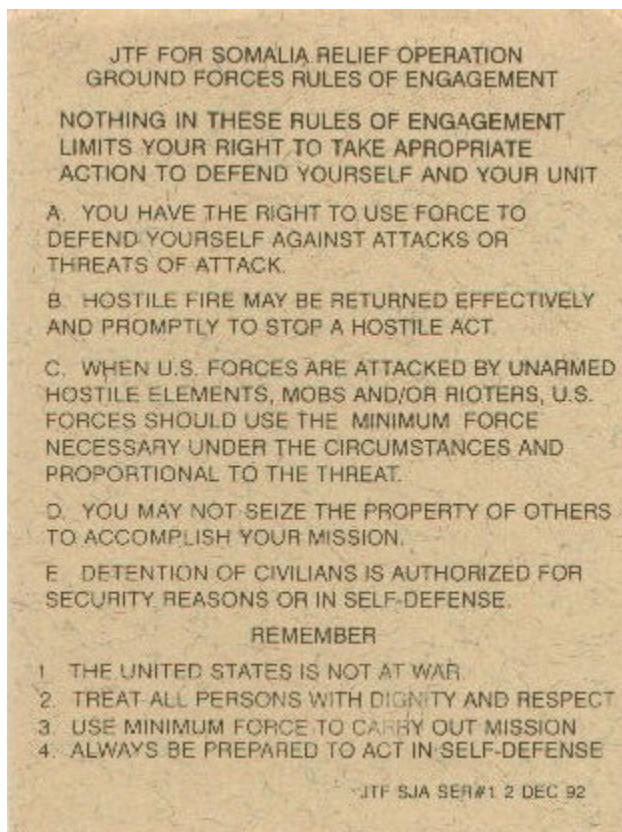
Conclusion

I have begun with an Orthodox Fr. Seraphim of Plantina and ended with a Protestant C.S. Lewis. The turn is not expected of an Orthodox author, but I have generally had an easier time with C.S. Lewis fans than those of Fr. Seraphim.

All the same, I hope to have shed some light in the process, and introduced a useful distinction between donning X-Ray goggles that let you infallibly identify historic details cryptically referred to by the details of Revelation, and recognizing and understanding that we live in a singularity very different from that of over 99.9% of humans who have ever lived.

Much Love,
Christos

Rules of Engagement



1: *Focus exclusively on God and light, and never on darkness, temptation and sin.* Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. A vacation, besides taking you somewhere exotic, puts good before your eyes: but you can do that here and now, without even needing anything exotic. Fix your gaze on what is most worthy of your attention.

2: Remember that nothing can injure the man who does not harm himself. St. Job the Much-Suffering may have suffered terribly, but there was only one thing that could do him final harm:

his own sin, and he would have been lost if he yielded to his wife's temptation, "Curse God and die." St. Job suffered terribly, and unlike us, the readers of his story, he is never told that he has served as God's champion. However, everything the Devil did added jewels to St. Job's royal and Heavenly crown.

3: Know that Satan is on a leash. *People of the Lie*, in many ways a perceptive book, argues that evil is terribly out of control, and that is understandable for a psychiatrist who faces full force a kind of evil in a profession where the very belief in a Devil is rare enough to be exotic. But God help us if that were the case; none could be saved if we were tempted as much as the devils want. The *Philokalia* talks about how, if we know what burdens a beast of burden can bear, God knows and cares all the more what we can bear. *Everything* that happens is either a blessing from God, or a temptation that has allowed for our strengthening; the concept of a temptation, rightly understood, encompasses both things that make sin look attractive, and trials and tribulations, or something where both contribute to a single nasty whole. In medieval theology that I haven't been able to trace, Satan is called God's jester, because his foolishness with us is something that God takes up in glory, and a glory that can work in us.

4: *Expect not to understand*. One author I remember said that Christ's disciples were not so much sinful as thick-headed. I would be a bit careful about saying that, unless I say that I am thick-headed, too. God said through Isaiah, *For my counsels are not as your counsels, nor are my ways as your ways, saith the Lord*. But as the heaven is distant from the earth, so is my way distant from your ways, and your thoughts from my mind. One British preacher (this doesn't work as well as with U.S. pronunciation) said that the name "Isaiah" is basically like saying, "Eyes higher!" And we are called to have our eyes higher, including in Isaiah, which has been called the Fifth Gospel and may be the most Messianic book the Old Testament offers.

To pick one example of what might be called thick-headedness for people who do not understand that "the prophet sees through a glass, darkly, while the archivist sees through a microscope, sharply," we have in retrospect that Christ gave decisively clear predictions of his death and resurrection. However, St. Mary Magdalene came to Christ's tomb for one and only one reason: to offer a last, singularly miserable service to a man dear to her, by embalming his body with aromatics. She was shocked at the empty tomb, and the only thing in her mind was disappointment that someone had seemingly stolen Christ's body and was depriving her even of that last painful service she came to offer Christ. What had actually happened was utterly beyond her reckoning, but the Truth came to her: the grave was empty, defeated, with Christ resurrected beyond all earthly triumph. Much the same is true on the road to Emmaus, when Christ was quickening his disciples all along the way, and when their eyes were finally ready to be

open to him, he vanished. Between the Resurrection and Ascension Christ was weaning his faithful to new ways of relating to him, ever beyond their initial reach. And even before then, he was trying to wean people off expectations of a political savior and an earthly king. He came to offer something fundamentally deeper than his disciples (or *we*) could look for.

I remember one couple who unhappily introduced their three-year-old boy as "an accident", and complained about how hard it was to live their lives the way they wanted with him in the picture. I wanted to ask them, "Why must you look on the means of your deification as a curse?" Having children, whether we intend what God intends, is an opportunity for self-transcendence, where people who have transcended selfishness enough to love another are now given opportunity to transcend a selfishness of two. We may see a lot of other things that violate rights we think we have, and wonder where God is in all of this, but God is present all along; some have said that he is more visibly present in hard times than times of ease. Even if hard times shock us.

5. *Love and respect others.* "Blessed is the man who loves all men equally," said St. Maximus Confessor. We are missing something if we say that some have given themselves to good deeds and some have given themselves to evil: all of us can make an eternal choice between Heaven and Hell because we are made in the image of God, and the most disfigured of us cannot completely exterminate the original beauty. All of us are constituted by the presence of God in the image. There is no shallow obligation to think the best of everyone, let alone whitewash sins. However, even when all sin is taken into account, we are members of the royal race. What sins a person may be rightly judged for are God's concern, and God has not asked our help judging anyone. What divine image, and room for divine transformation, may exist in the vilest other are ours to respect and pray for.

Children who have been taught to respect adults may be more pleasant for adults to deal with, but the point of teaching children to respect adults really is not for the sake of adults, but for the sake of children to be able to benefit from adults. Ecclesiastical title and robes also don't really exist for the wearer's sake. Calling a priest 'Father' and the connected respect helps laity towards a position where they can benefit from clergy and their role.

6. *Don't wait on living until you have it all together. You probably never will.* Abdicate from being in control of things. If there is a term for being in complete control of your life, it is probably "Hell" or "Gehenna". The Sermon on the Mount speaks at length about being as the birds of the air or the grass of the field, and we, of the royal race, are of inestimably more value than plants and animals, venerable as they may be. There is only one Life: you're in Him, or you're not, and being in self-contained control over your life even if you can achieve it is not just dubiously achievable: it is dubiously desirable because you want to be independent of the one Life. The alternative is to dance

the Great Dance, or as the Sermon on the Mount addresses our much more basic interests:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Do you think you can add one single hour to your life by taking thought? You might as well try by taking thought to work your way into being a foot taller!

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?" or, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed"? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Christ speaks and assures us of our most basic material needs. There are other and more interesting needs, the need to grow in the divine Life and be freed from domination by our passions. But Christ here highlights things on a more basic level: not only does God wish to lead us in the Great Dance, but he also knows we need food and drink and offers practical care on his terms. The one petition out of the seven petitions in the Our Father, "Give us this day our daily bread", is exaggeratedly modest, or seems such: "Hallowed be thy name" is an earth-shaking desire, as is "Forgive us our trespasses." Asking for just enough providence for today is in fact more significant than asking, "Set providence for my whole life before me now." The smallness of the request is like the Virgin's womb: it is more spacious than the Heavens because it contained One that the Heavens of Heavens cannot contain.

7. *Guard your heart.* The Fathers talked about the importance of working, and monastics have worked to support their own needs, or even made baskets that were

burned at the end of the year so that they would not be idle. In ancient times, the preferred handicraft for monastics was basketweaving; in modern times, apart from writing icons, one preferred handicraft for monastics is making incense. In both cases, it may be missing the point to say that it is menial work, and monastics humbled themselves to do menial work. Though I have tried my hand at neither craft, the simple repetitive motions involved appear to be deeply meditative, a project of choice to employ the hands while the heart is at prayer. Now monastics can and have chosen the worst that was available to them in their humility, but the constant basketweaving of the Fathers may have been a best known option to occupy the hands while drawing the heart further into prayer.

In any case, and not just for monastics, one tenth of what we do is external action, and nine tenths of the work is guarding a heart at prayer. Today's respected forms of work like computer programming may present a bigger challenge to do prayerfully than tasks like janitorial work that are looked down on, but people in either line of work should make 9/10ths their effort to be at peace and at prayer, and 1/10th the external deliverable.

Furthermore, we should beware of all temptation, which starts as a spark and end, if not stopped, as a raging fire. Love keeps no record of wrongs, and remembrance of wrong is a self-torment; we make what was painful when we went through it to be present to us all again. In this case it may be helpful to silently pray the Jesus Prayer and attend to that rather than leave things to their course and re-attend painful memories.

8. *Expect a road of pain and loss.* Fr. Thomas said, "Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath." Christ's own comment cuts deeper into *why*: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." There can and should be other things beyond temptation and loss; God is good, and it's meaningless or awfully close to meaningless to say that because God is good any evil that could possibly happen to us is harmless. However, if we "Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath" and "Do the most difficult and painful things first," and recognize that we have no rights, the very letters will begin to shimmer and change. If we recognize that we do not have rights, instead of seeing rights of ours that are violated we may begin to see graces extended to us that we have no right to expect. If we have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to our last breath, we may recognize graces contrary to these expectations. The pain and the loss are real, and we may be shocked at times by what painful things God allows us. But the journey is purifying, and the God who prunes us does so that we may bear more fruit, and with it a fuller joy.

9. *Observe Orthodox mystagogy, at least on one lesser point.* There is such a thing as a book, or a teaching, that is above one's present pay grade. Maybe it will be in

reach later; it is not in reach now. There are classic books that open with exhortations to literary secrecy; far from an author today hoping to reach as broad an audience as possible, they say "Read this but keep it in secret from the many who would not profit from it."

This is not the same point exactly, but there is a much lesser mystagogy than writing a book and asking that it be given a closed circulation. It is, as explained to me, if you know the truth, and you know that another person will reject the truth if you tell it, you hold your tongue instead of trying to argue the other person into accepting the truth. I'm not saying that we're all really emotion and arguments do not persuade; arguments can persuade. This piece is in part argument, and it is legitimately meant to persuade by reasoning about the truth. But if you are dealing with a gay rights advocate or someone who is thoroughly convinced that Islam is a religion of peace, or whatever company may join them in the future, you do not try to argue them into a truth you know they will reject. When Judgment Day comes, it will be better for the other person because they did not reject the truth. And it will also be better for you because you did not set them up for that sin. This is far from the full extent of Orthodox mystagogy; some people have advocated asking a priest or spiritual father to pick out books from them for a time, or said that they weren't ready to read a book first but came back after they had grown spiritually and then found immense profit in the book. There is another thread of mystagogy in that monastics do not parade their mystical experiences for all the world or even all the faithful to see. Mystagogy is foundational to Orthodoxy even if it is pitifully observed now, but it still applies now in that you don't try to use logical arguments to make people accept truths their hearts reject.

There is an alternative to compelling by arguing the truth: compelling by living the Truth. If we embrace a Truth who is ever so much more than right opinion, other people will pick up on it, the same as if we fully respect the image of God in another person, right or wrong. If we grow enough spiritually, people will sense something. Possibly this may create a teachable moment; possibly it won't, but it will reach people's hearts as a logical jackhammer cannot. St. Paul advises believing wives to win over unbelieving husbands without a word; but this is not an exception to an argumentative norm so much as an example that is almost supreme in character. The basic phenomenon reaches from one heart to another.

10. *Read nourishing books in keeping with the Orthodox Church's character as an oral tradition.* There is a wealth of good books at the hands of the Orthodox Church; the collection of the Fathers over the centuries is like an encyclopedia in its length, and the Bible is indispensable. None the less, the Orthodox Church is at heart an oral tradition, and for most Orthodox Christians, being patristic is not achieved by quasi-academic reading of copious books, but by being in church where the priest mediates Tradition. There is oral tradition implied by the written tradition of the Philokalia,

which is less properly a book than a library with different texts at different levels. It's not meant to be read cover to cover, although that may also be permitted; it's intended for a spiritual guide to pull selections for someone under guidance. And treat this text, too, as written property of oral tradition; use it (or not) as your priest or spiritual father guides you.

11. *Banish two thoughts, and retain two thoughts.* Abandon the thoughts, "I am a saint," and "I will be damned." Instead, think both "I am a great sinner," and "God is merciful." Repentance needs no despair; the worst of earthly sins are like a smouldering ember thrown into the ocean of God's love.

12. *In conjunction with your spiritual father, know your limits and don't try to be perfect.* If someone is harassing you, and both not responding and repeated requests to stop harassment are being answered with harassment, it's time to involve social media or email authorities, or possibly the police, or just block someone on Facebook much earlier. It may be the case that some superspiritual saint could serenely shine through the worst of the harassment, but that is not the case for you and me. We aren't there, at least not yet, and your priest or spiritual father may have very practical words about how mountains are moved here on earth.

Silence: Organic Food for the Soul

We are concerned today about our food,
and that is good:
sweet fruit and honey are truly good and better than raw sugar,
raw sugar not as bad as refined sugar,
refined sugar less wrong than corn syrup,
and corn syrup less vile than Splenda.
But whatever may be said for eating the right foods,
this is nothing compared to the diet we give our soul.

The ancient organic spiritual diet
is simple yet different in its appearances:
those who know its holy stillness
and grasp in their hearts the silence of the holy rhythm,
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,
grasp the spiritual diet by their heart,
by its heart,
by God's heart.

What treasure looks good next to it?
It is said that many would rather be rich and unhappy

than poor and happy,
stranger still than thinking riches will make you happy:
Blessed stillness is a treasure,
and next to this treasure,
gold and technology are but passing shadows,
no better to satisfy hunger than pictures of rich food,
no better to satisfy thirst than a shimmering mirage,
for like the best organic food,
a diet of stillness gives what we deeply hungered for,
but deeply missed even seeking
in our untiring quest to quench our thirst with mirages.

And we have been adept at building mirages:
anything to keep us from stillness.
Perhaps technology, SecondLife or the humble car,
perhaps romance or conversation,
perhaps philosophy or hobbies,
not always bad in themselves,
but always bad when pressed into service
to help us in our flight from silence,
which is to say,
used the only way many of us know how.

There is a mystery,
not so much hard to find as hard to want:
humble yourself and you will be lifted up,
empty yourself and you will be filled;
become still and of a quiet heart,
and you will become home to the Word.

"But my life is hard," you say,
"You might be able to afford luxuries like these,
but I can't."
Take courage.
Read the lives of the saints,
and find that stillness grows,
not on the path that is spacious and easy to walk,
but the way that is narrow and hard:
strength is not found

in ease and comfort,
but among athletes with no choice but to strive.

We believe in life before death:
we live the life of Heaven here on earth,
and those things in life that seem like Hell
are our stepping stones:
"she shall be saved in childbearing:"
from the politically incorrect Bible.
Can't women have something more equitable?
But the truth is even *more* politically incorrect.

That is how *all of us* are saved:
in suffering and in struggle,
such as God gives us,
and not when dream,
and by our power
we make our dreams come true.

Weston Price fans,
who say that an ancient diet nourishes
far better than modern foods
manipulated like plastic,
newfangled corn and sunflower oil,
gone rancid then masked by chemical wizardry,
marketed as health food in lieu of wholesome butter,
could be wrong in their words
how we need ancient nourishment and not plastic foods.

They could be wrong about our needs,
but it is a capital mistake to say,
"That may have worked in golden ages,
but we need a diet that will work
for us now in our third millenium."
If Weston Price's movement is right,
then we need the nourishment of timeless traditions,
now more than ever.
Saying "No, we need something that will work today,"
is like saying, "No, we're very sick,

we are weak and we must focus on essentials:
healthy people may visit a doctor, but not us."

But even if the food we eat matters, and matters much,
the question of what we feed our body
is dwarfed by the question of what we feed our souls,
and over the centuries
our spiritual diet has turned
from something organic and nourishing
to something that might almost be plastic:
inorganic, yet made from what spiritual leaders call rancid.

The right use of technology is in the service of spiritual wisdom,
but the attractive use of technology is to dodge spiritual wisdom,
for one current example,
cell phones and texting not only a way to connect,
but a way to dodge silence,
a way to avoid simply being present to your surroundings,
and this is toxic spiritual food.
Cell phones have good uses,
and some wise people use them,
but the marketing lure of the iPhone and Droid,
is the lure of a bottomless bag:
a bottomless bag of spiritual junk food:
portable entertainment systems,
which is to say,
portable "avoid spiritual work" systems.

Someone has said,
"Orthodoxy is not conservative:
it is radical,"
which is striking but strange politically:
if Orthodoxy is not captured by a Western understanding of conservatism,
further off the mark is it to try to capture it with any Western idea of radicalism.
but there is another sense in which it is true:
not in our design to transform the world,
but in God's design to transform us.

I thought I was a man of silence.
I avoid television, occasionally listen to music,
but never as a half-ignored backdrop.
Recently I learned,
by the grace of a God who is radical,
that I did not know the beginning of silence.

"Hesychasm," in the Orthodox term,
described by a rhythm of praying,
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,
in the Church under the authority of a good priest,
an authority for your sake and mine,
is a doorway to strip off layers of noise,
and maybe a portal to joy.
So small-looking on the outside,
and so spacious if you will step in.

Concerned about organized religion?
Eastern Orthodoxy is quite disorganized, some have said,
but we won't go into that.
Negativity about organized religion
is part of the toxic spiritual diet
it is so hard to avoid.
Some have said that people concerned about organized religion
are really concerned about someone else having authority over them.
Though I am self-taught in some things,
an author with a few letters after his name
but not even a high school course in non-academic writing,
Aristotle's words are apropos:
"He who teaches himself has a fool for a master."
There are always choices we must make for ourselves,
Orthodoxy actually having wisdom to help free us in these choices,
but trying to progress spiritually without obedience to a spiritual guide who can tell you
"No,"
is like trying to be healthier without paying attention to stress in your life, or what you
eat, or exercise.
I speak from experience:
I still trip in the light,
but I do not want to go back to how I tripped in the dark.

"Keep your eyes on Jesus,
look full in his wonderful face,
and the things of this world
will grow strangely dim
in the light of his glory and grace,"
says the cherished Protestant hymn:
but it does not say how,
and silence is how.

Do you long for honors the world bestows,
and are never satisfied with what you have?
Mirages look good,
but the place of a mirage is always outside our grasp,
something it looks like we might reach tomorrow,
not something that is open to us right now.
And it is not until we let go of the mirage we want so much
that we see right next to us
a chalice
of living water
that can quench our thirst now.

Pride, lust, anger and remembrance of wrongs, envy, wanting to use people—
all of these urge us to look away
wanting to quench our thirst on mirages
and blind our eyes
to the chalice
of living water
that we are offered,
and offered here and now.
And it isn't until you rest and taste the waters,
the living waters of the chalice that is always at hand,
that you realize how exhausting it is
to chase after mirages.

The Church prays through the Psalm,
"But I have quieted and calmed my soul,
like a child quieted at its mother's breast,
like a child that is quieted is my soul."

When a child quieted at its mother's breast,
cares melt away,
and to the soul that knows silence,
the silence of Heaven,
for Heaven itself is silent
and true silence is Heavenly,
the things of this world grow strangely dim.

Do you worry? Is it terribly hard
to get all your ducks in a row,
to get yourself to a secure place
where you have prepared for what might happen?
Or does it look like you might lose your job,
if you still have one?
The Sermon on the Mount
urges people to pray,
"Give us this day our daily bread,"
in an economy
when unlike many homeless in the U.S. today,
it was not obvious to many
where they would get their next meal.
And yet it was this Sermon on the Mount
that tells us our Heavenly Father will provide for us,
and tells us not to worry:
what we miss
if we find this a bit puzzling,
we who may have bank accounts, insurance, investments
even if they are jeopardized right now,
is that we are like a child with some clay,
trying to satisfy ourselves by making a clay horse,
with clay that never cooperates, never looks right,
and obsessed with clay that is never good enough,
we ignore and maybe fear
the finger tapping us on our shoulder
until with great trepidation we turn,
and listen to the voice say,
"Stop trying so hard. Let it go,"
and follow our father
as he gives us a warhorse.

If you have a bank account, or insurance, or investments,
you may be better at making your clay statue,
better than the people who heard the Sermon on the Mount,
but the Lord says to us as much as them,
"Let your worries be quieted
as you enter silence,"
to give us a warhorse.
And when we let go of taking on God's job,
of taking care of every aspect of our future,
we find that he gives us better than we knew to seek:
if we thirst for worldly honor to make us feel significant,
if we covet luxuries to make us feel better,
and we learn holy silence,
the things of the world grow strangely dim.

People hold on to sin because they think it adorns them.
Repentance is terrifying,
because it seems beforehand
that repentance means you will forever lose some shining part of yourself,
but when you repent,
repentance shows its true nature
as an awakening:
you realize, "I was holding on to a piece of Hell,"
and, awakened, you grasp Heaven in a new way.

Let go of the mirage of doing God's job of Providence,
by your own strength,
and let go of the mirage of getting enough money
to make you happy,
and when you give up this misshapen clay horse,
find a warhorse waiting for you:
God will provide better than you know to ask,
perhaps giving you a great spiritual gift
by showing you you can live without some things,
and this just the outer shell holding spiritual blessings
next to which billions of dollars pale in comparison.
("Who is rich? The person who is content.")
And if like me you are weak and wish you had more honor,

you may taste the living water next to which worldly honor is an elusive mirage
always shimmering, always luring, and never satisfying, at least not for long,
and ride the warhorse,
and wonder why you ever thought worldly honor would make you happy.

A saint has said,
that when you work,
seven eights of the real task
is watching the state of your heart
and only one eighth is the official task.
Proverbs likewise tells,
"Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life."
Guard your heart.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,
whosoever things are honest,
whosoever things are just,
whosoever things are pure,
whosoever things are lovely,
whosoever things are of good report;
if there be any virtue,
if there be any praise,
think of these things."
What you put before your heart matters.
Your heart will be conformed to whatever you place before it:
a good deal of your spiritual diet
is simply what you place before your mind:
mental images above all else,
"Be careful, little eyes..."

There is a distinction between
where one meets God,
and that which reasons from one thought to another:
to us today, "mind" or "intellect" is that which reasons,
but the Church has long known the heart of the intellect or mind:
where one meets God.
And the poisoning of our spiritual diet
has moved us

from knowing the mind as the heart that meets God
to growing and over-growing that which reasons,
so that it is at the heart of our lives,
in Christians as much as the atheist,
is the secular view of mind,
like psychology,
in its secular flight
from religious knowing
of who the human person is
and what is the heart of the human mind.
Learn to live out of that by which you worship:
drink living water,
because it is exhausting
to chase after mirages
in worrying and scheming
in the part of us which reasons,
that which is only the moon
made to reflect the light
of the sun,
that by which we worship,
the spiritual eye
made for a God who is Light.
"We have a sister,
whose breasts are not grown,
what shall we do for our sister
in the day when she shall be spoken for?
If she be a wall,
we will build on her a palace of silver:
and if she be a door,
we will inclose her with boards of cedar."
In your mind be a garden locked and a fountain sealed,
that which worships
not forever dispersed,
forever exhausted,
in treating that which reasons
as the heart of your mind:
learn the prayer of the mind in the heart.

The ancient organic spiritual diet is prayer, silence, fasting, liturgy, giving to the poor, tithing, reading the Bible and the Fathers and saints' lives, and many other things.

You eat it as you would eat an elephant:

one bite at a time.

Your task today is to eat one day's worth:

tomorrow's concerns are tomorrow's concerns.

The *Silicon* Rule

I have stated, in *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, a lot of theory and analysis, and I would like now to give some of what I practice myself.

Taking a second look at asking, "What would Jesus do?"

I looked down on the "What would Jesus do?" fad when it was hot, and I have never had nor wanted a pair of W.W.J.D. Christian socks; for that matter, I have never asked that question. However, now much later, I wish to offer a word in its defense.

The Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," is not just a directive from the Bible; most or all world religions at least touch on it. And it is ethically very interesting in that it is a simple and short ethical directive that sheds quite a lot of light over a very broad collection of situations. That's a feat. Furthermore, it is also a feat represented by W.W.J.D. If you read the Bible regularly at all, the question "What would Jesus do?" brings clarity to many situations.

And I would like to provide another rule.

The *Silicon* Rule

The Silicon Rule, as I propose it, is a rule for guiding technology choices:
What do Silicon Valley technology executives choose for their children?

Now "What would Jesus do?" is only meaningful if you have some picture of what Jesus was like, and "What do Silicon Valley technology executives choose for their children?" may surprise you, although a search for "humane tech" might hit paydirt.

Jean-Claude Larchet, towards the end of his must-read *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul* talks about a fashionable private school and quotes glimpses of the private lives offered to children of Silicon Valley technology executives in Steve Bilton's summary:

The Waldorf School of the Peninsula, in the heart of Silicon Valley, is rare in that it is not connected [to the Internet]. Three quarters of the pupils are children whose parents work in the area, with Google, Apple, Yahoo, or Hewlett-Packard. These people who work to develop the digital economy and propagate it into every level of society are especially glad that in this school, their offspring are completely sheltered from computers, tablets, and smartphones right up till eighth grade.

"So, your kids must love the iPad?" I asked Mr. Jobs [...]. The company's first tablet was just hitting the shelves. "They haven't used it," he told me. "We limit how much technology our kids use at home." ...

Evan Williams, a founder of Blogger, Twitter and Medium, and his wife, Sara Williams, said that in lieu of iPads, their two young boys have hundreds of books (yes, physical ones) that they can pick up and read any time.

So how do tech moms and dads determine the proper boundary for their children? In general, it is set by age.

Children under 10 seem to be most susceptible to becoming addicted, so these parents draw the line at not allowing any gadgets during the week. On weekends, there are limits of 30 minutes to 2 hours on iPad and smart-phone use. And 10- to 14-year-olds are allowed to use computers on school nights, but only for homework.

"We have a strict no screen time during the week rule for our kids," said Lesley Gold, founder and chief executive of the SutherlandGold Group, a tech media relations and analytics company. "But you have to make allowances as they get older and need a computer for school."

Some parents also forbid teenagers from using social networks, except for services like Snapchat, which deletes messages after they have been sent. This way they don't have to worry about saying something online that will haunt them later in life, one executive told me.

Although some non-tech parents I know give smartphones to children as young as 8, many who work in tech wait until their child is 14. While these teenagers can make calls and text, they are not given a data plan until 16. But there is one rule that is universal among the tech parents I polled.

"This is rule No. 1: There are no screens in the bedroom: There are no screens in the bedroom. Period. Ever," Mr. Anderson said. [...]

I never asked Mr. Jobs what his children did instead of using the gadgets he built, so I reached out to Walter Isaacson, the author of "Steve Jobs," who spent a lot of time at their home.

"Every evening Steve made a point of having dinner at the big long table in their kitchen, discussing books and history and a variety of these things," he said. "No one ever seemed to pull out an iPad or computer. The kids did not seem addicted at all to devices."

Examples could easily be multiplied, even if one is only quoting Larchet. This is, quite briefly, what Silicon Valley technology executives want for their children.

My own working model

I remember, on environmental issues, someone talking softly about how "subdue the earth" in Genesis 1 originally meant a very gentle mastery. That was everything I wanted to believe, and I'd still like it to be true, but it has been said that the Hebrew has the force of, "trample it under foot!" In the Orthodox Church's Greek Bible, the word here translated as "subdue," κατακυριω (katakurio) is the same verb that in the New Testament for how Orthodox leaders are not to relate to the rank and file, and can be translated "lord it over." κυριος (kurios) is the basic word for "lord," and the prefix κατα (kata) in at least some places gives the word significantly more force.

Should we lord it over the earth? That's one thing I think we have done disproportionately well. However, I bring this up for a reason. I believe we can, should, and perhaps need to *lord it over technology*, and the basis for our interactions, above the assumed life in the Church and frequent reception of sacraments, is the bedrock to how we should relate to technology. We should reject most use of technology along

marketing positions. Possibly I will be under the authority of an abbot and be directed not to engage in electronic communication at all. For now, I have the usual technologies, apart from any working smartwatch.

One way I have tried to explain my basic attitude is as follows. Most of us, most of the time, should not be calling 911. And my understanding is that you can get in trouble with the law without having what the law considers appropriate justification; you don't call 911 because you're bored and you want someone to talk to. However, the *single most important number* you can call is 911; if you are in a medical emergency or some other major problem, being able to call 911 can be a matter of life and death.

My prescription is, in caricature, carry a smartphone but only use it when you need to call 911.

Apart from the smartphone, I try to avoid TV, movies, radio and so on. Michael in *Stranger in a Strange Land* said that he had questions about what he saw on the "g**d**-noisy-box", and I really don't think I'm losing out by not being involved in them. Television has over the years grown a heavy dose of MSG; watching even a clean movie hits me like a stiff drink. Silence is something precious, and it has been called the language of the world to come.

On my smartphone, I've watched maybe a couple of dozen movies and have nothing loaded for it as an iPod. I have no games, or at least none for my own use, nor amusement apps. Its use is governed by silence, which means in large measure that it is used for logistic purposes and not used when I do not have a logistical reason to use it. I only really use part or what appears on my home screen: Gmail, Calendar, Camera, Maps, Weather, Notes, App Store, Settings, Termius (software for IT workers), GasBuddy, PNC, Kindle, Flashlight, Pedometer, Libby, Translate, FluentU (for language learning), DuckDuckGo (a privacy-enhanced web browser), Phone, mSecure (a password manager), and Text. And of those, I do not really use Camera, Weather, Notes, or Kindle.

This may sound very ascetic, but it is a spiritual equivalent of good physical health. Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the ELIMINATION of Television* looks about artificial unusuality, about how we connect with the kind of stimulation we receive, and how children not stimulated by television can be stimulated by the natural world. My seemingly austere use of my phone gives me luxuries that would have been unimaginable to Emperors and Popes in the ancient and medieval times. Even in the nineteenth century people were pushing the envelope on keeping toilets from smelling nasty.

One area where I am learning now is to avoid making fake or ersatz connections by computer or phone. I use Facebook and Twitter to announce new postings; arguably I shouldn't do even that. They are an arena for idle talking, and for fake friendship. Larchet's term for a person hollowed out by technology is *Homo connecticus*, Man the

Connected. There are numerous ways to be connected, all the time, in a way that is simply not helpful, and in fact an intravenous drip of noise. If I do not have an active conversation, I check my email by default about once an hour; though this might not be a good idea, I have turned off all sound notifications for text messages. In previous years, I had gone on "net.vacations" and avoided computers and electronic communication for a few days; more recently I have sometimes kept my phone on a permanent "Do not disturb." As far as my social life, I meet people (and cats) face-to-face when I can.

I also almost categorically try to avoid exposure to advertising, almost as if it were porn; both are intended to stimulate unhelpful desire. I tend to be a lot less likely to covet something and spend tight money on things I don't need. And really, if I need something only after an advertiser paints ownership beautifully, chances are some

All of this is how, in the concrete, I have tried to trample technology underfoot, and *really* trample its marketing proposition. This is something of a countercultural use, but it works remarkably well, and if you can rein in yourself, it won't suck out so much of your blood.

What is the advantage of having a phone then? Wouldn't it be simpler to not own one? I personally think there is much to commend about not owning a smartphone, but it is a socially mandated technology. You should be able to get along well enough to have a paper planner and pad and a standalone GPS to navigate by, but this is how to skim the cream off of technology and not hurt yourself with its murkier depths.

All of this may sound excessively ascetic, or a feat that it isn't. Feel free to chalk it up to eccentricity or introversion. However, I would point out that the conversations in Silicon Valley technology executive's houses are quiet lively. For example, here are ten things you might do, or start doing.

1. Read a book by yourself.
2. Read a book and discuss it together.
3. Take up a new hobby, like woodworking. You can make a lot of interesting things woodworking.
4. Go to an Orthodox church. After that, take a breather and go to a museum or a library.
5. Pick one topic and research it as far as you can in a fixed number of days. Share with others what you learned.

6. Buy a pair of binoculars and take up bird watching. Please note that local conservation society members, park districts, possibly libraries, and so on may have excellent advice on how to get involved.
7. Spend an hour in silence and just sit, just unwind.
8. Use older technologies and practices. Drive to visit someone instead of calling. Call instead of texting. Watch old 1950's movies that are at an F on special effects but an A on plot and storytelling. Go outside and play catch with a ball or frisbee.
9. Take a walk or a hike, or fish up a bicycle and take bike rides for fun.
10. Have a conversation about everything and nothing.

And trample technologies underfoot as much as it takes to have a life.

How to get there

What I have listed above is more a destination than a means how. As far as how goes, the basic method is to start whittling away at your consumption of noise bit by bit. If you watch television, you might decide in advance what you want to watch, and stick to only shows you've picked out. After that, vote one show per week off the island (maybe one show per month would stick better), until there is only one show, and then cut into the days you watch it. That is much more effective than through sheer force of will to stop watching together until you binge and decide you can't live without it. And the same principle applies with other things.

An Orthodox priest can be very good at helping you taper down and stop activities, and another perspective can really help. If you want to stick with a book, Tito Collander's *The Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Inner and Spiritual Growth* displays the discipline well. However, a real, live encounter with an Orthodox priest gives a valuable second set of eyes, and making the pilgrimage and overcoming a bit of shyness are two good things you should want to have.

One P.S. about motivation

My main motivation in writing this is for you and your spiritual health. Now it might also be good for your body to stop vegetating with your smartphone and start doing things, and it might also be beneficial for the environment in that it encourages a much lighter step in consumption.

Would you take one small step, for yourself?

Singularity

Herodotus: And what say thou of these people? Why callest thou them the Singularity, Merlin?

John: Mine illumined name is John, and John shall ye call me each and every one.

Herodotus: But the Singularity is such as only a Merlin could have unravelled.

John: Perchance: but the world is one of which only an illumined one may speak aright. Call thou me as one illumined, if thou wouldst hear me speak.

Herodotus: Of illumination speakest thou. Thou sawest with the eye of the hawk: now seest thou with the eye of the eagle.

John: If that be, speak thou me as an eagle?

Herodotus: A point well taken, excellent John, excellent John. What speakest thou of the Singularity?

John: A realm untold, to speak is hard. But of an icon will I speak: inscribed were words:

'Waitress, is this coffee or tea?'

'What does it taste like?'

'IT TASTES LIKE DIESEL FUEL.'

'That's the coffee. The tea tastes like transmission fluid.'

Herodotus: Upon what manner of veneration were this icon worshipped?

John: That were a matter right subtle, too far to tell.

Herodotus: And of the inscription? That too be subtle to grasp.

John: Like as a plant hath sap, so a subtle engine by their philosophy wrought which needeth diesel fuel and transmission fluid.

Herodotus: [laughs] Then 'twere a joke, a jape! 'Tis well enough told!

John: You perceive it yet?

Herodotus: A joke, a jape indeed, of a fool who could not tell, two different plants were he not to taste of their sap! Well spoke! Well spoke!

John: Thou hast grasped it afault, my fair lord. For the subtle engine hath many different saps, no two alike.

Herodotus: And what ambrosia be in their saps?

John: Heaven save us! The saps be a right unnatural fare; their substance from rotted carcasses of monsters from aeons past, then by the wisdom of their philosophy transmogrified, of the subtle engine.

Herodotus: Then they are masters of Alchemy?

John: Masters of an offscouring of all Alchemy, of the lowest toe of that depraved ascetical enterprise, chopped off, severed from even the limb, made hollow, and then grown beyond all reason, into the head of reason.

Herodotus: Let us leave off this and speak of the icon. The icon were for veneration of such subtle philosophy?

John: No wonder, no awe, greeteth he who regardeth this icon and receive it as is wont.

Herodotus: As is wont?

John: As is wanton. For veneration and icons are forced secrets; so there is an antithesis of the sacra pagina, and upon its light pages the greatest pages come upon the most filled with lightness, the icons of a world that knoweth icons not.

Let me make another essay.

The phrase 'harmony with nature' is of popular use, yet a deep slice of the Singularity, or what those inside the Singularity can see of it, might be called, 'harmony with technology'.

Herodotus: These be mystics of technology.

John: They live in an artificial jungle of technology, or rather an artificial not-jungle of technology, an artificial anti-jungle of technology. For one example, what do you call the natural use of wood?

Herodotus: A bundle of wood is of course for burning.

John: And they know of using wood for burning, but it is an exotic, rare case to them; say 'wood' and precious few will think of gathering wood to burn.

Herodotus: Then what on earth *do* they use wood for? Do they eat it when food is scarce or something like that?

John: Say 'wood' and not exotic 'firewood', and they will think of building a house.

Herodotus: So then they are right dexterous, if they can build out of a bundle of gathered sticks instead of burning it.

John: They do not gather sticks such as you imagine. They fell great trees, and cut the heartwood into rectangular box shapes, which they fit together in geometrical fashion. And when it is done, they make a box, or many boxes, and take rectangles hotly fused sand to fill a window. And they add other philosophy on top of that, so that if the house is well-built, the air inside will be pleasant and still, unless they take a philosophical machine to push air, and whatever temperature the people please, and it will remain dry though the heavens be opened in rain. And most of their time is spent in houses, or other 'buildings' like a house in this respect.

Herodotus: What a fantastical enterprise! When do they enter such buildings?

John: When do they rather go out of them? They consider it normal to spend less than an hour a day outside of such shelters; the subtle machine mentioned earlier moves but it is like a house built out of metal in that it is an environment entirely contrived by philosophy and artifice to, in this case, convey people from one place to another.

Herodotus: How large is this machine? It would seem to have to be very big to convey all their people.

John: But this is a point where their 'technology' departs from the art that is implicit in τεχνη: it is in fact not a lovingly crafted work of art, shaped out of the spirit of that position ye call 'inventor' or 'artist', but poured out by the thousands by gigantical machines yet more subtle, and in the wealth of the Singularity, well nigh unto each hath his own machine.

Herodotus: And how many can each machine can convey? Perchance a thousand?

John: Five, or six, or two peradventure, but the question is what they would call 'academical': the most common use is to convey one.

Herodotus: They must be grateful for such property and such philosophy!

John: A few are very grateful, but the prayer, 'Let us remember those less fortunate than ourselves' breathes an odor that sounds truly archaical. It sounds old, old enough to perhaps make half the span of a man's life. And such basic technology, though they should be very much upset to lose them,

never presents itself to their mind's eye when they hear the word 'technology'. And indeed, why should it present itself to the mind his eye?

Herodotus: I strain to grasp thy thread.

John: To be thought of under the heading of 'technology', two things must hold. First, it must be possessed of an artificial unlife, not unlike the unlife of their folklore's ghouls and vampires and zombies. And second, it must be of recent vintage, something not to be had until a time that is barely past. Most of the technologies they imagine provide artificially processed moving images, some of which are extremely old—again, by something like half the span of a man's life—while some are new. Each newer version seemeth yet more potent. To those not satisfied with the artificial environment of an up-to-date building, regarded by them as something from time immemorial, there are unlife images of a completely imaginary artificial world where their saying 'when pigs can fly' meaning never is in fact one of innumerable things that happen in the imaginary world portrayed by the technology. 'SecondLife' offers a second alternative to human life, or so it would seem, until 'something better comes along.'

Herodotus: My mind, it reeleth.

John: Well it reeleth. But this be but a sliver.

For life to them is keeping one's balance on shifting sand; they have great museums of different products, as many as the herbs of the field. But herein lies a difference: we know the herbs of the field, which have virtues, and what the right use is. They know as many items produced by philosophy, but they are scarce worse for the deal when they encounter an item they have never met before. For while the herbs of the field be steady across generations and generations, the items belched forth by their subtle philosophy change not only within the span of a man's life; they change year to year; perchance moon to moon.

Herodotus: Thou sayest that they can navigate a field they know not?

John: Aye, and more. The goal at which their catechism aims is to 'learn how to learn'; the appearance and disappearance of kinds of items is a commonplace to them. And indeed this is not only for the items we use as

the elements of our habitat: catechists attempt to prepare people for roles that exist not yet even as the students are being taught.

Though this be sinking sand they live in, they keep balance, of a sort, and do not find this strange. And they adapt to the changes they are given.

Herodotus: It beseemeth me that thou speakest as of a race of Gods.

John: A race of Gods? Forsooth! Thou knowest not half of the whole if thou speakest thus.

Herodotus: What remaineth?

John: They no longer think of making love as an action that in particular must needeth include an other.

Herodotus: I am stunned.

John: And the same is true writ large or writ small. A storyteller of a faintly smaller degree, living to them in ages past, placed me in an icon:

The Stranger mused for a few seconds, then, speaking in a slightly singsong voice, as though he repeated an old lesson, he asked, in two Latin hexameters, the following question:

'Who is called Sulva? What road does she walk? Why is the womb barren on one side? Where are the cold marriages?'

Ransom replied, 'Sulva is she whom mortals call the Moon. She walks in the lowest sphere. The rim of the world that was wasted goes through her. Half of her orb is turned towards us and shares our curse. Her other half looks to Deep Heaven; happy would he be who could cross that frontier and see the fields on her further side. On this side, the womb is barren and the marriages cold. There dwell an accursed people, full of pride and lust. There when a young man takes a maiden in marriage, they do not lie together, but each lies with a cunningly fashioned image of the other, made to move and to be warm by devilish arts, for real flesh will not please them, they are so dainty in their dreams of lust. Their real children they fabricate by vile arts in a secret place.'

The storyteller saw and saw not his future. 'Tis rare in the Singularity to fabricate children 'by vile arts in a secret place'. But the storyteller plays us false when he assumes their interest would be in a 'cunningly fashioned image of the other'. Truer it would be to say that the men, by the fruits of philosophy, jump from one libidinous dream to another whilest awake.

Herodotus: Forsooth!

John: A prophet told them, the end will come when no man maketh a road to his neighbors. And what has happened to marriage has happened, by different means but by the same spirit, to friendship. Your most distant acquaintanceship to a fellow member is more permanent than their marriage; it is routine before the breakable God-created covenant of marriage to make unbreakable man-made covenants about what to do if, as planned for, the marriage ends in divorce. And if that is to be said of divorce, still less is the bond of friendship. Their own people have talked about how 'permanent relationships', including marriage and friendship, being replaced by 'disposable relationships' which can be dissolved for any and every reason, and by 'disposable relationships' to 'transactional relationships', which indeed have not even the pretension of being something that can be kept beyond a short transaction for any and every reason.

And the visits have been eviscerated, from a conversation where voice is delivered and vision is stripped out, to a conversation where words alone are transmitted without even hand writing; from a conversation where mental presence is normative to a conversation where split attention is expected. 'Tis yet rarely worth the bother to make a physical trail, though they yet visit. And their philosophy, as it groweth yet more subtle, groweth yet more delicate. 'Twould scarcely require much to 'unplug' it. And then, perhaps, the end will come?

Herodotus: Then there be a tragic beauty to these people.

John: A tragic beauty indeed.

Herodotus: What else hast thou to tell of them?

John: Let me give a little vignette:

Several men and women are in a room; all are fulfilling the same role, and they are swathed with clothing that covers much of their skin. And the differences between what the men wear, and what most of the women wear, are subtle enough that most of them do not perceive a difference.

Herodotus: Can they not perceive the difference between a man and a woman?

John: The sensitivity is dulled in some, but it is something they try to overlook. But I have not gotten to the core of this vignette:

One of them indicateth that had they be living several thousand years ago they would not have had need of clothing, not for modesty at least, and there are nods of agreement to her. And they all imagine such tribal times to be times of freedom, and their own to be of artificial restriction.

And they fail to see, by quite some measure, that prolonged time in mixed company is much more significant than being without clothing; or that their buildings deaden all of a million sources of natural awareness: the breeze blowing and the herbs waving in the wind; scents and odours as they appear; song of crickets' kin chirping and song of bird, the sun as it shines through cloud; animals as they move about, and the subtleties and differences in the forest as one passes through it. They deaden all of these sensitivities and variations, until there is only one form of life that provides stimulation: the others who are working in one's office. Small wonder, then, that to a man one woman demurely covered in an office has an effect that a dozen women wearing vines in a jungle would never have. But the libertines see themselves as repressed, and those they compare themselves to as, persay, emancipated.

Herodotus: At least they have the option of dressing modestly. What else hast thou?

John: There is infinitely more, and there is nothing more. Marriage is not thought of as open to children; it can be dissolved in divorce; it need not be intrinsically exclusive; a further installment in the package, played something like a pawn in a game of theirs, is that marriage need not be between a man and a woman. And if it is going to be dismantled to the previous portion, why not? They try to have a world without marriage, by their changes to marriage. The Singularity is a disintegration; it grows more

and more, and what is said for marriage could be said for each of the eight devils: intertwined with this is pride, and it is only a peripheral point that those who further undefine marriage speak of 'gay pride'. A generation before, not mavericks but the baseline of people were told they needed a 'high self-esteem', and religious leaders who warned about pride as a sin, perhaps as the sin by which the Devil fell from Heaven, raised no hue and cry that children were being raised to embrace pride as a necessary asceticism. And religion itself is officially permitted some role, but a private role: not that which fulfills the definition of *religare* in binding a society together. It is in some measure like saying, 'You can speak any language you want, as long as you utter not a word in public discourse': the true religion of the Singularity is such ersatz religion as the Singularity provides. Real religion is expected to wither in private.

The Singularity sings a song of progress, and it was giving new and different kinds of property; even now it continues. But its heart of ice showeth yet. For the march of new technologies continues, and with them poverty: cracks begin to appear, and the writing on the wall be harder to ignore. What is given with one hand is not-so-subtly taken away with the other. The Singularity is as needful to its dwellers as forest or plain to its dwellers, and if it crumbles, precious few will become new tribal clans taking all necessities from the land.

Herodotus: Then it seemeth the tragedy outweigheth the beauty, or rather there is a shell of beauty under a heart of ice.

John: But there are weeds.

Herodotus: What is a weed?

John: It is a plant.

Herodotus: What kind of plant is a weed? Are the plants around us weeds?

John: They are not.

Herodotus: Then what kinds of plants are weeds?

John: In the Singularity, there is a distinction between 'rural', 'suburban', and 'urban': the 'rural' has deliberately set plants covering great tracts of land, the 'suburban' has fewer plants, if still perhaps green all around, and the 'urban' has but the scattered ensconced tree. But in all of them are weeds, in an urban area plants growing where the artificial stone has cracked. And among the natural philosophers there are some who study the life that cannot be extinguished even in an urban city; their specialty is called 'urban ecology'. The definition of a weed is simply, 'A plant I do not want.' We do not have weeds because we do not seek an artificial environment with plants only present when we have put them there. But when people seek to conform the environment to wishes and plans, even in the tight discipline of planned urban areas, weeds are remarkably persistent.

And in that regard, weeds are a tiny sliver of something magnificent.

Herodotus: What would that be?

John: The durability of Life that is writ small in a weed here in the urban, there in the suburban is but a shadow of the durability of Life that lives on in the sons of men. Mothers still sing lullabies to their dear little children; friendships form and believers pray at church far more than happened in the age where my story was told, a story dwarfed by what was called the 'age of faith'. The intensity of the attacks on the Church in a cruel social witness are compelled to bear unwilling witness to the vitality of the Church whose death has been greatly exaggerated: and indeed that Church is surging with vitality after surviving the attacks. The story told seems to tell of Life being, in their idiom, 'dealt a card off every side of the deck'—and answering, 'Checkmate, I win.' I have told of the differences, but there are excellent similarities, and excellent differences. For a knight whoso commandeth a wild and unbridled horse receiveth greater commendation than a knight whoso commandeth a well-bred and gentle steed.

Herodotus: The wind bloweth where it listeth. The just shall live by his faith. Your cell, though it be wholly artificial, will teach you everything you need to know.

John: Thou hast eagerly grasped it; beyond beauty, tragedy, and beyond tragedy, beauty. Thou hast grasped it true.

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"The Good Parts"

[Here ends the manuscript]

"Social Antibodies" Needed: A Request of Orthodox Clergy

Some time ago, a pastor contacted me and asked permission to quote one of my poems. We've been in contact at least occasionally, and he sent me an email newsletter that left me asking him for permission to quote.

Let me cite the article in full (—2014 Pastor Vince Homan, used by very gracious permission):

When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, but the one who controls his lips is wise. Proverbs 10:19

I recently violated a longstanding position I have held; to avoid all further interaction with social media, particularly Facebook. It wasn't necessarily because of any moral high ground; it was more because I had already mastered e-mail and was satisfied with my online accomplishments. In addition, I didn't have any additional time or interest to keep up with pithy little sayings, videos, cartoons, social life, or even cute kiddie pictures. But now I am happily in the fold of Facebook users (particularly if there is a picture of one of my grandbabies on it). In addition, it has allowed me to discover that there are literally dozens of people who are just waiting to be my friends. However, the real reason I'm on Facebook is work related. Thanks to the good work done by a few of our church members; both of our churches

have excellent Facebook pages. In order to access those pages, I needed an account, so—here I am. And though all seems well with the world of Facebook, I am discovering that it is not always the case. For all the "warm fuzzies," and catching up with friends and family it offers ... there is also a dark side.

At a recent continuing education event I attended, the speaker presented some dire consequences to uninhibited use of social media. He reported that social media had replaced money as the number one contributor to marriage problems. He said it wasn't so much affairs that online relationships led to; rather it was the persistent flirting that broke down barriers and hedges, which once protected the marriage. Such interaction often led to a downward spiral, corrupting and compromising the marriage vow. One in five divorces involves the social networking site Facebook, according to a new survey by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. A staggering 80% of divorce lawyers have also reported a spike in the number of cases that use social media for evidence of cheating, with Facebook by far the biggest offender. Flirty messages and photographs found on Facebook are increasingly being cited as proof of unreasonable behavior or irreconcilable differences. Many cases revolve around social media users who get back in touch with old flames they hadn't heard from in many years.

PBS recently hosted a webinar, *This Emotional Life*, about the internet's impact on relationship and marriage.^[i] One of the panelists, Theresa Bochard, explored the issue a bit farther in an article originally published on PsychCentral.com. She said that after reading hundreds of comments and emails from people who have been involved in online relationships or emotional affairs as well as the responses on several discussion boards, she concluded that while the internet and social media *can* foster intimacy in a marriage, it seems to do more harm than good. She reported that an astounding 90% of opposite-sex online relationships were damaging to the marriage. Facebook affairs are threatening healthy couples too.

"I have suggested to myself to write a thank you note to the inventors of Facebook and Myspace because they have been responsible for a significant percentage of my income," says marriage counselor Dr. Dennis Boike. He's not kidding. "I'm having people say I never would have expected me to do this. It's in the privacy of my computer. I'm not going out anywhere, I'm not dressing for it, I'm not smelling of another's perfume. There are no tell-tale signs except my computer record." But a new study suggests Facebook can

also help disconnect you from your better half. The site, which boasts more than 350 million active users, is mentioned in over 20% of divorce petitions, according to Divorce-Online.

Prominent Houston divorce attorney Bucky Allhouse can understand why. "It's really kind of shocking what people put on Facebook," says Allhouse. Perhaps it's not so shocking that the social networking site can essentially pour kerosene on "old flames." Most online relationships start out benign: an email from a person you knew in college, friending an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend on Facebook (as suggested by Facebook: "people you might know"), getting to know a co-worker or acquaintance better online. But the relationship can take a dangerous turn very quickly if you're not careful and even more easily if you are doing most of the talking behind a computer.

We have no non-verbals with which to interpret people's conversation when we communicate online. What we say can be misinterpreted and come off in a way we don't intend. Or worse, we purposely allow our conversation to drift into an unhealthy area, where we put out "feelers" to see if the person we are communicating with will do the same. We will text things to people that would make us blush if we said them in person. All too often the end result is flirting, compromising our values, and allowing the secrecy of social media to sweep us off our feet and into a quagmire of social dysfunction. This is not a victimless choice. Many times, inappropriate conversations through social media lead to great pain with children, spouses, parents, and friends.

One such instance occurred when Jonathan found Sharon on Facebook, 20 years after he dumped her one week after their high school prom. She had never married, while he had and was also the father of two teenagers. During months of emailing and texting, Sharon proved a sympathetic listener to his sense of isolation and loneliness within his own marriage. He found they could talk easily, picking up with the friendship they had had years before. They shared feelings they had never shared with others. After a few months, they decided to cross a few states and meet half way. Then, they talked of marriage. Shortly after, Jonathan went through with his divorce and months later he and Sharon married. Not surprisingly, and after only four months, they divorced. What happened? Fantasy was hit hard by reality. They went into a marriage without really spending time to know each other as they are today. Their romance was fueled by their history (as 18-year-olds) not their adult present. The romantic idea of reconnecting with an old lover, at a time Jonathan was unhappy in his marriage, was a recipe for danger.

In talking about it later, Jonathan realized he had not intended to start up a romance; he hadn't intended to leave his marriage in the first place. As

he and Sharon shared feelings, he felt more cared for by her than by his wife. When asked who raised the issue of marriage, he wasn't sure. "Perhaps she pushed it, but I may have been just been musing something like, 'Wouldn't it have been great if we got married,' and that led her to talk about marriage. I wonder if I led her on. Did I promise more than I had realized and then feel in love with my own fantasy?"[ii]

When we cross barriers that were intended to keep us safely within the parameters of our marriage vows, we start in internal conflict—one that attacks our emotional and mental center. Conversations with people of the opposite sex can lead to flirtations. Flirtations can lead to imaginations which lead to fixations ... and there is a fine line between fixation and passion. Promiscuity is rarely a random act. It is pre-meditated. Something triggers our thoughts. And that something *can* be social media.

Christians must be wary of intimate conversations with people of the opposite sex; it is a trap that too many good people have been caught in. Paul wrote: "We are casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). It is good advice; cast down imaginations ... take every thought captive, because it is often out of our imaginations and thoughts that bad choices are born. Jesus said something similar. Speaking to the disciples he warned, "But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matthew 15:18-19). The battleground is not the computer or cell phone; it is the heart and the mind. But secretive messaging avenues like social media offers can help plant the seed for a battle that good people lose every day.

Dr. Karen Gail Lewis, a marriage and family therapist of 39 years and author of numerous relationship books, offers these social networking guidelines for married couples.

1. *Be clear about your agenda in contacting the other person.*
2. *Limit the frequency of your time online.* This sets a good boundary around the social networking contact.
3. *Don't talk intimately.* By not sharing intimacies with your correspondence, you reduce the chance of sending a message that you want a more intimate relationship.

4. *Let your spouse know with whom you are contacting.* This openness makes it clear you have nothing to hide. (I would add, especially so if you are contacting a person of the opposite sex).[iii].
5. *Share your outgoing and received emails/texts with your spouse.* Sharing communications removes any chance for jealousy or misunderstandings (I would add, share passwords with your spouse; give them full access to your social media sites).[iv].
6. *Do not meet in person unless your spouse is with you.* Meeting up with old friends with your spouse by your side is a reminder that you two are a team and removes sending mixed messages to your former lover. This also reinforces the importance of fixing your marriage before playing with the flames of old flames.[v].

Jesus taught us to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matthew 10:16). Social media is a place that Scripture applies. I believe in the sanctity of marriage. I believe a person places their personal integrity and honor on the line in the marriage vow more than anything else in their life. And I believe marriage is under attack from multiple directions. I have officiated at many young couples weddings. I spend time with each one, warning them of the potential pitfalls and dangers; encouraging them to make their marriage a priority each day. Because I know the reality; many of the ones I marry won't make it. It's not because they are bad people or people of no character; but they get caught in a trap, and they can't seem to find a way out. And I also know most of them deeply regret their decisions after the fallout of their choices turn to consequences.

Social media can be a wonderful thing. I love keeping in touch with family and looking at pictures of the grandbabies. Now our churches are using social media to share the gospel. But Christians should be wary of the potential dangers. We must keep up our barriers at all times. James warned, "Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters" (James 1:14-16). Indeed, we must not be misled, rather be guided by the protective barriers God has placed around us; especially so if we are married. We must watch our words carefully and keep our thoughts captive. The sanctity of our marriage vow demands it.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Vince

[i] <http://www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/blogs/does-internet-promote-or-damage-marriage>

[ii] <http://www.hitchedmag.com/article.php?id=903>

[iii] Parenthetical mine

[iv] Parenthetical mine

[v] <http://www.hitchedmag.com/article.php?id=903>

This article left me *reeling*.

In part, I wondered if my collection in *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*, was simply wrong. Or if someone might rightly say to me, "What you give in *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* is helpful up to a point, at least for someone with a similar background to yours. However, regular people need much more concrete guidance." What struck me very concretely about Pastor Vince's article is that it gave very practical advice on how married people can appropriately handle Facebook.

The article reminded me of remarks I'd seen by people interested in making computers that people can actually use that the Apple Macintosh was the first computer worth criticizing. Perhaps some detail of the guidance in the article above could be criticized: perhaps much of it should be criticized: but it may be the first article I've seen on the topic that was worth criticizing.

The concept of "social antibodies": it's not just Facebook

Paul Graham's "The Acceleration of Addictiveness" is worth reading in full. (It's also worth *quoting* in full, but he's asked nicely that people link to it instead of reposting, which is a fair request. So I linked to it even though I'd prefer to reproduce the whole article. It's at <http://www.paulgraham.com/addiction.html>.)

"The Acceleration of Addictiveness" talks about a little bit bigger picture about things that are addictive. Though he mentions Facebook as something that's even more addictive than television, he's clear that the big picture is more than addictive little Facebook. Graham talks about a concept of "social antibodies" which I think is incredibly useful.

Decades ago, smoking cut through the US like a hot knife through butter. But, while smoking is still dangerous and there still continue to be new smokers, we no longer have glamour shots of celebrities holding cigarettes in some flashy, sophisticated, classy pose. Smoking is no longer "sexy;" over the past 20 years it has been seen as seedy, and "smoker" is not exacty the kindest thing to call someone. (I remember one friend commenting that he could think of a number of terms more polite than "smoker,"

none of which were appropriate to the present company.) *As a society, the US has developed social antibodies to smoking now.*

There are many things that we need "social antibodies" for, and we keep developing new technologies, Facebook included, that need social antibodies. The six prescriptions in the quoted articles are essentially social antibodies for how to use Facebook without jeopardizing your marriage. They may seem harsh and excessively cautious, but I submit that they are easier to go through than divorce. *Much easier. A piece of cake!* And I quote Pastor Vince's article because it's something we need more of.

A helpful parallel to technology: Wine as an example

Simply not drinking alcoholic beverages is an option that I respect more as I think about it, but for the sake of this discussion, I will leave it on the side. I am interested in helpful parallels for "social antibodies" in moderation and restraint in using technology, and as much as I may respect people who do not drink, that option is not as interesting for my investigation. This is especially true because people living in my society assume that you are not abstaining from every technology that can cause trouble. So with a respectful note about not drinking alcohol at all, I want to look at social antibodies for moderate, temperate, and appropriate use of wine.

Wine and liquor slowly increased in strength in Western Europe, slowly enough that societies had at least the *chance* to build social antibodies. This makes for a marked contrast to escape through hard liquor among Native Americans, where hard liquor blew through decimated nations and peoples like escape through today's street drugs would have blown through a Europe already coping with the combined effects of the bubonic plague and of barbarian invasions. Perhaps there are genetic differences affecting Native Americans and alcohol. A Native American friend told me that Native American blood can't really cope with sugar, essentially unknown in Native American lands apart from some real exceptions like maple syrup. And lots of alcohol is worse than lots of sugar, even if some of us wince at the level of sugar and/or corn syrup in the main US industrial diet. (Even those of us not of Native American blood would do well to restrict our consumption of artificially concocted sugars.) But aside from the genetic question, introducing 80 proof whiskey to societies that did not know how to cope with beer would have been rough enough even if there were no genetic questions and no major external stresses on the societies. If there was something of a stereotype about Native Americans and whiskey, maybe part of that is because hard liquor that had been developed over centuries in the West appeared instantaneously, under singularly unfortunate conditions, in societies that had not even the social antibodies to cope with even the weaker of beers.

I cite St. Cyril of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, Book Two, Chapter II: On Drinking as a model for approaching alcohol (and, by extension, a serious reference

point in understanding moderate use of technology), with some reservations. The translation I link to is obscure and archaic, and if you can get past that, the individual prescriptions are the sort that would only be all kept (or, for that matter, mostly kept) by the sort of people who are filled with pride that they observe ancient canons more strictly than any canonical bishop. In other words, *don't* try these directions at home unless you know you are in agreement with your priest or spiritual father. But the chapter of *The Instructor* on wine offers a *priceless* glimpse into real, live social antibodies on how to navigate dangerous waters. This is a live example of the sort of things we need. The book as a whole covers several topics, including clothing and boundaries between men and women, and they could serve as a model for pastoral literature to address the challenges offered to spiritual life today. Not specifically that *online* interactions between men and women *introduce* an element of danger. That element of danger has always been there, and always will be there. But online interactions frame things a little differently. This means that people with social antibodies that would show appropriate caution face-to-face might not recognize that you have to compensate when dealing with the opposite sex online, or might not intuit exactly *how* you have to compensate when dealing with the opposite sex online.

I would like to close this section with a word about wine and why I drink it. The politically incorrect way of putting this point is to say that wine is something which literally and figuratively is not part of Islam. Islam works out, in stark relief, what it means to subtract the Incarnation from Christian faith. It means that not only has the Son of God not become incarnate in Christ, but all the more does God become incarnate in his children. It means that Holy Communion is just a symbol, and wine could absolutely, absolutely *never* become the blood of God. Water is necessary and wine is not, as St. Clement tells us, but the Orthodox Church that regards Islam as a Christian heresy used fermented wine exclusively in the Eucharist, and condemned heretics' use of pure water for the same purpose. And my reason for drinking a little wine is that wine has an elasticity that bears the meaning of Jesus's first miracle, turning water into even more wine when wine ran out at a wedding where the guests were already pretty drunk, and it bears the meaning of the Holy Mysteries: few if any material substances are as pregnant with spiritual depth as wine. Ecclesiastes is perhaps the most dismal book in the entire Bible, and "Go, eat thy bread with mirth, and drink thy wine with a joyful heart" is close to being the only invitation to joy in the book. I do not say that this is a reason why people who have decided not to drink should change their mind. However, the theological motive to drink in Christianity comes from a higher plane than the admittedly very real reasons to be careful with alcohol, or else abstain. It's deeper.

Is the iPhone really that cool?

One news story reported that police officers had started using drug dealers' confiscated iPhones, and realized they were incredibly useful. And I wouldn't dispute that at all. I would say that having an iPhone is a little, but not quite, like being able to call 911, which is the most important number for you to be able to call. 99% of the time it is inappropriate and perhaps illegal to call 911, but the (less than) 1% of the time you *should* be calling 911, it can save your life. Literally. And I use my iPhone over 1% of the time; besides built-in phone, email, notes, and looking things up on the web, and including my personal logistical dashboard, and apps like GPS, my iPhone makes me more productive, and unsexy nuts and bolts usage has been very useful. So I wouldn't agree with "Come With Me If You Want to Live - Why I Terminated my iPhone" that the iPhone is simply "Terrible For Productivity." It certainly can be, and unrestrained use will be. And for that matter I've seen a lot of exquisitely produced apps in the App Store, and though I've written one iPhone app, I've found precious few apps that look genuinely useful to my purposes. But I am glad I have my iPhone, am not struggling to rein in inappropriately heavy use, and I believe it makes me more productive.

The LinkedIn article "Come With Me If You Want to Live - Why I Terminated My iPhone" talked about how one family decided to get rid of their iPhones. The author talked about how the iPhone had taken over their lives. They suggested that trying to use their habit to use the iPhone in moderation was a nonstarter, however enticing it may look. And, on a sobering note, they had earlier tried to avoid using smartphones, even for work. And I am convinced they made the right choice: not having any smartphone use is better than addictive smartphone use, hands down. And while I am cautious about advertising responsible smartphone use to people who can't live without their iPhone—the analogy drawn in the LinkedIn article was, "In hindsight, it's like an alcoholic saying 'I thought I could have it in the house and not drink it.'" But I have iPhone use which is defensible, at least in my opinion; I have drawn a boundary that is partly tacit and partly explicit, and while it can be criticized, it is a non-addictive use of the iPhone. I average less than one text a day; I do not compulsively check anything that's out there. A few of the guidelines I found are,

1. *Limit the time you spend using your smartphone.* The general Orthodox advice is to cut back a little at once so you never experience absolute shock, but you are always stretched a little bit outside your comfort zone. That may be a way to work down cell phone use, or it may not. If you compulsively reach for your smartphone, you might leave it in one room that you're not always in. Put a boundary between yourself and the smartphone.

2. *Limit how often you check your cell phone unprovoked.* When I'm not at work, I try to limit checking email to once per hour. Limit yourself to maybe once per hour, maybe more, maybe less, and restrain yourself.
3. *When you're going to bed for the day, you're done using your smartphone for the day.* I am not strict in this; I will answer a call, but checking my iPhone, unprovoked, after my evening prayers or my bedtime is a no-no.
4. *Don't use the iPhone as a drone that you need to have always going on.* This includes music, texting, games, and apps, including Vince's hero, Facebook. Perhaps the single biggest way that this violates Apple's marketing proposition with the iPhone is that the iPhone is designed and marketed to be a drone that is always with us, a bit of ambient noise, delivering precisely what the Orthodox spiritual tradition, with works like *The Ladder*, tell us is something we don't need. The iPhone's marketing proposition is to deliver an intravenous drip of noise. The Orthodox Church's Tradition tells us to wean ourself from noise.
5. *iPhones have "Do Not Disturb" mode. Use it.* And be willing to make having "Do Not Disturb" as your default way of using the phone, and turn it off when you want "Please Interrupt Me" mode explicitly.
6. *Don't multitask if you can at all avoid it.* I remember reading one theology text which claimed as a lesson from computer science, because people can switch between several applications rapidly, that we should take this "lesson" to life and switch between several activities rapidly. And in a business world where multitasking has been considered an essential task, people are finding that multitasking is fool's gold, an ineffective way of working that introduces a significant productivity tax where people could be doing much better. Smartphones make it trivially easy to multiask. *Don't*, unless a situation calls for it. I note with some concern that the most I've been shocked at someone using an iPhone was when 12 and under kids were manipulating the iPhone, not to get something to done, but to activate the iPhone's smooth animations. Looking over their shoulders in shock has felt like I was eavesdropping on a (non-chemical) *acid trip*. Children's use of iPhones driven by slick animated transitions between applications are even more unhelpful than what the business world means by multitasking. (This feature of kids' use of iPhones has made me kind of wish iPhones were not used by people under 18.)

Now I should post this with a clarification that this is, so to speak, pastoral advice to myself. I've found the basic approach helpful, and priests and spiritual fathers may draw on it if they choose in their best judgment to take something from it, but I have not been ordained or tonsured, and I would fall back on the maxim, "As always, ask your priest." My reason to post them is to provide another reference point beyond those given to "social antibodies" in dealing with technology. With these antibodies, I hold the reins, or at least I hold the reins a little better than if I didn't have these antibodies. But I am aware of something vampiric, something that sucks out energy and life, in even my more moderate use of some technologies, and I am a little wary of comparing my use of technology to moderate and sober use of alcohol. Appropriate use of alcohol can be good, and apart from the risk of drinking getting out of control, it is an overall positive. I'm leery of claiming the same for my use of technology, even if I've tried hard to hold the reins and even if I may do better than average. There is something that has been drained from me; there is something that has been sucked out of me. Maybe I am less harmed than others: but my use of technology has harmed me. I am wary of saying now, "I've found the solution."

In dealing with another passion besides sexual sin, namely anger, people have started to develop "social antibodies:" as mentioned briefly by Vince Homan, we don't have the important channels of people's nonverbal communication, which flattens out half the picture. And when we are angry, we can flame people in emails where there is no human face staring back to us, only letters on the screen that seem so right—or perhaps not nearly *right* enough!—and write hurtful flames unlike anything we would dare to say in person, even to someone who hurt us deeply. And on that score, people seem to me to have developed social antibodies; I've been in lots of flamewars and given and received many unholy words, but I don't remember doing that recently, or seeing flames wage out of control on many mailing lists, even if admittedly I don't spend much time on mailing lists. But sexual dangers are not the only dangers online, and for online flaming, most of the people I deal with do not flame people like I did when I was first involved in online community. I've acquired some "social antibodies," as have others I meet online. *Some* social antibodies have already developed, and the case is not desperate for us as a Church learning how to handle technology in the service of holy living instead of simply being a danger.

Pastoral guidance and literature needed

I visited Amazon to try to get a gauge on how much Orthodox pastoral resources about appropriate use of computers, mobile, internet, and technology were out there, a sort of *The Instructor* for technology today, and my search for orthodox internet found 109 resources from Christianity, Judaism, and the occult, none of which seemed to be about "How does an Orthodox Christian negotiate the social issues surrounding

computers, smartphones, tablets, the Internet, apps, and technology?" Some other searches, such as *orthodox pastoral internet*, *orthodox pastoral smartphone*, and *orthodox pastoral technology* turned up nothing whatsoever. A search for "orthodox technology" turned up one page of search results with... *several connected works of my own*. Um, *thanks*, I think. I guess I'm an expert, or at least a resource, and even if I didn't want to, I should probably make myself available to Orthodox clergy, with my spiritual father and bishop foremost. But this compliment to me, if it is such (maybe it means I'm off the rails) caught me quite off-guard; I was expecting to see at least *some* publications from people with pastoral authority and experience. But seeing as I'm the local expert, or at least a first author for this particular topic, I'll briefly state my credentials. I have been an Orthodox Christian for a decade, so no longer a recent convert, *have works on social dimensions of technology dating back as far as 1994*, have two years of postgraduate theology under slightly silly conditions at Cambridge, and two more years under very silly conditions at a sort of "Monty Python teaches theology" PhD program (one Orthodox priest consoled me, "All of us went through that"), but did not complete the program. I grew up with computers back when my home computer access meant going to an orange and black terminal and dialing up a Dec MicroVAX on a 2400 (or less) baud modem, was on basically non-web social networks years before it became a buzzword, have worked with the web since before it went mainstream, much of it professionally. I've been bitten by some of the traps people are fighting with now. And I'm also kind of bright. So I guess I am, by default, a local expert, although I really think a responsible treatment of the issues raised here would see serious involvement from someone with pastoral qualifications and experience. I haven't been tonsured, at least not yet, and perhaps not ever.

But I would ask priests reading this piece to consider a work on a sort of technological appendix to *The Rudder*, or maybe I shouldn't say that because I have only barely sampled the ancient canons. But I would like to see ideally two pastoral works parallel to *The Instructor*, Book II: one for pastoral clergy use, and one for "the rest of us faithful." When I was a lay parish representative at a diocesan conference, there was talk about appropriate use of the internet; Vladyka PETER read something that talked about the many legitimate benefits we have received from using computers, but talked about porn on the internet, which is a sewer I haven't mentioned; he said that young people are spending hours per day looking at porn, and it's more addictive than some street drugs, and he commented how porn has always been available, but you used to have to put on a disguise and a trenchcoat, and go leave your car in front of a store with the windows covered up, where now, it finds you and it comes free with a basic utility in the privacy of your home. And the biggest thing I can say about freedom from porn comes from the entry for porn in *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*:

There is a story about a philosopher who was standing in a river when someone came to him. The philosopher asked the visitor, "What do you want?" The visitor answered, "Truth!" Then the philosopher held the visitor under the water for a little while, and asked him the second time, "What do you want?" The visitor answered, "Truth!" Then the philosopher held the visitor under water for what seemed an interminable time, and let him up and asked, "What do you want?" The visitor gasped and said, "Air!" The philosopher said, "When you want Truth the way you want air, you will find it."

The same thing goes for freedom from the ever-darker chain called pornography, along with masturbation and the use of "ED" drugs to heighten thrills (which can cause nasty street drug-like effects [and a doomed search for the ultimate sexual thrill that decimates sexual satisfaction] even in marriage).

And I would like to suggest some guidelines for fighting Internet porn, quite possibly the most commonly confessed sin among young men today. Sexual sins are among the most easily forgiven: but they are a deep pit. So, in the interest of providing a "dartboard" draft that's put out for people to shoot at. I am intentionally saying more rather than less because it's easier for a pastoral conversation to select from a set of options than furnish arbitrarily more additional options. Here are several things I'd consider, both sacred and secular:

1. If your right eye offends you, tear it out and throw it away from you: for it is better for you that one part of your body should die than that your whole body should be thrown into Hell. These words are *not* to be taken literally; if you tore out your right eye you would still be sinning with your left eye, and the Church considers that it was one of Origen's errors to castrate himself. But this is a forceful way of stating a profound truth. There is an incredible freedom that comes, a yoke that is easy and a burden that is light, when you want purity the way you want "Air!", and you apply a tourniquet as high up as you need to to experience freedom. Give your only computer power cable to a friend, for a time, because you can't have that temptation in the house? That is really *much* better than the alternative. Have the local teenager turn off display of images in Chrome's settings? That is really *much* better than the alternative. Webpages may look suddenly ugly, but not nearly as ugly as bondage to porn. Only check email at the library? That is really *much* better than the alternative. These tourniquets may be revised in pastoral conversation, but tearing out your right eye is much more free and much less painful than forever wanting to be free from addiction to

porn, but also secretly hoping to give in to the present temptation; as the Blessed Augustine prayed, "Lord, give me chastity, but not yet." There is a great deal of power in wanting purity *now*, and once you go slash-and-burn, the power is amazing.

2. *Install content-control software, and have things set up so that only the woman of the house knows the password to make exceptions.* There are legitimate needs for exceptions, and I remember being annoyed when I went to customize *Ubuntu Christian Edition* and finding that a site with all sorts of software to customize the appearance of Ubuntu was blocked, apparently because of a small sliver of soft porn in the wallpaper section of a truly massive site. There will be *legitimate* exceptions, but it cuts through a *lot* of self-deception if you get the exception by asking your wife.
3. *Don't bother trying to find out how to disable ~~porn mode~~ "Incognito Mode" on your browser; set up a router to log who visits what websites.* However much browser makers may tout themselves as being all for empowerment and freedom, they have refused to honor the many requests of men who want freedom from porn and parents who care for their children in many, many voices asking for a way to shut off porn mode. (Even if you found a pre-porn-mode browser version, it would place you at incredible information security risk, and not only because your browser is the #1 way to attack your computer.) But there is something else you should know. Routers exist that can log who visits what when, and if you know someone who is good with computers (or you can use paid technical support like the Geek Squad), have a router set up to provide a log of what computers visited what URLs so that the wife or parents know who is visiting what. *The presence of a browser's porn mode suddenly matters a lot less when a router records your browsing history whether or not the browser is in porn mode.*
4. *Rein in your stomach. Eat less food. Fast.* It is a classic observation in the Orthodox spiritual tradition that the appetites are tied: gluttony is a sort of "gateway drug" to sexual sin, and if you cut away at a full stomach, you necessarily undermine sexual sin and have an easier contest if you are not dealing with sexual temptation on top of a full stomach. And it has been my own experience that if I keep busy working, besides any issues about "Idle hands are the Devil's workshop," the temptation to amuse and entertain myself with food is less. So that cuts off the temptation further upstream. If you eat only to nourish the body, it helps. Even if nourishing food tastes good, cutting out junk like corn-

syrup-loaded soft drinks, or anything sold like potato chips in a bag instead of a meal, and moderating consumption of alcohol (none before going to bed; it doesn't help), will help.

5. *When you are tempted, ask the prayers of St. John the Much-Suffering of the Kiev Near Caves, perhaps by crossing yourself and saying, "St. John the Much-Suffering, pray to God for me."* In the Orthodox Church you may ask the prayers of any saint for any need, but St. John is a powerful intercessor against lust. That is part of why I asked Orthodox Byzantine Icons to hand-paint an icon of St. John for me: a little so I would have the benefit of the icon myself, and the real reason because I wanted Orthodox Byzantine Icons's catalogue to make available the treasure of icons of St. John the Much-Suffering to the world, which they would. Other saints to ask for prayer include St. Mary of Egypt, St. Moses the Hungarian, St. Photina, St. Thais of Egypt, St. Pelagia the Former Courtesan, St. Zlata the New Martyr, St. Boniface, St. Aglaida, St. Eudocia, St. Thomais, St. Pelagia, St. Marcella, St. Basil of Mangazea, St. Niphon, and St. Joseph the Patriarch. (Taken from Prayers for Purity.)
6. *Buy and pray with a copy of Prayers for Purity when you are tempted, and when you have fallen.* It is an excellent collection and helps when you know you should praying but words are not coming to mind.
7. *If you have been wounded, bring your wound to confession the next weekend.* (And try to have a rule of going to church each week.) It can be powerful, when you are facing a temptation, not to want to confess the same sin again in a couple of days. But in parallel with this remember when a visitor asked a saintly monk what they did at the monastery, and the saintly monk answered, "We fall and get up, fall and get up, fall and get up." Fall down seven times and rise up eight: fall down seventy-seven times and rise up seventy-eight: keep on repenting for as long as you need to to achieve some freedom, and know that some saints before you have risen after falling very many times.
8. *Buy a prayer rope, and use it.* When you are tempted, keep repeating a prayer for one prayer rope, and then another, and another, if you need it. Pray "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," or to St. John the Much-Suffering, "Holy Father John, pray to God for me," or to St. Mary of Egypt, "Holy Mother Mary, pray to God for me."

9. *Use the computer only when you have a specific purpose in mind, and not just to browse. Idle hands are the Devil's workshop;* For the fascination of wickedness obscures what is good, and roving desire perverts the innocent mind.; Do not look around in the streets of a city, or wander about in its deserted sections. Turn away your eyes from a shapely woman, and do not gaze at beauty belonging to another; many have been seduced by a woman's beauty, and by it passion is kindled like a fire. Men's roving sexual curiosity will find the worst-leading link on a page, and then another, and then another. Drop using roving curiosity when you are at a computer altogether; if you need to deal with boredom, ask your priest or spiritual father for guidance on how to fight the passion of boredom. But *don't* use the Internet as a solution for boredom; that's *asking* for trouble.
10. *Use a support group, if one is available in your area.* If I were looking for a support group now, I would call Christian counseling centers in the area if available. Talking with other people who share the same struggle can help.
11. *Use XXXchurch.com, or at least explore their website.* Their entire purpose is buying you your freedom from lust.
12. *Yearn for purity.* In the homily "A Pet Owner's Rules," I wrote:

God is a pet owner who has two rules, and only two rules. They are:

1. I am your owner. Enjoy freely the food and water which I have provided for your good!
2. Don't drink out of the toilet.

...

Lust is also drinking out of the toilet. Lust is the disenchantment of the entire universe. It is a magic spell where suddenly nothing else is interesting, and after lust destroys the ability to enjoy anything else, lust destroys the ability to enjoy even lust. Proverbs says, "The adulterous woman"—today one might add, "and internet porn" to that—"in the beginning is as sweet as honey and in the end as bitter as gall and as sharp as a double-edged sword." Now this is talking about a lot more than pleasure, but it is talking about pleasure. Lust, a sin of

pleasure, ends by destroying pleasure. It takes chastity to enjoy even lust.

When we are in lust, *God does not seem real to us*. Rejecting lust allows us to start being re-sensitized to the beauty of God's creation, to spiritual sweetness, to the lightness of Heavenly light. Lust may feel like you're losing nothing but gaining everything, but try to be mindful of what you lose in lust.

And that's my best stab at making a "dartboard," meant so people will shoot at it and make something better, and more complete and less one-sided in navigating the pitfalls of technology. This isn't the only trap out there—but it may be one of the worst.

I would suggest that we need a comprehensive—or at least *somewhat* comprehensive—set of guidelines for Orthodox use of technology. Such a work might not become dated as quickly as you may think; as I write in the resources section below, I unhesitatingly cite a 1974 title as seriously relevant knowing full well that it makes no reference to individually owned computers or mobile devices: it's a case of "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Or, perhaps, *two* works: one for clergy with pastoral responsibilities, and one for those of us laity seeking our own guidance and salvation. I believe that today, we who have forms of property and wealth undreamed of when Christ gave one of the sternest Luddite warnings ever, *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth*, can very easily use things that do not lead to spiritual health: sometimes like how Facebook can erode marriages that are well defended as regards old-school challenges.

The best I know, secondhand perhaps, is that today's Church Fathers, on Mount Athos perhaps, are simply saying, "Unplug! Unplug! Unplug!" What they want instead sounds like a liberal political-social experiment, where people who have grown up in an urban setting and know only how to navigate life there, will move en masse and form some sort of Amish-like rural communities. Or perhaps something else is envisioned: mass migration to monasteries? Given all that monasticism offers, it seems sad to me to receive the angelic image, of all reasons, only because that's the only remaining option where you can live a sufficiently Luddite life. I have heard of spiritual giants who incomparably excel me saying that we should stop using recent technology at all. I have yet to hear of spiritual giants who incomparably excel me, *and who live in places where technology is socially mandated*, advise us to unplug completely. For that matter, I have yet to hear of *any* Orthodox clergy *who live in places in the world where technology is socially mandated* say, only and purely, "Unplug! Unplug! Unplug!"

The Orthodox Church, or rather the Orthodox-Catholic Church, is really and truly Catholic, *Catholic* ultimately coming from the Greek kata, "with", and holos, "whole", meaning "with the whole", meaning that the entirety of the Orthodox Church belongs to

every Orthodox-Catholic Christian: the saints alike living and dead, the ranks of priesthood and the faithful, and marriage and monasticism in entirety belong to every Orthodox Christian, every Orthodox-Catholic Christian: and giving the advice "Unplug! Unplug! Unplug!" as the limits of where the Orthodox-Catholic Church's God and salvation can reach, is very disappointing. It's comparable to saying that only monastics can be saved.

Total avoidance of all electronic technology is guidance, but not appropriate guidance, and we need advice, somewhat like the advice that began on how to use Facebook, to what I wrote about iPhones or internet porn. A successful dartboard makes it easier to say "What you said about _____ was wrong because _____ and instead we should say _____ because _____." And I am trying to raise a question. I am trying to raise the question of how Orthodox may optimally use technology in furtherance of living the divine life.

Is astronomy about telescopes? No!

I would close with a quote about technology—or is it? Computer science giant Edgser Dijkstra said,

Computer science is no more about computers than astronomy is about telescopes.

And how much more must Orthodox discussion of how to use technology ascetically be no more *about* technology than astronomy is *about* telescopes? The question is a question about spiritual discipline, of how the timeless and universal wisdom of *the Bible*, the *Philokalia*, and the canons of the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

Resources for further study

Books

All the Orthodox classics, from the Bible on down. The task at hand is not to replace the *Philokalia*, but to faithfully adapt the *Philokalia* (and/or the Seven Ecumenical Councils) to a new medium, as it were. The principles of *the Bible*, the *Philokalia*, and the Seven Ecumenical Councils are simply not dated and simply do not need to be improved. However, their application, I believe, needs to be extended. We need ancient canons and immemorial custom that has the weight of canon law: however ancient canons express a good deal more about face-to-face boundaries between men and women than boundaries in Facebook and on smartphones. We need guidance for *all* of these.

St. Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor. I reference Book II and its chapter on wine as paradigms we might look too.

CJS Hayward, *The Luddite's Guide to Technology.* You don't need to read all of my ebooks on the topic, and they overlap. This one I'm offering because I don't know of anything better in (attempting to) address classic Orthodox spirituality to the question of ascetical use of technology.

Metropolitan Gregory (Postnikov), *How to Live a Holy Life.* This 1904 title gives concrete practical instruction. The technology is different from today's technology, but it serves an interesting and valuable reference point for today.

Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television.* Mander is a former advertising executive who came to believe things about television, with implications for computers and smartphones, For instance, he argues that sitting for hours seeing mainly the light of red, green, and blue fluorescent pixels is actually awfully creepy. Mander has no pretensions of being an Orthodox Christian, or an Orthodox Jew for that matter, sounded an alarm in his apostasy from advertising that is worth at least hearing out. (Related titles, good or bad, include *The Plug-in Drug* and *Amusing Ourselves to Death.*

Online Articles

(The only Orthodox articles I mention are my own. This is not by choice.)

Paul Graham, "The Acceleration of Addictiveness." The author of *Hackers & Painters* raises a concern that is not specifically Orthodox, but "just" human. (But Orthodoxy is really just humanity exercised properly.)

Vince Homan, *the newsletter article quoted above.* I do not believe further comment is needed.

All the articles below except iPhones and Spirituality are included in *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* (paperback, kindle).

CJS Hayward, *Technomicon: Technology, Nature, Ascesis.* This is a first attempt to approach a kind of writing common in the Philokalia on the topic of ascetical use of technology.

CJS Hayward, *Veni, Vidi, Vomi: A Look at, "Do You Want to Date My Avatar?"*. My brother showed me a viral music video, "Do You Want to Date My Avatar?", very effectively done. This is a conversation hinging on why I viewed the video with horror.

CJS Hayward, *Plato: The Allegory of the... Flickering Screen?*. With slight, with minimal alterations, the most famous passage Plato wrote speaks volumes of our screens today.

CJS Hayward, *iPhones and Spirituality.* This piece is partly about appropriate use of smartphones and partly what we lose of real, human life when we lay the reins on the iPhone's neck. It was originally a Toastmasters speech.

CJS Hayward, *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*. This is my most serious attempt at making an encompassing treatment to prepare people for different technologies. Pastor Vince's article helped me realize it was too much of a do-it-yourself kit, appropriate as far as it goes, but not addressing what the proper pastoral application of the principles should be. And that is why I am writing a piece that will, I hope, provoke Orthodox clergy to expand our coverage in pastoral literature.

Stephanos

*The crown of Earth is the temple,
and the crown of the temple is Heaven.*

Stephan ran to get away from his pesky sister—if nothing else he could at least outrun her!

Where to go?

One place seemed best, and his legs carried him to the chapel—or, better to say, the temple. The chapel was a building which seemed larger from the inside than the outside, and (though this is less remarkable than it sounds) it is shaped like an octagon on the outside and a cross on the inside.

Stephan slowed down to a walk. This place, so vast and open and full of light on the inside—a mystically hearted architect who read *The Timeless Way of Building* might have said that it breathed—and Stephan did not think of why he felt so much at home, but if he did he would have thought of the congregation worshipping with the skies and the seas, the rocks and the trees, and choir after choir of angels, and perhaps he would have thought of this place not only as a crown to earth but a room of Heaven.

What he was thinking of was the Icon that adorns the Icon stand, and for that matter adorns the whole temple. It had not only the Icons, but the relics of (from left to right) Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint John Chrysostom, and Saint Basil the Great. His mother had told Stephan that they were very old, and Stephan looked at her and said, "Older than email? Now *that* is old!" She closed her eyes, and when she opened them

she smiled. "Older than email," she said, "and electric lights, and cars, and a great many of the kinds of things in our house, and our country, and..." her voice trailed off. He said, "Was it as old as King Arthur?" She said, "It is older than even the tale of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table."

As he had kissed the relics, he had begun to understand that what made them important was something deeper than their old age. But he could not say what.

But now he opened the doors to the temple, smelled the faint but fragrant smell of incense—frankincense—and was surprised to see another Icon on the stand. (Oh, wait, he thought. There were frequently other Icons.) The Icon was Saint Mary of Egypt. (This Icon did not have any relics.) He looked at the Icon, and began to look into it. What was her story? He remembered the part of her story he liked best—when, very far from being a saint at the beginning of her life, she came to a church and couldn't go in. An invisible force barred her, and a saint, the Mother of God, spoke to her through an Icon. Stephan vaguely remembered Father saying something about how it was also important how after years of fasting from everything but bread or vegetables, she was discovered but refused to go back to places that would still have been a temptation to her.

She was very gaunt, and yet that gauntness held fierce power. When he had looked into the Icon—or through it, as one looks through a window—he kissed her hand and looked at the royal doors, light doors with a kind of wooden mesh (it was beautiful) and a tower of three Icons each. The royal doors were at the center of the low, open wall that guarded the holy of holies within the temple, a special place crowned by the altar. The top two Icons told the place, not of the Annunciation *to* the Mother of God, but the Annunciation *of* the Mother of God. He looked into the pictures and saw the Annunciation *of* the Mother of God: not when the Archangel said, "Hail, O favored One! The Lord is with you," but when the Virgin listened and replied, "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word."

The spine of Eve's sin was snapped.

Death and Hell had already begun to crumble.

After looking through these pictures—it was not enough to say that he simply looked at them, though it was hard to explain why—he turned around and was absorbed into the Icon painted as a mural on the sloped ceiling that was now before him.

If that was the answer to Eve's sin, this was the answer to Adam's sin.

The Icon was an Icon the color of sunrise—or was it sunset? Then he saw something he hadn't seen before, even though this was one of his favorite Icons. It was an Icon of the Crucifixion, and he saw Christ at the center with rocks below—obedience in a garden of desolation had answered disobedience in a garden of delights—and beyond the rocks, the Holy City, and beyond the Holy City a sky with bands and whorls of light the color of sunrise. Now he saw for the first time that where Christ's body met the sky there was a band of purest light around it. Christ had a halo that was white at the

center and orange and red at the sides—fitting for the Christ who passed through the earth like a flame.

The flame made him think of the God Who Cannot Be Pushed Around. This God sent his Son, who was also the One Who Cannot Be Pushed Around. In his teaching, in his friendship, in his healing the sick and raising the dead, every step he made was a step closer to this, the Cross. And yet he did this willingly.

Stephan turned, and for a moment was drawn to the mural to the right, which was also breathtakingly beautiful. Two women bore myrrh (the oil that newly chrismated Orthodox have just been anointed with) to perform a last service—the last service they could perform—to a dearly loved friend. And yet they found an empty tomb, and a majestic angel announcing news they would not have dared to hope: the Firstborn of the Dead entered death and death could not hold him. Its power had more than begun to crumble. But then Stephan turned back, almost sharply. Yes, this was glory. This was glory and majesty and beauty. But Stephan was looking for the beginning of triumph...

...and that was right there in the Icon the color of sunrise. The Cross in itself was the victory of the God Who Cannot Be Pushed Around. However much it cost him, he never let go of his plan or his grace. Christ knew he could call for more than twelve legions of angels—but he never did. He walked the path the Father set before him to the very end.

Stephan stood, his whole being transported to the foot of the Cross. However long he spent there he did not know, and I do not know either. He looked through the Icon, and saw—tasted—the full victory of the God Who Cannot Be Pushed Around.

When he did look away, it was in the Light of that God. Everything now bore that Light. He went over to the relics of the patron saints of his land, and though they were much newer than the relics of Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint John Chrysostom, and Saint Basil the Great, that didn't seem to matter. It was like dust from another world—precious grains of sand from Heaven—and the Icon of Saint Herman of Alaska and Saint Innocent holding up a tiny building was richly colorful—"like a rainbow that has grown up," he heard one of the grown-ups say.

Then he walked over to the Icon of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, holding a scroll that was open partway, with his letter to the Romans: "Let me be given to the wild beasts, for by their means I can attain to God. I am God's wheat, and I am being ground by the teeth of the beasts, so that I may an"—but here the quotation stopped, leaving him wondering. That Icon itself was one of several old-looking, yellowed Icons—though not nearly the oldest around—held in a deep, rich brown wooden frame carved with grapevines and bunches of grapes, as many things in that room were carved (though some had intricate interwoven knots). Stephan said, "I want to be a martyr just like you, Saint Ignatius. Pray for me."

Then he walked over to an Icon that was much smaller, but showed a man standing besides a rustic settlement with an outer wall and turrets and doors and buildings inside. It looked medieval to him, and he wished he could enter that world. It was darkened and yellowed and had a gold leaf sky, and something was written at the top, but he couldn't read it because it was in a very old language: Old Slavonic.

Right by that Icon was Saint Anthony, the father of all monastics. He had a piercing gaze, and Stephan had the feeling he needed to confess something—but he couldn't think of anything besides his bout with his sister, and she had been a pest. He looked away.

Stephan looked at the Icon on the left of the wall, and saw the prince, Saint Vladimir, with buildings and spires behind him that looked like they were having a party.

Then Stephan stood in front of the main Icon of the Mother of God holding God the Son, though he stood some distance back. The background was gold, and this drew him in a different way than the Icon of Saint Vladimir. This more than any other did not work like a photograph. (Or at least he was more aware of this now.) It might look odd to people who were just used to photographs, but you could say that a photograph was just a picture, but to say this was just a picture would show that you missed what kind of a picture you were looking at. But he had trouble thinking of how. He didn't so much sense that he was looking inot the Icon as that the Mother of God and the Son of God were looking at him. He didn't even think of the Icon being the Icon of the Incarnation and First Coming.

Then he looked at the Icon of the Last Judgment, where Christ the King and Lord and Judge returns holding a book of judgment, a book that is closed because there is nothing left to determine.

He thought intensely. The First Coming of Christ was in a stable, in a cave, and a single choir of angels sung his glory. The Second and Glorious Coming he will ride on the clouds, with legion on legion of angels with him. The First Coming was a mystery, one you could choose to disbelieve—as many people did. There will be no mistaking the Second Coming. In the First Coming, a few knees bowed. In the Second Coming, every knee will bow, in Heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, some in bliss and rapture and others in utter defeat. At the First Coming, a lone star in the sky heralded Christ's birth. At the Second Coming, the stars will fall to earth like overripe figs and the sky recede as a vanishing scroll.

What were those chilling, terrifying words of Christ? "Depart from me, you who are damned, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, sick and in prison and you did not visit me, lacking clothes and you did not give me the dignity of having clothes to wear." Then the condemned will say, "Where did we see you hungry

and not feed you, or thirsty or sick or in prison and not take care of you?" And the King and Lord and Judge will say, "I most solemnly tell you, as much as you did not do it for the least of these brothers and sisters, you did not do it for me."

Stephan looked at the Icon and said, "I wish Dad would let me give money to beggars when I see..." Then his voice trailed off. The words didn't feel right in his mouth. He looked at the solemn love in the Icon, and then his mind was filled with the memory of his sister in tears.

He slowly backed down from the Icon, feeling the gaze of the King and Lord and Judge. He turned to almost run—he was in too holy of a place to run, and...

Something stopped him from leaving. After struggling inside, he looked around, and his eyes came to rest on the Icon of the Crucifixion that was the color of sunrise. Now he had not noticed them earlier this time, but he saw the Mother of God on one side and the beloved disciple on the earth. What had he just heard in church on Sunday? "Christ said to the beloved disciple, who is not here named because he is the image of every disciple, 'Behold your Mother,' and to his Mother, 'Behold your Son.' Listen to me very carefully. He did not say, 'Behold another man who is also your son,' but something much stranger and more powerful: 'Behold your Son,' because to be Orthodox is to become Christ." Stephan started to think, "Gold for kingship, incense for divinity, myrrh for suffering—these are Christ's gifts but he shares them with the Church, doesn't he?" He looked up, and then looked down.

"But I need to go and apologize for hurting my sister."

Then Christ's icon walked out the door.

A Strange Archaeological Find

To my most excellent friend and pupil:

Yes, you are correct about the letter's origins, and you are right to be somewhat confused. This one's going to take a more than a few words.

Literature from almost any place can be timeless. This people had an epic poem that appeared to be about cat and mouse, but was really about much more: the struggle between good and evil, and the vindication of the oppressed. We do not have a complete manuscript, but we know their children would listen to these poems for hours. I know the criticisms of that literature, and they are all true—but the literature is universal and timeless. I read some of it to my youngest, and he was laughing.

However, not everything they made is that universal. You asked if the document you'd found showed unusual local color. I'd rather call it a slagheap of discarded local paints and pigments. Making sense is going to take some explaining, but keep your cheer. By the time you're done, you may find some other things less difficult to think about.

Remember the lecture illustration of the potato. At one end is the entirety of man, or what is universally human; at the other end, the full specificity of one man. Understanding man, or understanding one man, means in part moving in an infinitely differentiated space full of nuance. I don't need to remind you that the actual lesson has other dimensions as well, in part because we aren't getting that far with this letter.

Now think about those things that are corporate to a people. Take a thin slice of the potato, and throw the rest away—yes, I know, that's most of the potato. Now

there's... I'll explain what the other slice is in a bit, but imagine another, even thinner slice of the slice, so what's left is a line—a line that looks like a point if you view it the wrong way.

What is that second slice? Step into a friend's field, and leave a rock to remember your place. Now walk to his house, counting the steps. Then walk back, and walk to some other landmark—a tree, perhaps, and count your steps. Now forget the earth beneath your feet, the grass you see, the children smiling, and the birds overhead—not quite 'forget', that's too strong, but push them back as secondary. What counts, what makes that place uniquely itself, is the number of steps you counted in going to the house and the tree. Of course the steps can be used to find that place, but imagine further that the number of steps make that place what it is—and it would be quite different if the house had been built ten paces further.

They do this with the number of winters that have passed. That is the second slice, and it is viewed end-on, so as to only be a point—but the strange thing is they do not think this is part of the picture, but that it *is* the picture. In a strange way, that line, viewed end-on, is much bigger than the potato we think of; it's not just a teacher's illustration, even one that is repeated very often, but an idea so basic and foundational that most of them aren't aware they believe it. They might perhaps be shocked, and think the other person is irrational, if someone were to deny the significance of one of the mantras that encapsulates this view, but... I'm trying to think of an example... I'll have to get back to you on that.

That is one major piece of background. Another that I'll mention—and this is not universal to the people, but something that tends to infect the more intelligent... ok, a bit of background.

We have, and use, one basic kind of candle. Once I was able to visit an archaist who had been able to revive one of the candles they were using. He invited several of us in, pulled a lever...

The candle was encased in a goblet, and it had a dazzling brilliance—as if there was a bonfire burning, and yet its flame was no larger than a small candle's, and it did not flicker at all, nor did it make smoke. The light was not red nor orange, not even yellow, but purest white like the sun—and when I broke my gaze and looked away, the other things in the room looked as if there were a little sun in the room. It was one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen.

As I was saying, they had several kinds of candle, but one thing they had in common was not only that they produced light, but that when they ran out, the wick turned black. One of their jokers, in an inspired moment, produced a theory that what were called 'light sources' were instead things that sucked dark: darkness was heavy, which is why if you swim down in a lake you will find more and more dark. It was absolutely brilliant humor, all the moreso if you know what sort of thing it parodied.

There are multiple theories like that, and there was... well, this will require a bit of background as well. Any magical system of merit doesn't just try to get things done; it has a theory about why the magic works, and underneath there is a story. One of their magical theories essentially said there was a nonexistent spirit which, despite its nonexistence, hovered over the earth and made more of organisms that were excellent and fewer of organisms that were poor. This theory was woven into a narrative about great mounds of rock and fire, then earth, then lightning striking a lake and bringing something to life, then the spirit working that one living thing into a symphony of diversity, organisms coming and going, until at last mortal gods walked the earth... and then, in the truly greatest speaking, all returns to elemental chaos. It is a truly great myth, and I am saddened that our storytellers do not recount anything like it.

There is an idea of a 'meme', which is an idea, story, or joke, construed as a living thing that this sort of spirit is operating on. I was interested when I encountered the idea, and read with even more interest when the Principia Cybernetica described memes in explicitly more anthropomorphic terms than people. Here, I was certain, was a masterpiece of comedic genius...

...and then one of my colleagues explained that it wasn't. It was deadly serious. I thought it parodied dirty sleight-of-hand in anti-Christian polemics... but it didn't. It couched terms in heavily prejudicial language, like their example question of, "Have you stopped beating your wife?" but somehow even very bright Christians accepted what far less intelligent ones intuited to be unfair and insulting.

Now I remember one of the catch-phrases, in terms of how important the number of passed winters was for them. I'd have to look at their literature for more, but one of them was, "We're entering the third millenium." As spoken, it was not simply the answer to a trivial question, but a statement of great metaphysical import. From what little I can tell, if someone contradicted this association, it was to them as if he had contradicted that the sun was white.

I think I've given enough of a preface to look at the letter—rather than writing a full letter of preliminaries. Here's the opening:

Several things relate here. Trying to 'see' what happened in history, particularly where we are looking at the origins of Christianity, is to me somewhat akin to being in a river trying to look back through all the moving water and intuiting what the source looked like when the water you are in now started to flow. 'Tis murky indeed... Those historians and theologians, who might have us believe they are not looking back through the murky river as we are but rather hovering over the source in a helicopter somehow transported back through time, are slipping in a priestly function in so doing.

I'd like to say a few things. As regards your main questions on this passage, you got one right and one wrong. The Helicopter was a giant mechanical bird capable of carrying men—oh, about that question, these things were produced by magic, but it was not occult practice to use them; this is not an occult reference, and I don't want to delve into why not. You were right about that.

What you were wrong about is your reading that the people being criticized are looking downstream while the letter's author is in the privileged Helicopter able to look down on the ancient Christians and the people he was criticizing. That isn't what he was saying at all... wait, I know why you would think that. You might be right in that that is what he was really saying. Kind of like the koan I'll adapt:

An ancient Christian looked troubled.

One later Christian said, "He is troubled."

Another Christian said, "How do you know whether or not he's troubled? You're not him!"

The other replied, "How do you know whether or not I know whether or not he's troubled? You're not me!"

The tone and spirit of the letter indeed suggests that the ancient Christians, and the author's conservative contemporaries, are trapped in a river, while the author is hovering about freely in the Helicopter. However, that is not the intent. The intent was to accuse the conservatives of doing something that would appear strange given the assumptions of a metaphor that runs counter to their thought, as for that matter it did for ancient Christian thought.

Further complicating our task is our respective cultural memes and our personal ongoing process of regeneration. The former contains all the turbidity thrown up by all previous good thinking and confused thinking. The latter usually contains some unrecognized proclivities.

The reference to 'cultural memes' carries quite a lot more freight than the already substantial freight they associate with cultures. I'm trying to think of something to use as a metaphor to convey what is meant here, and I am failing. It's a bit like saying "two people are uniquely themselves and cannot converse otherwise", except that what it plays out as is not a celebration of God's gift of humanity, where God made each man unique and catholic, but being uniquely themselves is construed as an impediment to catholicity: Gregory's skill in choosing nautical metaphors is an impediment to talking with Jane, because most people don't work that way. It's not exactly the doctrine of the Fall, either, saying that there are dark marks on each person and society, and that that

hinders communication. It's more... the central dogma of their magic is that there is no magic, and there is an essentially amoral and even material conception of human culture: culture is a spiritually inert weight which slows and weighs people down, except that's not right either. My head is spinning now, and you probably understand less about them than you did at the beginning of this paragraph.

The last sentence seems to stem from individualism, in that corporate personality, the spirit of a society, is a source of turgidity, but God does work with people, and he sometimes gives them special abilities despite his difficulties in blessing communal knowledge.

Hence my insistence that we know what we are thinking with as well as what we are thinking about.

No, this sentence is *not* corrupt. I checked.

Perhaps the best way to put it stems from a friend's comment that if he takes a strong and immediate dislike to someone, it is quite often because the other person exemplifies one of his vices. There's some resonance with Confucius's words, "When I see a virtuous man, I try to be like him. When I see an evil man, I reflect on my own behavior."

I understand your suggestion that the reading be emended, "Hence my insistence that conservatives know what we think they are thinking with, as well as what we are thinking about," but you have to understand that the statement as read, literally, can be made in perfectly good faith. Some people talked about the importance of knowing what they were thinking with; the people they criticized often did so.

Regarding what is called feminism, our very use of the term indicates the influence of our cultural meme and our submission to someone else's cultural agenda.

You were right on this time. He's not an etymologist. However, there are reasons besides individual carelessness that this would be presented as serious analysis.

You know that the New Testament writers tended to read any ambiguity for all it was worth, in their favor. The considered people tended to be much more tightly rigorous in treating Biblical texts, but relaxed rigor and made "Just-So" stories about words in their own time: "family man" was taken by their feminist dictionary to be a mark of sexism (because that quality is assumed in a woman so much that we don't have a specific term for a family woman), but you can rest assured that, had the language had a term "family woman" but not "family man", the dictionary entry would have talked about how sexist it was to have a word used to talk about a woman as a "family woman", but not even have a word to refer to a "family man".

If you ask a historian or an etymologist, their very use of the term feminism indicates something very prosaic: a movement started, calling itself feminism, and the name has stayed the same across time. This is a run-of-the-mill linguistic occurrence, closely related to the growth of dead metaphor, and has the same political significance as the fact that the gesture they use to greet a friend originated as a gesture of mistrust used to keep a stranger from drawing a weapon: none.

However, this sort of folk analysis is innately valuable for historians. You need to keep your eyes open for passages like this; some sentences can tell more than a page of straightforward explanation.

In the context of biblical discussion, much progress has been made on 'gender passages' such as 1 Timothy 2.

In their conception, that one thin slice of potato is magnified in part by a conception of progress, a conception that ideas, like machines, grow rust and need to be replaced for no other reason than being old. As such, their use of the term 'progress' means something different from our understanding of a student acquiring the expertise of his master. It means that people are becoming better, wiser, and nobler than the people who came before.

Given that I am writing to you and not speaking publicly, I'm not going to traipse through and analyze the texts referred to. I can say, without bothering to look them up, that they are using their immense scholarly resources to make themselves stupider than they actually are, dredging up some pretext to reverse a conclusion that is obvious to a child of twelve. You and I do this for humor; they were quite serious.

The starting point for learning this is via Christians for Biblical Equality. See the link to their website on the links page of www.intelligentchristian.org. I am convinced they are right.

Yes, there is a reason for the use of the term 'Biblical equality'. Specifically, the name functions as whitewash when even backwoods farmers have caught on that there are problems with feminism. As far as accuracy goes, one in two isn't bad for these things; it isn't Biblical (note that the Bible doesn't qualify as a suggested starting point for Biblical equality), but the choice of term makes up, if one may follow their linguistics: they seek e-quality, the absence of qualitative or distinctive traits such as God created every person to exhibit. Their way of leveling the ground also levels the people who are standing on that ground. A cue to this is found in their use of the term 'gender' where previous thinkers had referred to 'sexuality'.

The older term, 'sexuality', evokes a man and a woman on a couch, but that moment is the visible shoot atop a network of roots. The deep root stated, in essence, that different physical characteristics are not the end of different personhood, but the very beginning: that masculinity and femininity are attributes of the spirit, and that differences of spirit run deeper than differences of body. The feminist movement's search for equality discarded this, believing there are only physical differences, and if there's any differences in people's minds, they must be arbitrary social constructions, namely 'gender'.

The surface issue most commonly discussed—the only issue, to many listeners—is the issue of whether women should be ordained. In this regard, the people who were for women's ordination couldn't see why it shouldn't be that way, and the people against couldn't explain. If there's no essential difference, if as the feminists said we are one type of soul that happens to be encased in two types of body, then it is an unambiguous consequence that women should be ordained.

I trust you will see that something important has slipped into that nice-looking statement. If not—think closely about "one type of soul that happens to be encased in two types of body." What is being said? This doesn't just impact sexuality. The teaching that we are soul encased in body is ancient, and it lies at the root of that great Hydra, Gnosticism. Gnosticism starts out very rigidly ascetic, trying to be spiritual by shunning anything bodily—because we're spirits and not bodies. Then it shifts, and ascetics are shocked when their spiritual children engage in every form of bodily vice—because we're spirits and not bodies, so it doesn't matter *what* we do with our bodies. I've studied it, and it happens every time.

I would recall to you an early lecture, where I distinguished a philosophical conclusion from a practical conclusion: there's a deeper resemblance than philosophy being practical, but I wish to talk about them as distinct ideas. A philosophical conclusion is what a philosopher will develop from an idea with an hour's thought, and it does not much concern me here. A practical conclusion is what will happen over time if you start a community believing an idea and come back to it later. Gnostic libertinism is the practical conclusion of Gnostic asceticism.

Does the Biblical egalitarian perspective have a practical conclusion? It does, and it is something even that Biblical egalitarian could have seen—could have seen without engaging in the execrated practice of opening a history book. The perspective did not originate with him; it happened before, and the late forms were around for him to see.

The claim bandied about is that women should be ordained. Well... it appears that women had been ordained before and after the Biblical egalitarians, and so far as I read, God's blessing was on it. However, that's really just a glint on the surface. What lies deeper, and the reason people were so bent on having half the priests be priestesses, is the idea that there is no fundamental difference between men and women beyond what

impacts the mechanics of reproduction—because if there isn't, then of course it's ridiculous to only ordain men. That assumption was not given critical examination.

What happened after that is what had happened every other time, and what he could have verified by opening his eyes. If the teachings about masculinity and femininity are erased from Christian doctrine, a few proof texts about women's roles won't last long... very few years pass before people explain them away, as appears "progress" in misinterpreting the Timothy passage above. The Bible is an interlocking whole, a great sculpture in perfect balance—and if you pull away one part you don't like, others will not stay in place. So we celebrate the ordination of women, or—in more honest terms—celebrate the annihilation of belief that sexuality could inform how people contribute to the body of Christ.

After that, why be so unenlightened as to maintain sex roles anywhere else? Why not gay marriage? By that time, it was difficult to have anything besides a gay marriage, even with a man and a woman both involved: it was some legal contract involving sex, but disconnected with any expectation of loyalty or openness to children, so why not a marriage between two men? Sure, the Bible has a couple of proof texts about that, but they're not really any harder to "explain" and "investigate" than those that suggest human sexuality contributes to the Church... It wasn't an accident, by the way, that feminism specifically celebrated lesbianism. There were of course other factors, but part of it was the dismantling of an older teaching that celebrated sex as the interaction between two very opposite poles.

By this time, a sculpture that had been hanging precariously slid further down. Somewhere along the line any revelation of God as masculine and not feminine was dismantled—because "we need to keep an open mind and not confine God to traditional canons of gender", meaning in practice "we need to confine God to our anti-traditional abhorrence of sexuality." You'll remember the Re-Imagining conference which there was that big hubbub about—celebrating the goddess and more fundamentally believing that all the Biblical images their movement didn't like were arbitrary imaginations put in by unenlightened men. I frankly don't see why anyone, conservative or liberal, made such a stink about that. It wasn't any worse than what was happening elsewhere; it just dropped the usual mask.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Where people raised the axe and chopped away one troublesome root of the Ancient Tree, what invariably happened was that that wasn't the one troublesome root; now that it was gone, their vision cleared to see that there was another one of equal trouble... and another... and another... and by the time the Tree fell, people were glad for the death of an ancient menace. The phenomenon is a bit like a fire—the more it has, the more it wants.

I am leery of the unrecognized use of logical systems which were developed outside scripture.

I understand your point, but I really don't think he's trying to be ironic. "A meme is not a social construct like a syllogism; it reflects the terrain of which the syllogism is a very imperfect map." Agreed, this is a bad way of putting it, but... the best I can explain it is that he is brilliant, knows many of the facets of knowing how to think, but doesn't understand how to think. Reminds me of when I had a student trained in memory but not our thought, who answered perfectly my questions until I stumbled on the fact that he didn't understand what was being talked about—he memorized words, and did so far better than I ever will, but didn't grasp the ideas the words were meant to hold. This is different; the author knows large chunks of the truth, but... Irenaeus wrote how false teachings were as if someone had taken a jewel statue of the king, and reassembled it to an imperfectly executed statue of a fox, and said the fox were the king. There are real jewels there, but the statue isn't right.

As we now know through complexity studies, the old Aristotelian view that A and non-A were mutually exclusive is suspect.

In response to your question, I'm more hesitant to say that he's gone from believing in infallible logic to believing infallible complexity study has debunked fallible logic. It comes closer to say that logic is old and favored by many traditional theologians, and therefore in double jeopardy—complexity studies provide a good platform to attack it. If Aristotle had developed complexity studies and more recent endeavors had found logic, I believe this statement would show how logical inquiry reveals inherent problems in complexity studies.

At any rate, after tasting old wine, he has tasted the new, and said, "The new is better."

There is one reason to be particularly cautious in your use of logic.

He's not saying what you think he's saying. He's not describing logic as being like an array of tools, where you should use a file rather than a hammer to smooth a piece of wood. The direction he's going is more, after having seen that different tools perform different tasks, to say that you need to be careful in using a saw to cut wood, because there are so many things a saw isn't good at. It might be like an oral person with a well-trained memory discovering the power of writing, and doubting the justification of memorizing the stories he tells.

That is the instinctive, post-fall, unregenerative, inclination of males to engineer.

In another context, you would be right; the long string of words would convey something wonderful and poetic that one word will not tell. Here, it is there to achieve a quite different effect that one word wouldn't:

Instinctive

I know that instincts are good: the instincts to preserve oneself, or seek company, or procreate are part of the goodness of man. You have to keep in mind who is using the word, though. Remember what the feminist position implies for a theology of body: it is a husk, an exterior, and therefore to say someone is acting on instinct, is to say he is living by something base and exterior, and is less than a man. He is *not* building up to a panegyric on the glory of intelligent creation; he's using what is meant to be a very pejorative term.

Post-fall

I've seen this usage before, and I don't know what to make of it. What I can tell you is that it serves as a kind of loaded language to dismiss a feminist's opponent; the opponent is "locked into a post-fall mode of thinking", quite often without a proper explanation of why he is wrong. It's a sort of irrefutable trump.

The propositional content of this epithet is debatable; it states that the Fall created an urge which has just been declared part of our created instinct. It's rather confusing if you try to reason it out, and much better if you don't reason it out, and just let the words flow over you and show that whatever's being discussed is bad.

Unregenerative

This word may be read as saying that something is not itself part of the regeneration process; unless of the whole of a Christian's life (barring sin) is part of the regenerative process, this could just be part of a holy life that is not concerned with the facet called regeneration. However, in poetic context, this is part of the buildup saying that whatever follows is bad.

Males

Here we do not even see 'men', which in use by a feminist refers to less than one-half of men, but 'males'... the term reminds me of a related language, where it is considered to use the terms 'male' and 'female' of a human: they are used in biology, but of humans it is quite vulgar.

One other nuance, present if not obvious, is not simply as you or I would make a such a statement: you or I would refer to women half of the time when we were saying something sexually specific. They wouldn't. This statement says something very insulting about 'males', not because this sample happens to refer to us, but because no male feminist would dare to make such statements about women. A female feminist may say more abrasive things about traditional women, but a male feminist will nearly never do so. This provides a very interesting glimpse into their view of equality.

Engineer

Literally speaking, the term refers to part of how man participates in culture and the glory of God: that marvelous candle I described earlier was engineered. However, it is used in a metaphorical sense here, and is highly pejorative. The implication is that the accused is engineering something that was never meant to be engineered.

The interesting thing, especially with the last one, is... traditional theology is something organic that has been passed down from generation to generation, tended with the utmost of care by thinkers far too humble to try to engineer it, and is now being rejected in favor of something that has been engineered. That's why the spiritual climate produced the ill-starred Re-Imagining conference, something that wouldn't occur to the traditional theologians who're accused of engineering. This irony plays out in the next line:

Disguised in much theological discussion is the 'what should Christianity be like if I designed it?' agenda.

It is painfully obvious to you and me that making "much progress" on Pauline passages is seeing what Christianity would be like if they designed it, but the irony is apparently not evident there.

The list of indictments brought against traditional theology can be interesting. Looking closely may reveal things the accusers perceive because it is part and parcel of their world.

I don't think Christianity, or any generic god-conscious theology, was designed or engineered by the living God in an anthropomorphically satisfying way.

An astute observation; there is probably fertile ground for your research into why a person making this claim would do so in the context of criticizing traditional theology for not being anthropomorphically satisfying to people sharing his agenda.

It matters not whether the logic we use comes from Aristotle, Plato or Alfred E Newman, let's spell it out when we use it and justify why we use it.

Regarding your question, about why he neither spells out his logic nor justifies it: I honestly don't know. Perhaps he was rushed (an unusually common emotion for them), and he decided this was a poorer use of a small perceived available time than points of greater perceived substance, such as the subsequent list of opponents using personal attacks.

One of the tip-offs of the male dominator Christian theologians

Thinking about your intuition, I decided to check the archives.

An earlier note among the group had understood and responded in depth: specifically, that domination is what a feminist would expect of tradition because of his stereotype, and it is something read in, but is present neither in the Bible, nor in the theologians being represented. The 'misogynist' Paul is among few ancient writers who didn't tell husbands to keep women in line; he addresses women as moral agents, placing submission in their hearts, and then tells the men to love the women, naming as their example the most costly love of all—much more costly than submission. The group member responding had said, in so many words, that the sigil of male headship and authority is not a crown of gold but a crown of thorns.

Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on. The feminist position *needs* the traditional position to be abrasive to women—and if the Bible or traditionalists clarify, never mind; the abuse will be made up in the feminist's mind so he can still vilify the benighted.

Is their use of personal attack on egalitarian theologians.

I've done some reading of them. Once I was priveleged to visit an arcane library that had nearly half the issues to *First Things* and *Touchstone*, and I don't remember an article where one of them personally attacked an opposing theologian. There was quite a lot of polemic, and one devastating satire in "The Other Face of Gaia," but... they show a remarkable amount of restraint, and I'm getting sidetracked.

What I was going to say is that these people viewed being nice and love as the same thing, so that talking about being loving but not nice is equivalent to Plato talking about being eudaimonic and being evil—a perceived contradiction in terms. In this case...

I can see how some Biblical passages would lose some of their force. They had a concept of being 'unsanitary', kind of an amoral sense that you could get sick from something, and they knew disgust, but they didn't have a sense of being polluted and defiled... so few nonscholars would read Jesus' comparison of pillars of community to whitewashed tombs as being not merely an insult but a metaphor of their being so unholy that a person whose shadow fell on them would be defiled for a whole week. Likewise... they usually thought cannibalism was wrong, and knew the plot of *Oedipus Rex*, but they would still read 'brood of vipers' as simply comparing people to snakes and not with the full realization that Jesus compared them to creatures thought to kill their mothers and eat their way out—cannibalism and matricide being two of the most revolting things an ancient listener could think of. I can see how they might miss much of the abrasiveness, but there are so many other passages: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in the last times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron." You've read the Bible more than once; you could supply your own examples.

Somehow they were able to read these passages and not question the belief that the limits of niceness are the limits of love. I don't know how to explain why; that's just how it is. And so apparently the theologians mentioned are dismissed because they fail to meet a standard the Bible itself rejects.

Wayne Grudem, for example, has vilified Cathie Kroeger. He did this in print some time ago and it still hurts Cathie. I saw her, her husband Dick along with Elaine Storkey at Cathie's home a few weeks ago and it is obvious the personal attacks have done damage.

I talked with a colleague, and I believe Arius also sustained emotional damage from what happened at Nicaea.

J I Packer has written some nasty things, using vocabulary stemming from secular conflict.

In reference to 'vocabulary stemming from secular conflict'... I understand your asking where the article author gets *his* vocabulary from, but I'd prefer to abstain from judgment. I don't know that we have the background to evaluate this.

James Dobson, who is a psychologist of non-biblical foundations, has led the fight against the publication of more gender equal translations.

I've done some research, and I think he's referring to the obvious James Dobson... I wanted to do further research, because it's not at all obvious to me why he's categorized as a theologian... a sharp popularizer, to be granted, and a shade of demagogue; his psychological expertise is held in light esteem by psychologists now and was apparently held in light esteem then... perhaps the author was using the term 'theologian' as a convenient designation for "anyone prominent who disagrees with him." I don't mean that as a joke; if I had to choose between asking a brilliant theologian or a demagogue like Dobson to lead a fight, I'd pick the demagogue hands-down. (Perhaps the author wasn't familiar with very many *real* theologians' defense of sexuality.)

The idea of gender equal translations is interesting. Assuming a more modest objective of correcting gender bias without reading asexuality into God, the argument is made that the original languages used terms that were effectively asexual, so faithfully rendering them were asexual... and the terms in the original language were grammatically masculine which were understood to include the feminine. What's interesting here is that the terms in English were grammatically masculine and understood to include the feminine, universally and without question until feminists decided them to have gender bias.

It's kind of like someone going into a room where you enjoy seeing by candlelight, and then someone comes and brings in a blinding torch—and you get irritated and ask why, so he explains that you need the extra light because your eyes are dazzled.

Dobson's wife writes that the foundation of Christian marriage is the submission of the wife to the husband.

I don't share her perspective, but it is not clear to me why this statement is particularly significant. A more rigorous, if also more vivid, statement is found in Martin Luther's statement that if your theology is perfect except for what the world, the flesh, and the Devil are at that moment attacking, then you are preaching nothing.

Many people pick one or more specializations or areas of emphasis; it's an understandable temptation to think that your specialization is the center of the universe. If you're smiling at this, you might take a moment to remember the many times you have viewed history as the foundation to all scholarly inquiry. It's not; it has a place among the Disciplines, and I am glad to study it, but history is not the foundation to Discipline.

It doesn't surprise me that a woman allied with Dobson would think submission was the foundation of Christian marriage; it has the dual qualities of being important and under attack. What I fail to see is why her statement should be that significant.

I favour and encourage the popularization and democratization of bible study and take the view that if a theologian can understand then so can I. And if I can understand it then it can be produced in a popularly understandable form.

Part of this passage is very confusing; before and after, he is frustrated by popularized and democratized Bible study which leads people to contradict his conclusion. I'm not going to sort through that, but I wish to summarize one element:

There's a kind of proverb, very common, where someone meeting a specialist would say, "In a sentence, explain what it is that you know." What is interesting is that this was not perceived as a riddle of heroic proportions, or even a ridiculous question; they believed instead that the burden of effort was on the specialist, and if he could not convey what knowledge he had obtained by years of excellent study, then he didn't know what he was talking about. The attitude in this challenge is apparently present in what is proposed.

On one level, there is confusion; given that the Bible is beyond any one person's understanding, the Bible was available, not merely in one or two translations, but so many translations we don't have a count. Many of these were simplified. What appears to be said is not a Wycliffe call to make the Bible available to the common man, but a call for propaganda that will obscure what is presently obvious to the lay reader.

Instead we get more structure from these men who design and engineer. As I say, structure can speak louder than words. Structure can speak louder than the word of God. And for some, structure can become the word of God.

You have seen an article demonstrating how structure can speak louder than the word of God, an article that seeks and begs that the structure become the word of God. Read it closely. The allegation is made that structure and engineering are the realm of the tradition with no consideration made for how they might belong to the re-imaginers. Go to the First Things archive and read "The Skimpole Syndrome:" never mind if you dislike it, but is that the writing of an engineer? Then read materials from Re-Imagining 2000 and ask if you see a reverent and trusting preservation of a transcendent and divine gift.

I don't know what, if anything, will come of it, but I took the opportunity to suggest once again to Cathie, Dick and Elaine that they begin producing their own translations of the gender passages along with an outline of the reasons for their differing translation and links for further study.

Why are they making a translation? Well, stop and think. I've made translations for the following reasons:

- To take a text not available in a given language, and make an understandable rendering.
- To take a text available only available in an arcane dialect of a given language, and make it understandable.
- To produce something that is close on a word-to-word level.
- To produce a text that renders thought-for-thought.
- Some careful balance of the previous two goals.
- To document linguistic ambiguity.

What is interesting here is that they aren't making a translation for any of those reasons. There's one reason you or I might not normally think of: to obscure a text's meaning.

You know that translations then tended to gut the Song of Songs, but there's really more going on here. The one I think was called the *Now Indispensible Version* was one where the scholars wanted to render the cruder passages accurately, but their elders said that part of God's word wasn't fit for public consumption. Translation bugaboos we will always have with us, but for some translations it is the *raison d'etre*. The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures opens the Great Beginning with, "In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." The original for that verse says, literally, "And God was the Word;" Greek did not give John a more emphatic way to say, "And the Word was God." So why this translation? It is a translation made by heretics for the express purpose of being able to say, "Flip, flip, flip. The Bible doesn't really say that. See! My translation doesn't say so right here!"

That is exactly the kind of translation that is being requested here.

Clearly, from the discussion within our own intelligent group, the egalitarian information is not getting out.

I examined the archives: we know that egalitarian information was getting out in the group, and we know that because some very wise people rejected it, and stated that they had done so. The remark here is reminiscent of people who believe that, if you don't

share their perspective, it can only be because you don't understand what they're saying. The mentioned article was actually a response sparked by someone who had weighed egalitarianism in the balance, and found it wanting.

Graham

One last note, because I know what you chose not to write.

He was not dead in mind.

He was absolutely brilliant—brighter than you. Graham Clinton was a leader of the International Christian Mensa. Mensa is a society that allows people who have a certain quantified wisdom such as is found with one man among fifty, and their leaders are often even sharper. Graham Clinton was someone who worked through struggle, held a great deal of compassion for his neighbor, and did many good works—and I have intentionally shown you his writing so that you may see someone brilliant and a leader among Christians. He also spent some time at a very good seminary. He did not hold ecclesiastical title, but he was concerned (and talented) for a Christian life of the mind.

Satan will attack us wherever he can, and may be far more powerful on our strengths than our weakness. The letter I cite, and the movement from which it came, was not a movement of half-wits; it held many sharp people. It takes quite a lot of wits to make yourself that stupid. Compassion doesn't hurt; Graham could never have fallen for this poison did he not hold a great deal of compassion.

You do well enough in gawking at foreigners. That's commendable; it's good amusement. I might suggest there is more you could learn from your gawking—in particular, that their foibles are all too often our foibles dressed up in other clothes. All of the darkness in that letter is darkness I find in my own heart.

Would you come over here for a season? I miss you, and the discussions seemed to be livelier when they had your questions.

Cordially yours,

Sutodoreh

The year of our Lord 2504.

A Strange Picture

As I walked through the gallery, I immediately stopped when I saw one painting. As I stopped and looked at it, I became more and more deeply puzzled. I'm not sure how to describe the picture.

It was a picture of a city, viewed from a high vantage point. It was a very beautiful city, with houses and towers and streets and parks. As I stood there, I thought for a moment that I heard the sound of children playing—and I looked, but I was the only one present.

This made all the more puzzling the fact that it was a disturbing picture—chilling even. It was not disturbing in the sense that a picture of the Crucifixion is disturbing, where the very beauty is what makes it disturbing. I tried to see what part might be causing it, and met frustration. It seemed that the beauty was itself what was wrong—but that couldn't be right, because when I looked more closely I saw that the city was even more beautiful than I had imagined. The best way I could explain it to myself was that the ugliness of the picture could not exist except for an inestimable beauty. It was like an unflattering picture of an attractive friend—you can see your friend's good looks, but the picture shows your friend in an ugly way. You have to fight the picture to really see your friend's beauty—and I realized that I was fighting the picture to see the city's real beauty. It was a shallow picture of something profound, and it was perverse. An artist who paints a picture helps you to see through his eyes—most help you to see a beauty that you could not see if you were standing in the same spot and looking. This was like looking at a mountaintop through a pair of eyes that were blind, with a

blindness far more terrible, far more crippling, than any blindness that is merely physical. I stepped back in nausea.

I leaned against a pillar for support, and my eyes fell to the bottom of the frame. I glanced on the picture's title: *Porn*.

Technology is Part of our Poverty

The reason for this work

This piece arose from a conversation with a fairly bright friend I had where I realized I had been putting important points of data out but not explaining or clarifying very well how they were connected, assuming connections were obvious when they weren't. This piece is not intended to add anything new to my portfolio of documents, but to explain and/or re-explain with more "connective tissue" where the reader will be told how they fit together.

Clearing away one distraction

The effort to go virtual made more painfully apparent the resource disparities affecting the underprivileged. I acknowledge such, but my point has nothing really to do with that. No objections to such discussion, but I am not attempting such a discussion here. I am discussing something else.

An example of a gap

To illustrate the kind of gap I am talking about, I would like to look at *Bridge to Terebithia*, which is partly driven by a cultural gap between a poor farmboy and an urban gal whom the author marks as being Privileged with a capital **P**. It's not just that, as the Wikipedia article points out, that her family is the one family in town where "Money is not the issue." Her family does not own a television, a point which prompted the farmboy to assume her family is too poor to own a television. Other markers where

the author attaches a bold-font label of "Privileged" are that she does not know the Easter story, but listens to it with some wonder and says it's like the story of Socrates's trial and death, or Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

The story is largely a story of cross-cultural encounter, and it is so no less because the two central characters are both U.S. citizens, both white, of the same age, and for that matter are both can run. The privilege is not just that the girl's parents are wealthy and purchase a rural house to take a break and re-evaluate their priorities. Not owning a television is a major marker of the girl's Privileged family, and I will consider that very important in the points that follow. But my other major reason for presenting this, besides my wanting to underscore that the girl's family Does Not Own a Television, is that studying and exploring a gap across what really amounts to culture is a large portion of what drives this story and makes this Newberry Award winner interesting.

Gaps like these, in my opinion, are well worth paying attention to, and it is my intent in this post to understand a few gaps and reap something very worthwhile from minding the gaps.

Why I disagree with "In the future, we'll all be Harry Potter"

Jakob Nielsen in "In the future, we'll all be Harry Potter" writes:

By saying that we'll one day be like Harry Potter, I don't mean that we'll fly around on broomsticks or play three-dimensional ballgames (though virtual reality will let enthusiasts play Quidditch matches). What I do mean is that we're about to experience a world where spirit inhabits formerly inanimate objects.

Much of the Harry Potter books' charm comes from the quirky magic objects that surround Harry and his friends. Rather than being solid and static, these objects embody initiative and activity. This is precisely the shift we'll experience as computational power moves beyond the desktop into everyday objects.

Next-Generation Magic

[You can read the full article if you want to.]

I do not contest Jakob Nielsen's assertion that in the future we will have technology that sounds astounding by today's standards. That much is indisputable. However, I strongly dispute the implication that to people living in that reality, it will be a world of wonder, or a world that we could wish were real to us, the way Harry Potter fans wish on some level they could live at Hogwarts.

I wish to assert, unfold, and unpack that however much some technologies may initially wow people who don't have them, the future is this shimmering, desirable place

the way Harry Potter's Hogwarts is a place people so much wish that they could be their real world.

A meme about a gap: Old Economy Steve

There is a group of memes that rub in the smiling, pimply white face of some poor guy's high school yearbook photo with a generic, mid-70's hairstyle. They spitefully rub things in about a clueless, out-of-touch Old Economy Steve, and rub in that he is specifically clueless about the gap separating young people from himself:

Goes to law school.
Pays student loans with first paycheck.

Brought a house in his 20's with a 9 to 5 job that didn't require a bachelor's degree.
"Kids these days have it easy."

"When I was in college my summer job paid the tuition."
Tuition was \$400.

Pays into Social Security.
Receives benefits.

Becomes homeowner at 22.
Tells son's generation it's lucky because it can afford \$200 smartphones.

Said, "Too many C____s, not enough I____s."
Middle manages minimum wage employees.

"At my first job I only made \$15k a year."
In 1979 that was the equivalent of \$47k.

Got my dream job,
By answering a classified ad.

"Why don't you call and ask if they're hiring?"
Hasn't been on a job hunt since 1982.

"I worked all summer to buy a car."
Corvette!

Grows up in one of the world's best economies.
Creates the worst global economy the world has ever seen.

("And all this before COVID," one might add!)

Now I would like to ask you to keep one eye on what Old Economy Steve doesn't get about our economy today, and watch a series of famous 1993 ad campaign run by AT&T.

In all or almost all of these things, we have pretty much what the advertisement stated, or something that makes said prediction simply obsolete. I admit readily that electronic toll collection is far more convenient than keeping track of various denominations of coins and stopping at a tollbooth and trying to throw the coins into one of those funnels, and the demolition derby to get back on to the regular highway. For that matter I see our toll collection as more convenient than what the commercial promises: we don't even need to swipe a credit card through a reader to pay a toll; we just drive through at full speed and are charged the toll...

...but the actor in the ad displays an almost sexual thrill at being able to pay a toll while driving at full speed, *and whatever the experience is like for us to whom it is an everyday activity, our experience is hardly an orgasm.*

What we have now is simply not Old Economy Steve's economy with ~~draining~~ charming and wonderful phones tacked on. And this has something to do with why I believe *technology is part of our poverty.*

Here and now, I submit, we are already living "In the future, we'll all be Harry Potter." The clarification on Jakob Nielsen's part of "By saying that we'll one day be like Harry Potter, I don't mean that we'll fly around on broomsticks or play three-dimensional ballgames" is already obsolete: we *have* flying motorcycles and with some basic Internet of Things features we could make three-dimensional ballgames no more

dangerous than Harry Potter's Quidditch. And it is probably child's play, for initiates, to print an ornamental level of broomstick-themed decoration, even though a flying motorcycle may still look like a flying motorcycle:



"In the future we'll all be Harry Potter" and "YOU WILL and the company that will bring it to you is AT&T and *T" meet together. The prediction that we will carry our medical records in our wallets is obsolete because we have Internet-enabled health records. It is beside the point that a credit card sized device can carry our medical

records. It is also obsolete to predict that in the future we will be able to get custom concert tickets from an ATM. We can buy tickets, pick seats, and show a QR code on our smartphones. And there is something quaint about the image of an enchanted mother giving best wishes to a baby through video phone booths; we can Zoom chat with laptops and mobile devices but some of us find mandatory Zoom chats depressing next to conversing face-to-face.

All this said, we ain't in Old Economy Steve's economy any more, *and technology is part of our poverty.*

In one post to a friend, I wrote,

Have you ever drained yourself by compulsively checking your phone easily a hundred times a day?

Have you ever had several Big Brothers know your every every step, every heartbeat?

Have you ever had every keystroke you've ever typed be recorded and available to use against you for all your remaining life?

Have you ever met people from the last generation that remembers what life was like before the world went digital?

YOU WILL

and AT&T ain't the only company that will bring it to you!

Conclusion: My own privilege

Having discussed how we have at least somewhat "Harry Potter"-like technologies, but we ain't enjoying Old Economy Steve's "Hasn't applied for a job since Jimmy Carter—'You need to hit the bricks to find work. That's what I did.'" living conditions any more, I would like to add an additional note, and tie in something from the beginning of this article, the Privileged girl in *Bridge to Terebinthia*.

I am in at least one privileged position comparable to the girl whose family doesn't have a television.

I own a cellphone, and it doesn't run my life.

(One I purchased a couple of years ago, used.)

I used to get sucked into social media, but have backed away to 5-10 minutes' social media interaction per month, generally to announce something.

I read (among others) Jean-Claude Larchet's *The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul*, and realized I was compulsively checking email and checking my phone a hundred times per day. I now check email often just once or twice a day, not compulsively. I also don't really check my cellphone. I've turned off almost all notifications that I can. I still use my phone, for instance for

GPS navigation, but on an opt-in basis. I try to limit what is initiated by my phone, and avoid what I have elsewhere called *an intravenous drip of noise* like the plague.

I've seen a very frequent Twitter poster ask, "Is there anywhere in the world that does not have Internet?" and in one sense the answer is almost a complete "No:" every continent, including the poorest continent of Africa, has expensive phones as common possessions." But in another sense, the answer is, "It's right under your nose. But don't go to buy airfare. Read a couple of books, and *make some lifestyle changes*, and in an older word, *repent*."

I would ask the reader to buy two books: *The New Media Epidemic* and my own *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*. Please consider buying both of them in *paper* ("kids-go-ask-your-grandparents"), and if you buy just one, buy the first. I've found that it is possible to have an oasis or at least a relative oasis. It is not entirely easy, and it is even less obvious, but it exists for real. *The New Media Epidemic* also covers, as I do not, clinics and programs that exist for smartphone / internet addiction. (This is also somewhere a good Orthodox priest can help.)

I have other privileges besides having taken charge, at least mostly, of my cellphone and internet usage. I'm really book-smart, and I can't simply give that to you, though I can write brainbuilding materials. I am also, in some circles, a famous author, or at least I've been told my name has triletted on Facebook to "CSH," i.e. "C.S. Hayward," along the lines of "C.S. Lewis," and even a scathing personal attack mentions that I am well-known among conservative converts to Orthodoxy. Despite all this Amazon has ways of interpreting its contracts so my income from Kindle books is a total of about \$10 to \$20 per month (I think I earn more if you buy one of the paperbacks from my bookshelf (or the one hardcover worth mentioning, but I'm not clear my income from Amazon will break three figures monthly, as it did before Amazon reinterpreted its contracts). I have, in God's Providence, everything I need; I am retired on disability, and it is not uncommon for me to receive some boost on top of that. I really try to pray "Give us today our daily bread," and beyond that cast my cares upon the Lord and upon a favorite saint, St. Philaret the Merciful, whose life is a testimony to everything the Sermon on the Mount says about treasures in Heaven and proper use of wealth.

And the Sermon on the Mount, with its teachings on wealth, is the true Oasis amidst a parched technoscape. Almost everything else that is good to be had is first drunk from that Fountainhead.

And the Oasis, so terribly difficult to see from the outside, is unfathomably vast from the inside. It is the Oasis, poured through my humble pen, into "Paradise," into an a work reminiscent of C.S. Lewis in "The Angelic Letters," into an "Akathist hymn to dear St. Philaret the Merciful," into an extreme, dark, and unexpected path to glory in Fire in the Hole," into the deep mercy of "The Consolation of Theology," and into the

rising hymn of triumph in "Doxology. "And I have nothing of the treasures in this Heavenly Oasis that does not beckon to you, too!

Epilogue: *Phones can be turned off, folks!*

"If you keep your guitar in the case and get it out before you play it and put it away afterwards, you'll spend less time playing your guitar."

This advice was mentioned in reference to another Internet addiction, but I recently leveled up about not having my phone control my life.

I carry my phone turned off completely. Not sleeping and ready for action when I hit the sleep/wake button. Off. Completely. As off as I can do.

If I have a legitimate justification to use it, I turn it on for long enough to do whatever I need to do, and then I immediately turn it all the way off. It's *wonderfully* inconvenient, and it lets me keep my phone with me as much as I want, have it available, but then be in a place in the world that does not have *convenient*, non-stop Internet access. And I can get there without needing to shell out for an expensive plane ticket to some faroff forgotten world, or for that matter shell out any money for anything at all.

Extra credit for fuller benefit: Don't piggyback multiple activities at a time. If you use your phone to do GPS navigation, and realize you need to send a text, turn your phone off completely, when you arrive at your destination, then turn it on again, then send the text, then turn it off again completely, and you're off!

And while you're at it, upgrade to a watch that cannot be controlled by the government or hacked into by faceless intruders from across the world, perhaps the watch you had before getting a smartwatch—ine is a Casio Men's Pathfinder Casual Watch PRW2500T-7CR Titanium. (Though I felt very small and shamed when I saw a doctor wearing a cheap \$5 digital watch with no special features.)

If you liked this, you may also like a deeper dive in "Revelation and Our Singularity."

To a Friend

[With apologies to St. Seraphim, and I really hope my adaptation doesn't come across as comparing myself to a great saint I am deeply indebted to!]

To Your Brilliance, and you know who you are:

On the topic of worry, Your Brilliance said that I was a monk and therefore not subject to worry, but you, not being a monk, have worries. And I, poor not-even-a-novice Christos, wish to open your eyes to something. I, poor Christos, have nothing that is not an open door for you.

Where to begin?

One start might begin with commercials to stimulate covetousness back in 1993:

[see tinyurl.com/you-will-and-the-company]

Some of the technologies in the "YOU WILL" commercials are already obsolete; we don't need to get tickets from an ATM because we can do that with a phone in our pockets, and we don't need to carry our medical records in our pockets because the electronic storage of records obviates the need to carry a physical device so doctors can have your records.

But in retrospect, the following "anti-commercial" could be added:

Have you ever drained yourself by compulsively checking your phone easily a hundred times a day?

Have you ever had several Big Brothers know your every every step, every heartbeat?

Have you ever had every keystroke you've ever typed be recorded and available to use against you for all your remaining life?

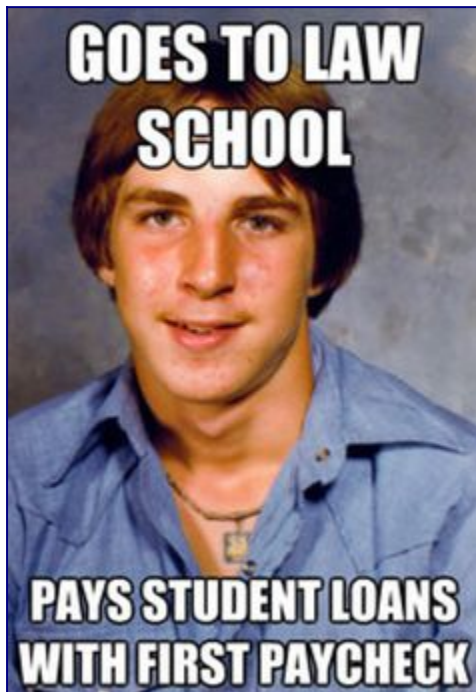
Have you ever met people from the last generation that remembers what life was like before the world went digital?

YOU WILL

and AT&T ain't the only company that will bring it to you!

No technology is permanently exotic. It may be the case that Jakob Nielsen said, "In the future, we'll all be Harry Potter," meaning we will all have gadgets that do super things. It did not, of course, mean that we will be playing Quidditch—a dated remark, given that we now have flying motorcycles.

It might be deadly difficult to use them to try and play Quidditch, or perhaps some Internet of Things technology could make such Quidditch playing no more dangerous than in J.K. Rowling's imagination, but that important safety caveat does not change the fact that we can do things Nielsen didn't imagine... but still, no technology is permanently exotic, and none of these technologies really change the poverty that "Old Economy Steve" was privileged not to even need to fathom:



And the picture is false if it is assumed that "YOU WILL" is simply Old Economy Steve's vibrant economy with electronic tolling and other such things tacked on.

Telling of a story

There was one story poor Christos thought to write, but it has some things intended at surface level that apparently are not at surface level. "Hysterical Fiction: A Medievalist Jibe at Disney Princess Videos" was intended to be an obvious inversion of a bad habit in fantasy and historical fiction that has at least one postmodern wearing armor. The reading experience is like what it is like for an American to travel to England, enter a shop, and be greeted with the same accent as back home. However, very few people got it, so poor not-even-a-novice Christos would rather tell of a story than tell the imagined story itself.

The story would be set in what is treated as a dark science fiction world, and presents the shock of seeing how things really are, that we have pretty much everything promised in the "YOU WILL" commercials, if perhaps not the Old Economy Steve assumptions about basic wealth.

But amidst this darkness is something important, a light that shines in many places. It has been said that Paradise is simply where the saints are, and the well-worth-reading story of Fr Arseny: Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father tells of a priest who carries Paradise with himself, even in a concentration camp! And the real core of the story I have wanted to tell is "Guilty as charged" for every element of dark science fiction dystopic reality, but that is really much less significant than a character of light who shines in even the deepest darkness. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness never gets it.

Peter Kreeft said that the chief advantage of wealth is that it does not make you happy. If you are poor, perhaps perennially struggling to make ends meet, it may be a difficult temptation to resist to think that if you had money, all your problems would go away. Being wealthy clips the wings of that illusion, and our science-fictiony present clips somewhat the wings of the illusion that life would be great if we could send a fax from the beach. Windows Mobile was advertised under the rubric of "When, why, where, and how you want to work," when it should be, "You will never be free from the shackles of your job."

I would quote the Sermon on the Mount:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine

eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

"Therefore I say unto you, Do not worry about your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than garments? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Do you think you can add one single hour to your life by worrying? You might as well try to worry yourself into being a foot taller!

"And why do you worry for garments? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

"Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?" or, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Do not worry about the morrow: for the morrow has enough worries of its own. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

"If thine eye be single:" a reading of this verse in translations often has the word "healthy" or "sound," and those readings are true. However, in the middle of a real sandwich of teaching about storing up treasures in Heaven and earth, "single" is singularly appropriate. Its meaning is cut from the same cloth as the warning, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." A "single" eye is one that is undivided, that does not multitask, that as an old hymn says,

Keep your eyes on Jesus,
 Look full in His wonderful face,
 And the things of this world will grow strangely dim,
 In the light of his glory and grace.

What poor Christos has, and this is something monastic aspirants should aspire to, but not anything should be a "greater monasticism" monopoly, is not in any sense

being better at planning; it may mean in fact being worse at planning. All of poor, not-even-a-novice Christos's lessons about worrying have not been being better at planning for the future; experience is that trying to solve a life's problems on a day's resources opens the door to despair. What is needed is not greater planning but greater focus on today, and allowing tomorrow to worry for itself. "Each day has enough trouble of its own" is very *practical* advice. Poor Christos is no better at solving all problems in a day than Your Brilliance; poor Christos is just a little bit better at letting go and trusting in Divine Providence.

That Providence orders the Dance. Blessed Augustine said that if a master sends two slaves along paths that will cross, their meeting is a coincidence from the slaves' perspective but intended by the master as planned. One thing we find in escaping the Hell of self is that that is how God opens our eyes to a broader world.

And really, refraining from worry is the outer layer where there are many layers underneath. People who delve deeper may have no plans; trusting God that if they obey God today, God will plan for them tomorrow. Identity as we understand it today is another treasure on earth we are to let go of, and digging deeper is something of an opposite of magic. I remember as the Hell of self when I had a job and an extended stay hotel room, and I was able to set up technology exactly as my poor self wanted. It might as well have been magic. G.K. Chesterton famously said, "The poet only asks to get his head into the Heavens. The logician tries to get the Heavens into his head, and it is his head that splits." Magic is an attempt to reduce things to the point that we will have more control, while dancing with the Lord of the Dance opens our hands instead of closing them. C.S. Lewis says that we want God to change our circumstances, where God wants our circumstances to control us. Right now poor less-than-a-novice Christos has been working on the Classic Orthodox Bible and trying to publish it in hardcover with larger text when it is cramped as an Amazon paperback. And I wanted to have it ready for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, but it is not appearing like it will be ready; but there may be something in publishing it the next Sunday, the Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas. All concrete hopes, with an 'S' as in 'Shit', will be disappointed. Hope proper, Hope in God, will be fulfilled.

TED talks have made a great deal out of the Stoicism that is a secret weapon in the National Handegg League, with observations like "We suffer more in imagination than in reality." And it is a blinding flash of the obvious that philosophy could make a difference to real people. But what we have here is something more than Stoicism. Stoicism's strengths are preserved in the *Philokalia*, and there is more. Stoicism is of some benefit, but it does not tell us to follow the Lord of the Dance. It is worth noting, and practical in benefit, but eclipsed by a living exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount:

Righteous Philaret the Merciful, son of George and Anna, was raised in piety and the fear of God. He lived during the eighth century in the village of Amneia in the Paphlagonian district of Asia Minor. His wife, Theoseba, was from a rich and illustrious family, and they had three children: a son John, and daughters Hypatia and Evanthia.

Philaret was a rich and illustrious dignitary, but he did not hoard his wealth. Knowing that many people suffered from poverty, he remembered the words of the Savior about the dread Last Judgment and about "these least ones" (Mt. 25:40); the the Apostle Paul's reminder that we will take nothing with us from this world (1 Tim 6:7); and the assertion of King David that the righteous would not be forsaken (Ps 36/37:25). Philaret, whose name means "lover of virtue," was famed for his love for the poor.

One day Ishmaelites [Arabs] attacked Paphlagonia, devastating the land and plundering the estate of Philaret. There remained only two oxen, a donkey, a cow with her calf, some beehives, and the house. But he also shared them with the poor. His wife reproached him for being heartless and unconcerned for his own family. Mildly, yet firmly he endured the reproaches of his wife and the jeers of his children. "I have hidden away riches and treasure," he told his family, "so much that it would be enough for you to feed and clothe yourselves, even if you lived a hundred years without working."

The saint's gifts always brought good to the recipient. Whoever received anything from him found that the gift would multiply, and that person would become rich. Knowing this, a certain man came to St Philaret asking for a calf so that he could start a herd. The cow missed its calf and began to bellow. Theoseba said to her husband, "You have no pity on us, you merciless man, but don't you feel sorry for the cow? You have separated her from her calf." The saint praised his wife, and agreed that it was not right to separate the cow and the calf. Therefore, he called the poor man to whom he had given the calf and told him to take the cow as well.

That year there was a famine, so St Philaret took the donkey and went to borrow six bushels of wheat from a friend of his. When he returned home, a poor man asked him for a little wheat, so he told his wife to give the man a bushel. Theoseba said, "First you must give a bushel to each of us in the family, then you can give away the rest as you choose." Philaretos then gave the man two bushels of wheat. Theoseba said sarcastically, "Give him half the load so you can share it." The saint measured out a third bushel and gave it to the man. Then Theoseba said, "Why don't you give him the bag, too, so he can carry it?" He gave him the bag. The exasperated wife said, "Just to spite me, why not give him all the wheat." St Philaret did so.

Now the man was unable to lift the six bushels of wheat, so Theoseba told her husband to give him the donkey so he could carry the wheat home. Blessing his wife, Philaret gave the donkey to the man, who went home rejoicing. Theoseba and the children wept because they were hungry.

The Lord rewarded Philaret for his generosity: when the last measure of wheat was given away, a old friend sent him forty bushels. Theoseba kept most of the wheat for herself and the children, and the saint gave away his share to the poor and had nothing left. When his wife and children were eating, he would go to them and they gave him some food. Theoseba grumbled saying, "How long are you going to keep that treasure of yours hidden? Take it out so we can buy food with it."

During this time the Byzantine empress Irene (797-802) was seeking a bride for her son, the future emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos (780-797). Therefore, emissaries were sent throughout all the Empire to find a suitable girl, and the envoys came to Amneia.

When Philaret and Theoseba learned that these most illustrious guests were to visit their house, Philaret was very happy, but Theoseba was sad, for they did not have enough food. But Philaret told his wife to light the fire and to decorate their home. Their neighbors, knowing that imperial envoys were expected, brought everything required for a rich feast.

The envoys were impressed by the saint's daughters and granddaughters. Seeing their beauty, their deportment, their clothing, and their admirable qualities, the envoys agreed that Philaret's granddaughter, Maria was exactly what they were looking for. This Maria exceeded all her rivals in quality and modesty and indeed became Constantine's wife, and the emperor rewarded Philaret.

Thus fame and riches returned to Philaret. But just as before, this holy lover of the poor generously distributed alms and provided a feast for the poor. He and his family served them at the meal. Everyone was astonished at his humility and said: "This is a man of God, a true disciple of Christ."

He ordered a servant to take three bags and fill one with gold, one with silver, and one with copper coins. When a beggar approached, Philaret ordered his servant to bring forth one of the bags, whichever God's providence would ordain. Then he would reach into the bag and give to each person, as much as God willed.

St Philaret refused to wear fine clothes, nor would he accept any imperial rank. He said it was enough for him to be called the grandfather of the Empress. The saint reached ninety years of age and knew his end was approaching. He went to the Rodolpheia ("The Judgment") monastery in

Constantinople. He gave some gold to the Abbess and asked her to allow him to be buried there, saying that he would depart this life in ten days.

He returned home and became ill. On the tenth day he summoned his family, he exhorted them to imitate his love for the poor if they desired salvation. Then he fell asleep in the Lord. He died in the year 792 and was buried in the Rodolpheia Judgment monastery in Constantinople.

The appearance of a miracle after his death confirmed the sainthood of Righteous Philaret. As they bore the body of the saint to the cemetery, a certain man, possessed by the devil, followed the funeral procession and tried to overturn the coffin. When they reached the grave, the devil threw the man down on the ground and went out of him. Many other miracles and healings also took place at the grave of the saint.

After the death of the righteous Philaret, his wife Theoseba worked at restoring monasteries and churches devastated during a barbarian invasion.

St. Philaret did not just refrain from worry; he played his part in the Great Dance, and God gave him a wonderful story.

As far as all these things that his wife Theoseba could not see, his trust reached the level of, really, an arrogance, the same arrogance whose hymn I wrote:

Song VIII.

A HYMN TO ARROGANCE.

The Saint opened his Golden Mouth and sang,
 "There be no war in Heaven,
 Not now, at very least,
 And not ere were created,
 The royal race of mankind.
 Put on your feet the Gospel of peace,
 And pray, a-stomping down the gates of Hell.
 There were war in Heaven but ever brief,
 The Archangel Saint Michael,
 Commander of the bodiless hosts,
 Said but his name, 'Michael,'
 Which is, being interpreted,
 'Who is like God?'
 With that the rebellion were cast down from Heaven,
 Sore losers one and all.
 They remain to sharpen the faithful,
 God useth them to train and make strength.

Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?
Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?
As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up,
Or as if the staff should lift up itself,
As if it were no wood.

Therefore be not dismayed,
If one book of Holy Scripture state,
That the Devil incited King David to a census,
And another sayeth that God did so,
For God permitted it to happen by the Devil,
As he that heweth lifteth an axe,
And God gave to David a second opportunity,
In the holy words of Joab.

Think thou not that God and the Devil are equal,
Learnest thou enough of doctrine,
To know that God is greater than can be thought,
And hath neither equal nor opposite,
The Devil is if anything the opposite,
Of Michael, the Captain of the angels,
Though truth be told,
In the contest between Michael and the Devil,
The Devil fared him not well.

The dragon wert as a little boy,
Standing outside an Emperor's palace,
Shooting spitwads with a peashooter,
Because that wert the greatest harm,
That he saweth how to do.

The Orthodox Church knoweth well enough,
'The feeble audacity of the demons.'
Read thou well how the Devil crowned St. Job,
The Devil and the devils aren't much,
Without the divine permission,
And truth be told,
Ain't much with it either:
God alloweth temptations to strengthen;
St. Job the Much-Suffering emerged in triumph.
A novice told of an odd clatter in a courtyard,
Asked the Abbot what he should do:
'It is just the demons.'

Pay it no mind,' came the answer.
 Every devil is on a leash,
 And the devout are immune to magic.
 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
 The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.
 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
 Wherefore be thou not arrogant towards men,
 But be ever more arrogant towards devils and the Devil himself:
 'Blow, and spit on him.'"

"The Consolation of Theology" tells in part the author's worries and wishing to be in control, and learning something that is the very opposite of what we both reach for.

There was a simple "game" on Macintoshes when poor Christos was in high school, called "Global Thermonuclear War," with a "Launch" button. Press the button, and all kinds of missiles launch worldwide and destroy the earth. The lesson is articulated in words: "The only way to win the game is not to play at all." And so it is with worry.

"Do not store up treasures on earth." The further we grow into this, the more we discover we have treasures on earth to give up... and the more we give them up, the more treasures in Heaven our hands are empty enough to receive.

St. Seraphim had a remarkable dialogue with a pilgrim about the meaning of life, and he said it was one thing: the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. Good works do not reach their full stature unless they are relational, done to connect with God. And really, what greater treasure in Heaven is there to have than the Holy Spirit? The expurgation seems painful, and it is painful, but the pain does not last. Or rather it is transcended, like the saint in the story posited above transcends a dark science fiction dystopia. But there is tremendous freedom in letting go.

God wants to open us up to a larger world. Once poor Christos confessed to not being open to God, and was instead of a usual correction was advised to be mindful of the fact that God and the saints are open to us.

But to give a sudden close, poor Christos will reread St. John, "A Treatise to Prove that Nothing Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself." He needs it, and you might too.

Treasure

Treasure is not measured in dollars

I would like to begin by telling a story. I was in a medical waiting room for a medical test, when a mother came in, pulling along a little girl by the hand, and taking care of the paperwork. The child had, by the looks of it, slammed her thumb in a door or something similar: there was a dark purple bulge under her thumbnail. I remembered when that had happened to me, and I was **not** a happy camper. No wonder the little girl was bawling her eyes out!

She was sitting in a chair, and I thought things might be better if she were engaged in a conversation. So, gently and softly, I told her a joke: "What kind of musical instrument does a dog play?" and answered, "A trombone." She didn't get it. So I tried to talk about several other things, trying and failing to engage her in conversation. After a few minutes, I had still managed an absolute zero percent success rate at making age-appropriate conversation that would allow her to contribute her half of the conversation. But I realized something: she was looking at me, and she was not crying. I had obtained her rapt attention, and for the moment she had completely stopped crying.

I was called and politely took my leave; a few minutes later, after my blood draw, I came out and the mother was giving TLC and comforting her daughter. The mother said, "You have a very gentle way about you." I thanked her, shook the daughter's hand, and told her, "I have to leave now, but I'm glad I met you." The mother repeated once or twice, "You have a very gentle way about you." And she caressed her little one.

This is a tale of treasure, and it arose in my heart, perhaps, because none of it is measured with dollars. My blood test cost money, of course, and the treatment of the child's thumb presumably also cost money, of course, but the treasure is not measured in dollars. If the treasure were of gold, or some other material item, one could equate treasure with a high dollar value, but for the mother to pay me money, or for me to ask for it, would have been a crass way of defacing a treasure. There was joy and a lesson in it for me, and pain relief and a pleasant meeting for the child, but this, this *treasure*, falls under the heading of "The Best Things in Life are Free."

By contrast, I would tell a joke:

I was trying to help a friend's son look into colleges, and yesterday he handed me the phone, really excited, and said, "You have got to speak with these guys." I fumbled the phone, picked it up, and heard, "—online. We offer perhaps the best-rounded of degrees, and from day one our students are equipped with a top-of-the-line Dell running up-to-the-minute Vista. We address back-end issues, giving students a grounding in Visual Basic .NET, striking the right balance between 'reach' and 'rich,' and a thorough groundings in Flash-based design and web design optimized for the latest version of Internet Explorer. Throw in an MCSE, and marketing-based communication instruction that harnesses the full power of PowerPoint and covers the most effective ways to make use of animated pop-ups, opt-in subscriber lists, and—"

I interrupted. "Excuse me, but what is your institution *called*?"

"The Aristocrats."

For those of you who have been spared the joke, there is a classic off-color joke where a group of performers approach a theatre owner or the like, are asked what they do and describe an X-rated show that is grosser than gross (bestiality, necrophilia, ...), and when asked what they are called, say, "The Aristocrats."

The fork off that joke above is that all of these mostly technological items, however expensive, are false treasure at best. The original "The Aristocrats" is plain in advertising anti-treasure; the latter take, in a Unix chauvinist's way, has things that appear to be treasure but are really false treasure, anti-treasure that calls for the grosser-than-gross punch line. *And perhaps more than one of those jokes is false treasure, but we won't go into that.*

My reason for mentioning treasure that is free, like the best things in life, and expensive anti-treasure, is to say that while many treasures may be worth money, and bigger treasures can be worth more money, real treasure is beyond money. "The Best Things in Life are Free," as the saying goes.

Living for treasure

I live to create treasure. Actually I live to contemplate God, and worship his glory, but there are a million concrete ways one can contemplate God, and one of them is creating treasure. My website at CJSHayward.com is created to be a treasure, or a treasurehouse of treasures, and while there are pieces you could look at and say, "You botched this and that," my intent is still to create a treasure. There are other areas where I try to create treasure (a picturebook of loved ones for a hospitalized child), but the greatest success I receive is to finish something and find it has been a treasure to the person who has received it.

In "Doxology," God the Father is called,

The Treasure for whom all treasures are named,

And if ever there is treasure, he is God. Mankind and angels are treasures; there is a discussion in the Gospel where Christ is asked if it is lawful to pay a tax or not, asks to see the coin used to pay the tax, and asked whose image and superscription it was. "Give what is Caesar's to Caesar, and what is God's to God;" thus Jesus Christ appealed to a principle that whoever coins money has the authority to tax that money. Augustine picks up on this: "Caesar seeketh his image; render it; God seeketh his image; render it. Let not Caesar lose from you his coin: let not God lose in you His coin." He explores it, and there is the suggestion at least that we are God's coins: first and foremost by being struck with his image, but it cannot be too far from mind that coins could be struck on precious metal, that a coin is treasure. Augustine attends to the minor point, that the mere earthly coin with Caesar's image is due to Caesar, but all the much more the coin imprinted in the image of God and nothing less, is due to God: a parish of faithful followers is much more a treasury than a room with chests of silver coins.

The Lord God Almighty and the Uncreated Light reigns over all; the Uncreated Light illumines the cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, powers, authorities, principalities, archangels, and angels: the glory and treasure of the Lord thunder through rank on rank of angel host. The Mother of God bore God in her womb and exchanged with her Son: she gave him his humanity, and he gave to her from his divinity, leaving her as a treasure eclipsing all the angels. The treasure unfurls and unfolds on earth: the sacramental priesthood and the spiritual priesthood, songs, liturgy, angels, and ten thousand other treasures. And treasure is close to the heart of the treasure of the Church: a Church saying says, "If you have two small coins, you use one to buy bread for the altar, and the other to buy flowers for the icons."

Hard treasure

There are some hard lessons in "The Best Things In Life Are Free," and hard lessons in "Maximum Christ, Maximum Ambition, Maximum Repentance." But both of these give up false treasure for true treasure, true treasure for greater treasure. Christ commanded something great: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Some of us are to hold earthly treasure with detachment; others are to get rid of it altogether, but in any case we are called to reach far beyond earthly treasure for treasures in Heaven, such as good works, virtues, and graces. The call is a Narnian Further up and further in!

We live in a time where treasures seem to be evaporating, or at least money. Once a rising standard of living was taken for granted; now employment is not taken for granted. We are urged to sell gold for cash. But treasure is still here. The Best Things in Life are Free," even now, even if we are in an arena, a cosmic coliseum. False treasures abound; for treacherous technology, see the Technonomicon. And there is a great deal in technologies that can be treacherous, with a right grievous backswing. But that is not all.

The authors John Calvin and Thomas Hobbes were authors with a very pessimistic view of mankind. But in the comic strip named after them, *Calvin and Hobbes*, we meet a claim well worth heeding:

There's treasure everywhere!

The Treasure of Humility and the Royal Race

The vastness of humility

I told the guestmaster I'd like to become a monk.

"What kind of monk?" he asked. "A real monk?"

"Yes," I said.

He poured me a cup of wine. "Here, take this." No sooner had I drunk it than I became aware of a crystal globe forming around me. It began to expand until finally it surrounded him too. This monk, who a minute before had seemed so commonplace, now took on an astonishing beauty. I was struck dumb. After a bit the thought came to me, "Maybe I should tell him how beautiful he is—perhaps he doesn't even know."

But I really *was* dumb—that wine had burned out my tongue! But so great was my happiness at the sight of such beauty that I thought it was well worth the price of my tongue. When he made a sign to leave, I turned away, confident that the memory of such beauty would be a joy forever.

But what was my surprise when I found that with each person I met it was the same—as soon as he would pass unwittingly in my crystal globe, I could see his beauty too. And I knew it was real.

Is this what it means to be a REAL monk—to see the beauty in others and be silent?

Tales of a Magic Monastery, Theopane the monk

To even get near [humility], even for a moment, is like a drink of cold water to a man in a desert.

Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call "humble" nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody.

Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed a cheerful, intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him.

If you do dislike him it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily. He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less.
C.S. Lewis

These two striking Western quotes need some counterbalance. Orthodox confess before communion: "I believe that thou hast come into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." And though this is above my pay grade, there are some very important words (in *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, for instance) about longing for the cup of dishonor as if it were honor, an experience that I believe is very different from the inside and from the outside. The experience of reaching a new level of pride may be exultant for an instant, but the natural course of that sin, if we do not repent of it, is to hold on to the sin while its pleasure necessarily vanishes. My suspicion that those who long for the cup of dishonor as if it were honor, retain the virtue while its sting gives way to joy. Repentance is Heaven's best-kept secret, and the monastic longing for dishonor may also bring joyful surprises.

With all of that stated, the story about the globe is the best picture I've seen of the heart of humility. And the humblest people I have known don't really try to impress upon me how horrible people they are. They bear a striking resemblance to the figure Lewis describes: hospitable, generous, open, welcoming, listening, wanting to understand what you have to say, and wanting to understand you. Their style, the practical living effect of their belief that God is everything and they are nothing, is marked by joy in whatever person's company God deigns to grace them with.

One verse that I've found profoundly difficult to appreciate is, "In humility consider others better than yourself." I suspect others don't find it pleasant either. But there is treasure inside.

I'd like for you to imagine yourself sitting next to your hero: your favorite person, past or present, near or far, someone you know or someone you might never meet. What is it like to be next to that person?

Now imagine someone who is a jerk and acts like an absolute scumbag. Do you enjoy the company?

Which one of these two is humbly considering others better than yourselves?

Pride is blinding; the term "hubris" refers to a blinding arrogance. The greatest degree of pride that has a label I'm aware of is called "prelest" or spiritual illusion, a term that doesn't even mention self-opinion but describes being completely and destructively out of touch with reality and what will benefit oneself and/or others.

But with humility it is quite different. Some have said that the only true intelligence is humility. Humility opens people's eyes, and it opens them to everything that is beautiful, honorable, and noble in others.

Humility allows us to see and enjoy the royal race.

The royal race

What do I mean by "the royal race?"

Let's visit Confucius.

One nice, opaque snippet states that Confucius learned of a fire in the horse stables. Confucius asked, "Were any people hurt?" And we are explicitly told that he did not ask about the horses.

Today this story lends itself to thinking, "I guess Confucius just wasn't the world's biggest animal lover," and trust me if I say, "Please ignore that; something completely different was going on culturally."

In the China of Confucius's day, a stable worker was a slave, here meaning a mere commodity worth only 20% of the value of a horse. Please contrast this with U.S. Southern slave owners who rationalized slavery at infinite length because they knew it was wrong, and they rationalized because they knew that it was morally wrong to keep African-American slaves in conditions unworthy of human beings and unfit for human consumption. In Confucius's day, *they didn't even know it was wrong*. The socially expected response from Confucius, upon hearing that there had been a major fire in the horse stables, would be to ask about what was the most valuable and important: the precious horses, not the expendable stable hands.

Confucius's question about people in the stable left the obvious, socially expected response highly conspicuous by its absence. The point he sledgehammered was of the supreme value of every human life, whether at the top of the social scale, or the bottom, or anywhere in between. He didn't say that all human life is sacred, and possibly it would not have occurred to him to connect life with the sacred, but the essential point he drove home is the supreme value of human life.

And that is really a dignity of the royal race.

Having mentioned race, I would like to comment something on the biology of the royal race. If we lay out on a football field the whole millions of years since humans first appeared, the first ninety-nine yards, or perhaps even the first ninety-nine and a half yards, show to the best of my knowledge our ancestors as living in Africa in the Sahara Forest. Then, a geological eyeblink ago, there was an Ice Age, and some of our ancestors bundled up against the cold and migrated under sub-Arctic conditions to what was eventually Europe. And they suddenly changed from needing lots of dark pigment to block out the mighty African sun, to vastly decreased levels of our built-in sunscreen because they needed to get as much of the precious little sun as they could. The whole change was only reducing the amount of one particular chemical: that's it. And that is one major factor of the difference between dark and light skin.

What I would like to comment here is that this is an extremely shallow biological adaptation. Never mind that a dark-skinned and a much lighter-skinned person look quite different to the uninstructed. The biological difference is shallow. It is quite literally only skin-deep. None of us as the royal race grow feathers and have the ability to fly like birds, or can breathe underwater without technology, or can sleep while standing up unsupported. Nor, apart from birth defect, accident, etc. have we lost toes, or lose the full support of a circulatory system, or anything like that. Unless disability or adverse circumstances stop us, we all walk and we all trade in the miracle of language. There is one set of human anatomical features to be had with distinction between the sexes. We all need food, water, sleep, and so on. We tend to think we are very different because we look different, but the adaptations we have are biologically the shallow adaptations of a single, royal human race. There are admittedly other adaptations besides the pigments in our skin, but race as we know it hinges on people leaving Africa an extremely short time ago on geological terms and not enough time for much of *any* particularly interesting evolution to have occurred. We are all from the same species, *Homo sapiens*. For that matter, we are also all from the same, more specific subspecies: *Homo sapiens sapiens*!

Now I would balance my remark in biology and acknowledge any number of the most profound cultural differences across the world and possibly right in each other's back yards, but again this is the royal race. Humpback whales have a culture; wolves have a culture; but there is essentially one culture for an animal community in a wild ecosystem. So far as I know the vast number of cultures that exist today attest to an unparalleled flexibility built into the royal race.

And if we look at Genesis 1, perhaps the two biggest takeaways are that we are made in the image of God, constituted by the divine presence in us, and that the entire human race is one family. The person before you is great: and he is your brother.

A note on beggars

And I would like to make one comment, very specific: "He is your brother" includes beggars.

I know some people, who do or do not give to beggars, who have made a careful and considerate decision and act in a situation where evaluating the best action is hard to do. I know of some people whose considered judgment is that giving money to beggars does more harm than good, and their refrain from giving is harder to them than giving would be. I might also suggest that one could give things other than money; one can carry a bag with easily peeled Cuties citrus fruit, or a Halloween-style bag of tiny chocolate bars if the weather won't melt them.

However, I have heard, and wince, when someone says "beggars" like they are some kind of disgusting vermin. *They are not*. They are made in the image of God, as you, and the Orthodox Church's teaching is that you should give, and when you give, you are respecting others made in the image of God. It is possible that their begging is sinful; that is not your concern and you do not share in the guilt by a gift. I've heard multiple Orthodox priests address the topic, and they never seem to suggest giving particularly much; the specific suggestion is to give little at least most of the time, without any suggestion that you have to furnish all that a beggar with a story of need lists as the needed expense.

But there is a more basic concern than meeting beggars with an open hand, and that is meeting them with an open heart. Monastics are said to be "above alms": those who have placed themselves above possessions may not have a single bite of food to offer at the moment. But the literature quotes, "Is not a word better than a gift?", with the implication explicitly explored that if you have nothing you could give (or, perhaps, you have a \$20 bill but have run out of the quarters or singles you carry in a separate pocket to give), a warm welcome is itself giving a gift. Monastics are spoken of as "above alms", but they are not above loving beggars. Those monastics, perhaps more than people who are not above alms, are called to fit the picture of humility towards beggars: hospitable, generous, open, welcoming, listening, wanting to understand what they have to say, and wanting to understand *them*. This kind of warm welcome is a much bigger gift than a quarter.

But may I suggest a view of beggars that has more sharply defined contours?

Look at beggars as altars. The beggar, regardless of religion, is made in the image of God and can never be rightly understood without reference to God. He who despises the poor shows reproach for their Maker; God loves everybody at every level of the social scale, and to show kindness to a beggar is to show a kindness to God. It is possible to embrace without touching, or embrace in an offered fist bump. Insofar as you are able, give a quarter or dollar (if you are in the U.S.) / a Cutie / chocolate / ..., and what is

more, try to give in the generosity of a monk above alms who meets the dues of hospitality.

Look on beggars as altars on whom you can show kindnesses to God.

One more quote to squirm by

Here is one more quote that makes people squirm; it is a personal favorite (Mt 25:31-46, NIV):

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Christ, in his own person, has no needs beyond the Trinity and could not possibly benefit from any generosity from any person.

But Christ in the person of a beggar is another story. There we can welcome him as Christ; there we can ease his hunger; there we can show a million kindnesses that will answer for us on that dread day when we are judged before his throne.

Someone who had a large collection of books asked, "Will I have any of these books with me in Heaven?" The answer came, "Probably." The book lover then asked, "Which ones?" The answer came, "The ones you gave away."

When our life is spent, none of the possessions we cling to will offer us any hope. However, even the tiniest of gifts given in the right spirit will answer for us. Even a smile, when you didn't have change available, counts!

In humility consider beggars better than yourself. *They, too, belong to the royal race!*

Two Decisive Moments

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

There is a classic Monty Python "game show": the moderator asks one of the contestants the second question: "In what year did Coventry City last win the English Cup?" The contestant looks at him with a blank stare, and then he opens the question up to the other contestants: "Anyone? In what year did Coventry City last win the English Cup?" And there is dead silence, until the moderator says, "Now, I'm not surprised that none of you got that. It is in fact a trick question. Coventry City has never won the English Cup."

I'd like to dig into another trick question: "When was the world created: 13.7 billion years ago, or about six thousand years ago?" The answer in fact is "Neither," but it takes some explaining to get to the point of realizing that the world was created 3:00 PM, March 25, 28 AD.

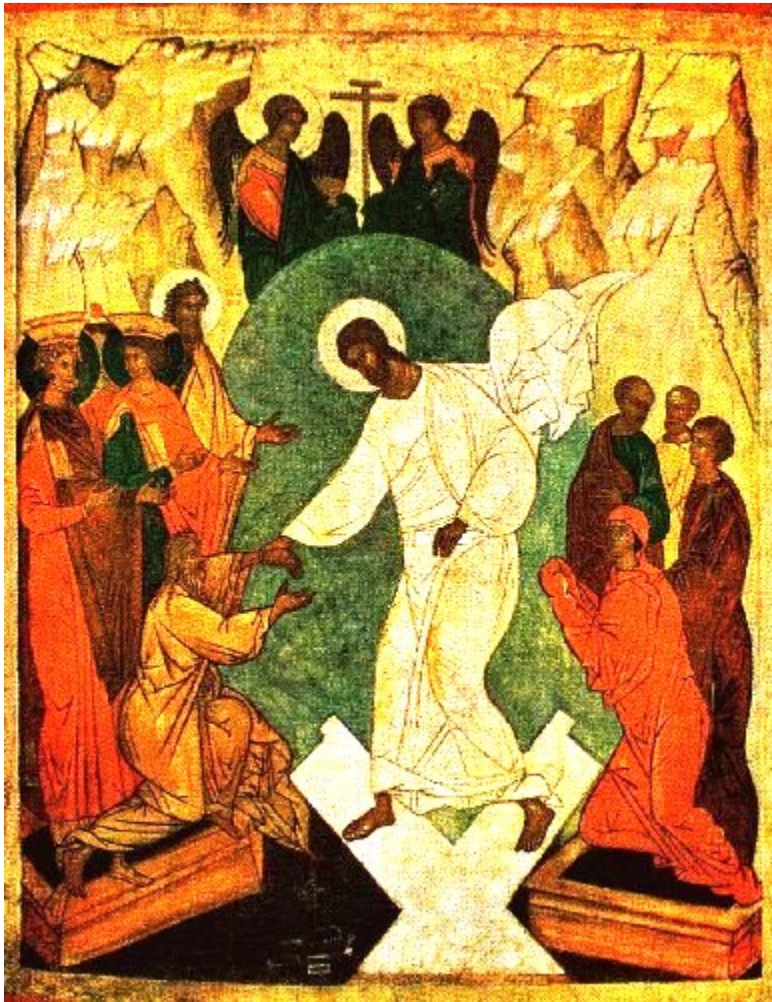
Adam fell and dragged down the whole realm of nature. God had and has every authority to repudiate Adam, to destroy him, but in fact God did something different. He called Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Elijah, and in the fullness of time he didn't just call a prophet; he sent his Son to become a prophet and more.

It's possible to say something that means more than you realize. Caiaphas, the high priest, did this when he said, "It is better that one man be killed than that the whole nation perish." (John 11:50) This also happened when Pilate sent Christ out, flogged, clothed in a purple robe, and said, "Behold the man!"

What does this mean? It means more than Pilate could have possibly dreamed of, and "Adam" means "man": Behold the man! Behold Adam, but not the Adam who

sinned against God and dragged down the Creation in his rebellion, but the second Adam, the new Adam, the last Adam, who obeyed God and exalted the whole Creation in his rising. Behold the man, Adam as he was meant to be. Behold the New Adam who is even now transforming the Old Adam's failure into glory!

Behold the man! Behold the first-born of the dead. Behold, as in the icon of the Resurrection, the man who descends to reach Adam and Eve and raise them up in his ascent. Behold the man who will enter the realm of the dead and forever crush death's power to keep people down.



An icon of the Resurrection.

Behold the man and behold the firstborn of many brothers! You may know the great chapter on faith, chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews, and it is with good reason one of the most-loved chapters in the Bible, but it is not the only thing in Hebrews. The book of Hebrews looks at things people were caught up in, from the glory of angels to

sacrifices and the Mosaic Law, and underscores how much more the Son excels above them. A little before the passage we read above, we see, "To which of the angels did he ever say, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you?'" (Hebrews 1:5) And yet in John's prologue we read, "To those who received him and believed in his name, he gave the authority to become the children of God." (John 1:9) We also read today, "To which of the angels did he ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I have made your enemies a footstool under your feet?'" (Hebrews 1:13) And yet Paul encourages us: "The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet," (Romans 16:20) and elsewhere asks bickering Christians, "Do you not know that we will judge angels?" (I Corinthians 6:3) Behold the man! Behold the firstborn of many brothers, the Son of God who became a man so that men might become the Sons of God. Behold the One who became what we are that we might by grace become what he is. Behold the supreme exemplar of what it means to be Christian.

Behold the man and behold the first-born of all Creation, through whom and by whom all things were made! Behold the Uncreated Son of God who has entered the Creation and forever transformed what it means to be a creature! Behold the Saviour of the whole Creation, the Victor who will return to Heaven bearing as trophies not merely his transfigured saints but the whole Creation! Behold the One by whom and through whom all things were created! Behold the man!

Pontius Pilate spoke words that were deeper than he could have possibly imagined. And Christ continued walking the fateful journey before him, continued walking to the place of the Skull, Golgotha, and finally struggled to breathe, his arms stretched out as far as love would go, and barely gasped out, "It is finished."

Then and there, the entire work of Creation, which we read about from Genesis onwards, was *complete*. There and no other place the world was created, at 3:00 PM, March 25, 28 AD. *Then* the world was created.

That is a decisive moment, but decisive moments are not some kind of special exception to Christian life. Christian history and the Christian spiritual walk alike take their pace from decisive moments. I would like to look at the decisive moment in the Gospel reading.

In that reading, the people who have gathered to listen to Jesus went beyond a "standing room only" crowd to being so packed you couldn't get near the door. Some very faithful friends of a paralytic did the only thing they could have done. They climbed on the roof and started digging through it. I suspect that the homeowner didn't like the idea. But they dug in, and lowered him, hoping this teacher will heal him.

Jesus saw their faith and said, "Your sins are forgiven." And people were shocked —there was a very good reason for this! If I have two friends, and one owes the other money, I can't tell the first one, "Your debt is forgiven. It's wiped clean." *That's not my place*. Sin is not a debt, or a crime, or even a disease. *It's worse*. And Christ told a man

who owed an infinite debt to God that his slate was wiped clean and his sins were forgiven. And the reason people were saying, "This man blasphemes! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" was that they understood exactly how significant it was for Jesus to say, "Your sins are forgiven." Maybe they failed to recognize Christ as God (it is very rare that anyone but the demons identified him as the Son of God), but they were absolutely right when they said that Jesus was saying something that only God had the authority to say.

They were murmuring, and Christ knew why. So he asked them, "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Arise. Take up your mat and walk.'" Everybody knew the answer, that forgiving sins was an infinitely weightier matter, but Jesus was about to give a lesser demonstration of the exact same authority by which he said, "Your sins are forgiven." He said to the paralytic, "Arise. Take up your mat and walk." And the paralytic did exactly that.

That is authority. That is the authority that commands the blind to gaze on the light of the Transfiguration, the deaf to listen to the song of angels, the mute to sing with God's angels, the lame to dance for joy, and what is greater than all of these, command you and me, sinners, to be freed from our sins.

Great and rare as the restoration of one paralytic may be, everybody knew that that was less important than the forgiveness of his sins. The story of that healing is a decisive moment.

But it's not the only decisive moment, and there is another decisive moment that may be much less rare, much less something we want to write home about, but is profoundly important, especially in Lent. I am talking about repentance.

When the Holy Spirit convicts me of my sin, there are two responses I give, both of which I ought to be ashamed of. The first response is to tell God that he doesn't know what he's talking about. Now of course I am not blunt enough to tell God, "You don't know what you're doing." (Perhaps it would be better if I did.) What I say instead is something like, "I can see where you're coming from, and I can see that you have a point. But I've given it a little thought and I'd like you to consider a suggestion that is much better for everyone involved. Would you consider this consolation prize?" Now again, perhaps it would be better if I were honest enough to simply tell God, "You don't know what you're doing." Not only is it not good that I do that, but it is spurning the grace of God.

When a mother takes a knife or a sharp pair of scissors from a little boy, this is not because the mother wants a pair of scissors and is too lazy or inconsiderate to go get her own pair: her motivation is entirely for the child's welfare. God doesn't need our repentance or our sin. When he commands us through his Spirit to let go of our sin, is this for our sake or for his need? It is entirely for our own benefit, and not something God was lacking, that we are commanded to repent from sin. And this has a deeper

implication. If God convicts us from our sin and asks our surrender to him in the unconditional surrender for repentance, then that is how we will be healed from our sin: it is the best medicine chosen by the Great Physician, and it is out of his mercy that the Great Physician refuses all of our consolation prizes that will cut us off from his healing love. Repentance is terrifying at times; it is letting go of the one thing we least want to give over to God, and it is only once we have let go that our eyes are opened and we realize, "I was holding on to a piece of Hell!" The more we understand repentance the more we understand that it is a decisive moment when God is at work.

The second response I give to the Holy Spirit is even more an affront to the decisive *now* in which the Lord meets me. I say, "Well, I think you're right, and I need to repent of it, only now isn't the best time for me. I'd like to deal with it at another time." Here, also, things might be better if I were at least honest enough to acknowledge I was telling God, "Your timing is far from perfect." God lives outside of time, and yet he has all the time there is. There is never reason for him to say with a sheepish grin, "I know this really isn't the best time for you, but I only have two minutes right now, and I'm going to ask for you to deal with this now even though this isn't the best time." When he comes and tells us to repent, now, the reason for that is not that some point later on we may feel more like repenting and that is a better time; the reason is that by the time I am struggling against God's Spirit I have already entered the decisive moment when I can choose either to be cleansed and freed of my sin, or keep on fumbling for the snooze button while God tells me, "Enough sleep! It is time for you to arise!"

Let us repent, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Unashamed

The day his daughter Abigail was born was the best day of Abraham's life. Like father, like daughter, they said in the village, and especially of them. He was an accomplished musician, and she breathed music.

He taught her a music that was simple, pure, powerful. It had only one voice; it needed only one voice. It moved slowly, unhurriedly, and had a force that was spellbinding. Abraham taught Abigail many songs, and as she grew, she began to make songs of her own. Abigail knew nothing of polyphony, nor of hurried technical complexity; her songs needed nothing of them. Her songs came from an unhurried time out of time, gentle as lapping waves, and mighty as an ocean.

One day a visitor came, a young man in a white suit. He said, "Before your father comes, I would like you to see what you have been missing." He took out a music player, and began to play.

Abby at first covered her ears; she was in turn stunned, shocked, and intrigued. The music had many voices, weaving in and out of each other quickly, intricately. She heard wheels within wheels within wheels within wheels of complexity. She began to try, began to think in polyphony — and the man said, "I will come to you later. It is time for your music with your father."

Every time in her life, sitting down at a keyboard with her father was the highlight of her day. Every day but this day. This day, she could only think about how simple and

plain the music was, how lacking in complexity. Abraham stopped his song and looked at his daughter. "Who have you been listening to, Abigail?"

Something had been gnawing at Abby's heart; the music seemed bleak, grey. It was as if she had beheld the world in fair moonlight, and then a blast of eerie light assaulted her eyes — and now she could see nothing. She felt embarrassed by her music, ashamed to have dared to approach her father with anything so terribly unsophisticated. Crying, she gathered up her skirts and ran as if there were no tomorrow.

Tomorrow came, and the day after; it was a miserable day, after sleeping in a gutter. Abigail began to beg, and it was over a year before another beggar let her play on his keyboard. Abby learned to play in many voices; she was so successful that she forgot that she was missing something. She occupied herself so fully with intricate music that in another year she was asked to give concerts and performances. Her music was rich and full, and her heart was poor and empty.

Years passed, and Abigail gave the performance of her career. It was before a sold-out audience, and it was written about in the papers. She walked out after the performance and the reception, with moonlight falling over soft grass and fireflies dancing, and something happened.

Abby heard the wind blowing in the trees.

In the wind, Abigail heard music, and in the wind and the music Abigail heard all the things she had lost in her childhood. It was as if she had looked in an image and asked, "What is that wretched thing?" — and realized she was looking into a mirror. No, it was not quite that; it was as if in an instant her whole world was turned upside down, and her musical complexity she could not bear. She heard all over again the words, "Who have you been listening to?" — only, this time, she did not think them the words of a jealous monster, but words of concern, words of "Who has struck a blow against you?" She saw that she was blind and heard that she was deaf: that the hearing of complexity had not simply been an opening of her ears, but a wounding, a smiting, after which she could not know the concentrated presence a child had known, no matter how complex — or how simple — the music became. The sword cut deeper when she tried to sing songs from her childhood, at first could remember none, then could remember one — and it sounded empty — and she knew that the song was not empty. It was her. She lay down and wailed.

Suddenly, she realized she was not alone. An old man was watching her. Abigail looked around in fright; there was nowhere to run to hide. "What do you want?" she said.

"There is music even in your wail."

"I loathe music."

There was a time of silence, a time that drew uncomfortably long, and Abigail asked, "What is your name?"

The man said, "Look into my eyes. You know my name."

Abigail stood, poised like a man balancing on the edge of a sword, a chasm to either side. She did not — Abigail shrieked with joy. "Daddy!"

"It has been a long time since we've sat down at music, sweet daughter."

"You don't want to hear my music. I was ashamed of what we used to play, and I am now ashamed of it all."

"Oh, child! Yes, I do. *I will never be ashamed of you.* Will you come and walk with me? I have a keyboard."

As Abby's fingers began to dance, she first felt as if she were being weighed in the balance and found wanting. The self-consciousness she had finally managed to banish in her playing was now there — ugly, repulsive — and then she was through it. She made a horrible mistake, and then another, and then laughed, and Abraham laughed with her. Abby began to play and then sing, serious, inconsequential, silly, and delightful in the presence of her father. It was as if shackles fell from her wrists, her tongue loosed — she thought for a moment that she was like a little girl again, playing at her father's side, and then knew that it was better. What could she compare it to? She couldn't. She was at a simplicity beyond complexity, and her father called forth from her music that she could never have done without her trouble. The music seemed like dance, like laughter; it was under and around and through her, connecting her with her father, a moment out of time.

After they had both sung and laughed and cried, Abraham said, "Abby, will you come home with me? My house has never been the same without you."

Un-Man's Tales: C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra*, Fairy Tales, and Feminism

A first clue to something big, tucked into a choice of children's books

I was once part of a group dedicated to reading children's stories (primarily fantasy) aloud. At one point the group decided to read Patricia Wrede's *Dealing with Dragons*. I had a visceral reaction to the book as something warped, but when I tried to explain it to the group by saying that it was like the Un-man in *Perelandra*, I was met with severe resistance from two men in the group. Despite this, and after lengthy further discussions, I was able to persuade them that the analogy was at least the best I could manage in a tight time slot.

I was puzzled at some mysterious slippage that had intelligent Christians who appreciated good literature magnetized by works that were, well... warped. And that mysterious slippage seemed to keep cropping up at other times and circumstances.

Why the big deal? I will get to the Un-man's message in a moment, but for now let me say that little girls are *sexist way* too romantic. And this being *sexist way* too romantic motivates girls to want fairy tales, to want some knight in shining armor or some prince to sweep her off her feet. And seeing how this *sexist* deeply romantic desire cannot easily be ground out of them, feminists have written their own fairy tales, but...

To speak from my own experience, I never realized how straight traditional fairy tales were until I met feminist fairy tales. And by 'straight' I am not exactly meaning the opposite of queer (though that is close at hand), but the opposite of twisted and warped, like "Do You Want to Date My Avatar?" (I never knew how witchcraft could be considered unnatural vice until I read the witches' apologetic in Terry Pratchett's incredibly warped *The Wee Free Men*.) There is something warped in these tales that is not covered by saying that *Dealing with Dragons* has a heroine who delights only in what is forbidden, rejects marriage for the company of dragons, and ridicules every time its pariahs say something just isn't done. Seeing as how rooting out from the desire for fairy tales from little girls and little kids in general, authors have presented warped anti-fairy tales.

Ella Enchanted makes it plain: for a girl or woman to be under obedience is an unmixed curse. There is no place for "love, honor, and obey."

The commercials for *Tangled* leave some doubt about whether the heroine sings a Snow White-style "Some day my prince will come."

The Un-man's own tales

One question that can be fairly raised is how far this might just be Lewis's creative imagining for one story—and it would be a brave soul who would deny Lewis can be imaginative. Whether *this* point is just imagination, or something Lewis would say in a nonfiction essay, can in fact be seen from a nonfiction essay, "Priestesses in the Church?"

Perelandra has a protagonist who visits Venus or Perelandra, where an unfallen Eve is joined first by him and then by the antagonist, called the Un-man because he moves from prelest or spiritual illusion to calling demons or the Devil into himself and then letting his body be used as a demonic puppet.

How does the Un-man try to tempt this story's Eve?

[The Lady said:] "I will think more of this. I will get the King to make me older about it."

[The Un-man answered:] "How greatly I desire to meet this King of yours! But in the matter of Stories he may be no older than you himself."

"That saying of yours is like a tree with no fruit. The King is always older than I, and about all things."...

[The Lady said,] "What are [women on earth] like?"

[The Un-man answered,] "They are of great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has

told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does..."

...The Lady seemed to be saying very little. [The Un-man]'s voice was speaking gently and continuously. It was not talking about the Fixed Land nor even about Maleldil. It appeared to be telling, with extreme beauty and pathos, a number of stories, and at first Ransom could not perceive any connecting link between them. They were all about women, but women who had apparently lived at different periods of the world's history and in quiet differences. From the Lady's replies it appeared that the stories contained much that she did not understand; but oddly enough the Un-man did not mind. If the questions aroused by any one story proved at all difficult to answer, the speaker simply dropped that story and instantly began another. The heroines of the stories seemed all to have suffered a great deal—they had been oppressed by their fathers, cast off by husbands, deserted by lovers. Their children had risen up against them and society had driven them out. But the stories all ended, in a sense, happily: sometimes with honours and praises to a heroine still living, more often by tardy acknowledgment and unavailing tears after her death. As the endless speech proceeded, the Lady's questions grew always fewer...

The expression on [the Lady's] face, revealed in the sudden light, was one that [Ransom] had not seen there before. Her eyes were not fixed on the narrator; as far as that went, her thoughts might have been a thousand miles away. Her lips were shut and a little pursed. Her eyebrows were slightly raised. He had not yet seen her look so like a woman of our own race; and yet her expression was one he had not very often met on earth—except, as he realized with a shock, on the stage. "Like a tragedy queen" was the disgusting comparison that arose in his mind. Of course it was a gross exaggeration. It was an insult for which he could not forgive himself. And yet... and yet... the tableau revealed by the lightning had photographed itself on his brain. Do what he would, he found it impossible not to think of that new look in her face. A very *good* tragedy queen, no doubt, very nobly played by an actress who was a good woman in real life...

A moment later [the Un-man] was explaining that men like Ransom in his own world—men of that intensely male and backward-looking type who always shrank away from the new good—had continuously laboured to keep women down to mere childbearing and to ignore the high destiny for which Maleldil had actually created her...

The external and, as it were, dramatic conception of the self was the enemy's true aim. He was making her mind a theatre in which that phantom self should hold the stage. He had already written the play.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the Lady is complementarian to the point where one wonders if the label 'complementarian' is sufficient, and the demon or Devil using the Un-man's body is doing his treacherous worst to convert her to feminism. Hooper says he is trying to make her fall by transgressing one commandment, and that is true, but the entire substance of the attack to make her fall is by seducing her to feminism.

A strange silence in the criticism

Walter Hooper's *C.S. Lewis: Companion and Guide* treats this dialogue in detail but without the faintest passing reference to feminism, men and women, sex roles, or anything else in that nexus. It does, however, treat the next and final book in the trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*, and defend Lewis from "anti-feminism" in a character who was a woman trying to do a dissertation on Milton: Lewis, it is revealed, had originally intended her to be doing a dissertation on biochemistry, but found that he was not in a position to make that part of the story compelling, and so set a character whose interests more closely paralleled his own. So the issue of feminism was on his radar, possibly looming large. But, and this is a common thread with other examples, he exhibits a mysterious slippage. His account gets too many things right to be dismissed on the ground that he doesn't know how to read such literature, but it also leaves too much out, mysteriously, to conclude that he gave anything like such a scholar's disinterested best in explaining the text. (It is my own opinion that Hooper in fact does know how to read; he just mysteriously sets this ability aside when Lewis counters feminism.) And this slippage keeps happening in other places and context, always mysterious on the hypothesis that the errors are just errors of disinterested, honest scholarship.

Jerry Root, in his own treatment in *C.S. Lewis and a Problem of Evil: An Investigation of a Pervasive Theme*, treats subjectivism as spiritual poison and problem of evil Lewis attacks in his different works: Root argues it to be the prime unifying theme in Lewis). But with slight irony, Root seems to turn subjectivistic, or at least disturbing, precisely where his book touches gender roles and egalitarianism. In his comments on *The Great Divorce*'s greatest saint-figure, a woman, Susan Smith, is slighted: among other remarks, he quotes someone as saying that women in C.S. Lewis's stories are "he neglects any intellectual virtue in his female characters," and this is particularly applied to Sarah Smith. When he defends Lewis, after a fashion, Root volunteers, "a book written in the 1940s will lack some accommodations to the culture

of the twenty-first century." But this section is among the goofiest logic in Root's entire text, speaking with a quasi-psychoanalytic Freudian or Jungian outlook of "a kind of fertile mother-image and nature-goddess," that is without other parallel and certainly does not infect the discussion of Lewis's parents, who well enough loom large at points, but not in any psychoanalytic fashion. Root's entire treatment at this point has an "I can't put my finger on it, but—" resemblance to feminists disarming and neutralizing any claim that the Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary could in any way, shape, or form contribute to the well-standing of women: one author, pointing out the difficulty of a woman today being both a virgin and a mother, used that as a pretext to entirely dismiss the idea that She could be a model for woman or a token of woman's good estate, thus throwing out the baby, the bathwater, and indeed the tub. The Mother of God is She who answered, Be it unto me according to thy word, an answer that may be echoed whether or not one is a virgin, a mother, or for that matter a woman.

The critique Root repeats, on reflection, may meet an Orthodox response of "Huh?", or more devastatingly, "Yes, but what's your point?", not because Lewis portrays a saint as "no model of intellectual virtue," but because Orthodox sainthood is not a matter of intellectual virtue. Among its rich collection of many saints there are very few models of intellectual virtue, admittedly mostly men, and usually having received their formation outside the Orthodox Church: St. John Chrysostom was called "Chrysostom" or "Golden-Mouth" because of his formation and mastery of pagan rhetoric. But intellectual virtue as a whole is not a central force in the saints, and Bertrand Russell's observation that in the Gospels not one word is put in praise of intelligence might be accepted, not as a weakness of the Gospel, but as a clarification of what is and is not central to Christian faith. And in terms of what is truly important, we would do well to recall the story of St. Zosima and St. Mary of Egypt. If Lewis's image of sainthood is a woman who is not an academic, this is not an embarrassment to explain away, but a finger on the pulse of what does and does not matter for sainthood.

Humankind, *n.* Mankind, as pronounced by people who are offended at "man" ever being inclusive language.

-Hayward's Unabridged Dictionary

Root mentions the Un-man briefly, and gives heavy attention to the man who would become the Un-man as he appears in the prior book in the trilogy, but does not reference or suggest a connection between the Un-man and feminism. Root became an egalitarian, and shifts in his book from speaking of "men" to saying "humankind". And this is far from one scholar's idiosyncrasy; a look at the World Evangelical Alliance's online bookstore as I was involved with it showed this mysterious slippage not as

something you find a little here, a little there, but as endemic and without any effective opposition.

Un-man's tales for Grown-Ups

During my time as webmaster to the World Evangelical Alliance, the one truly depressing part of my work was getting the bookstore online. Something like eighty to ninety percent of the work was titles like *Women as Risk-Takers for God* which were Un-man's tales for adults. I was depressed that the World Evangelical Alliance didn't seem to have anything else to say on its bookshelves: not only was there a dearth of complementarian "opposing views" works like *Man and Woman in Christ*, but there was a dearth of anything besides Un-man's tales. The same mysterious phenomenon was not limited to a ragtag group of friends, or individual scholars; it was dominant at the highest level in one of the most important parachurch organizations around, and not one that, like Christians for Biblical Equality, had a charter of egalitarian or feminist concerns and priorities.

Conclusion

G.K. Chesterton said, "Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed." That might hold for Chesterton's day, and classics like Grimm and MacDonald today, but today's fairy tales, or rather Un-man's tales, do not tell children the dragons can be killed. Children already know that deep down inside. They tell children dragons can be befriended and that dragons may make excellent company. For another title of the myriad represented by *Dealing with Dragons*, look at the tale of cross-cultural friendship one may look for in *The Dragon and the George*. When first published, *Dealing with Dragons* might have been provocative. Now *Tangled* is not. And reading *Perelandra* leaves one with an uncomfortable sense that C.S. Lewis apparently plagiarized, in the Un-man's tales, works written decades after his death.

This issue is substantial, and Lewis's sensitivity to it is almost prophetic: sensibilities may have changed, but only in the direction of our needing to hear the warning more. And it is one Christians seem to be blind to: complementarianism seems less wrong than petty, making a mountain out of a molehill. But the core issue is already a mountain, not a molehill.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. *Aim for something better than Un-man's Tales.*

Veni, Vidi, Vomui: A Look at "Do You Want to Date My Avatar?"

A Socratic dialogue triggered by The Labyrinth

Trimmed slightly, but "minimally processed" from an email conversation following "The Labyrinth:"

Author: P.S. My brother showed me the following video as cool. He didn't see why I found it a bit of a horror: "Do You Want to Date My Avatar?"

Visitor: Oh gosh, that's just layers and layers of sad. It's all about the experience, but the message is kept just this side of tolerable ("nerds are the new sexy" - the reversal of a supposed stigmatization) so it can function as an excuse for the experience. At least that's my analysis.

Author: Thanks. I just hotlinked a line of Labyrinth to Avatar...

...and added a tooltip of, "Veni, vidi, vomui".

Visitor: (Laughs) You have me completely mystified on this one, sorry.

However, you are welcome. And I'm glad to see that you're cracking jokes. (I think.)

No seriously, laughing out loud. Even though I don't exactly know why.

Is 'vomui' a made-up word? Men... when it comes right down to it you all have the same basic sense of humor. (I think.)

Author: Veni, vidi, vici: I came, I saw, I conquered.

Veni, vidi, vomui: I came, I saw, I puked.

Visitor: Yep... the basic masculine sense of humor, cloaked in Latin. I'm ever so honored you let me in on this. If the world were completely fair, someone would be there right now to punch your shoulder for me... this is my favorite form of discipline for my brother in law when he gets out of line.

But what's Avatar... and hotlink and tooltip?

Author: The link to "Do you want to date my Avatar?" Hotlink is a synonym for link; tooltip, what displays if you leave your mouse hovering over it.

Visitor: Oh dear, I really didn't understand what you were telling me; I was just in good spirits.

OK, I find that funny - and appropriate.

Author: Which do you think works better (i.e. The Labyrinth with or without images):

Visitor: I have some doubts about the video showing up in the text.

Author: Ok; I'll leave it out. Thanks.

Visitor: Welcome.

I did like the Christ image where you had it. It encouraged a sober pause at the right place in the meditation.

Author: Thank you; I've put it in slightly differently.

Visitor: I like that.

Author: Thank you.

I've also put the video (link) in a slightly different place than originally. I think it also works better there.

Visitor: Taking a risk of butting in... Would this be a more apropos place?

The true raison d'etre was known to desert monks,
Ancient and today,
And by these fathers is called,
Temptation, passion, demon,
Of escaping the world.

Unless I've misunderstood some things and that's always possible. (laughs)
I never did ask you your analysis of what, in particular, horrified you about the video. But it seems like a perfect illustration not of pornography simple but of the underlying identity between the particular kind of lust expressed in pornography (not the same as wanting a person) and escapism, and that's the place in the poem where you are talking about that identification.

Author: Thank you. I've moved it.

In *That Hideous Strength*, towards the end, Lewis writes:

"Who is called Sulva? What road does she walk? Why is the womb barren on one side? Where are the cold marriages?"

Ransom replied, "Sulva is she whom mortals call the Moon. She walks in the lowest sphere. The rim of the world that was wasted goes through her. Half of her orb is turned towards us and shares our curse. Her other half looks to Deep Heaven; happy would he be who could cross that frontier and see the fields on her further side. On this side, the womb is barren and the marriages cold. There dwell an accursed people, full of pride and lust. There when a young man takes a maiden in marriage, they

do not lie together, but each lies with a cunningly fashioned image of the other, made to move and to be warm by devilish arts, for real flesh will not please them, they are so dainty (delicati) in their dreams of lust. Their real children they fabricate by vile arts in a secret place.

Pp. 270/271 are in fantasy imagery what has become quite literally true decades later.

Visitor: Yes, that would be what I was missing... that fantasy banquet at the end of the video feels particularly creepy now.

However the girl I was telling you about had among other things watched a show where a "doctor" talked about giving seminars where women learn to experience the full physical effects of intercourse, using their minds only. (Gets into feminism, no?)

That's why I was trying to tell her that "richter scale" measurements aren't everything...

In this hatred of the body, in putting unhealthy barriers between genders, and in seeing the body as basically a tool for sexual experience, fundamentalist Christianity and cutting edge worldliness are really alike. (I had a pastor once who forbade the girls in the church school to wear sandals because they might tempt the boys with their "toe cleavage.")

Author: I would be wary of discounting monastic experience; I as a single man, prudish by American standards, probably have more interaction with women than most married men in the patristic era.

But in the image... "eating" is not just eating. In the initial still image in the embedded version of "Do You Want to Date My Avatar?", I made a connection. The sword is meant as a phallic symbol, and not just as half of a large category of items are a phallic symbol in some very elastic sense. It's very direct. Queer sex and orgy are implied, even though everything directly portrayed seems "straight", or at least straight as defined against the gender rainbow (as opposed, perhaps, to a "technology rainbow").

Visitor: Yes, I see what you are saying. I suppose the opening shots in the video would also imply self-abuse. I was seeing those images and the ones you mention as just icky in themselves without thinking about them implying something else.

Author: P.S. My brother who introduced it to me, as something cool, explained to me that this is part of the main performer's effort to work her way into mainstream television. She demonstrates, in terms of a prospect for work in television, that she can look beautiful, act, sing, dance, and be enticing while in a video that is demure in its surface effect as far as music videos go. (And she has carefully chosen a viral video to prove herself as talent.)

Not sure if that makes it even more disturbing; I didn't mention it with any conscious intent to be as disturbing as I could, just wanted to give you a concrete snapshot of the culture and context for why I put what I put in The Labyrinth.

Visitor: It's making a lot more sense now.

I'm not remembering the significance of the technology rainbow.

Author: As far as "technology rainbow":

In contrast to "hetero-centrism" is advocated a gender rainbow where one live person may have any kind of arrangement with other live people, as long as everyone's of age, and a binary "male and female" is replaced by a rainbow of variety that is beyond shades of gray.

I was speaking by analogy: a "technology rainbow", in contrast to "face-to-face-centrism", would seek as normative any creative possibility, again excluding child pornography, where face-to-face relationships are only one part of a "technology rainbow".

It might also help make the point that internet-enabled expressions of sexuality, for most of the men, aren't exactly straight. They do not involve same-sex attraction, nor animals or anything like that, but they depart from being straight in a slightly different trajectory from face-to-face relationships where heterosexuality is only one option.

Neither member of this conversation had anything more to say.

What Evolutionists Have to Say to the Royal, Divine Image: We're Missing Something

Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*

Robb Wolf, *The Paleo Solution: The Original Human Diet*

I have been rereading and thinking over parts of the two titles above, and I have come to realize that at least some evolutionists have something to give that those of us who believe there is something special about humanity would profit from. I believe more than the "special flower" assessment of humanity that Wolf ridicules; I believe more specifically that humanity is royalty, created in the image of God, and if for the sake of argument at least, the agricultural revolution and what follows are largely a mistake, I can say more than that *Homo sapiens (sapiens)* is the only species out of an innumerable multitude across incomparable time to be *anywhere near* enough of a "special flower" to make such a mistake. I believe more specifically that man is created in the divine image and is of eternal significance, and each of us is in the process of becoming either a being so glorious that if you recognized it you would be tempted to worship it, or a horror such as you would not encounter in your worst nightmare—and that each of us in the divine image is in the process of freely choosing which we shall be.

No other life form is conferred such a dignity—and I would focus that statement a little more and say no other animal.

Dependent Rational Animals as well worth a read, I will not engage him to the same degree as the likes of Mander and Wolf.

'No other animal:' the phrase is perhaps jarring to some, but I use it deliberately. I do not, in any sense, say *mere* animal. But I do quite deliberately say *animal*. Let us turn to Alisdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, in the opening of the second chapter:

From its earliest sixteenth century uses in English and other European languages 'animal' and whatever other expressions correspond to it have been employed both to name a class whose members include spiders, bees, chimpanzees, dolphins and humans—among others, but not plants, inanimate beings, angels, and God, and also to name the class consisting of nonhuman animals. It is this latter use that became dominant in modern Western cultures and with it a habit of mind that, by distracting our attention from how much we share with other animal species...

Since then, evolutionary claims that we are in fact animals is *not* a resurrection of the older usage; it is a new usage that claims we are nothing more than animals, a claim not implied by Aristotle's definition of us as 'rational mortal animals.' There is both a continuity and a distinction implied between rational humans and non-rational animals, and while many animals have intelligence on some plane (artificial intelligence, after failing to duplicate human intelligence, scaled back and tried to duplicate insect intelligence, and failed at that too), there's something special to human intelligence. The singularity we are in now may be a predicament, but no other animal could make a predicament of such dimensions.

I will be interested in a direction taken by Mander and the neo-Paleo movement, in a line that MacIntyre does not really explore. Perhaps his thesis about why we, as dependent rational animals, need the virtues, is greater than anything I will explore here. But I have my sights on something lower.

I would like to define two terms for two camps, before showing where one of them shortchanges us.

The first is revolutionary punk eek. Darwin's theory of evolution is no longer seriously believed by much of anyone in the (generally materialist) scientific community. People who say they believe in evolution, and understand the basic science, normally believe in neo-Darwinian theories of *revolution*. That is, with Darwin, they no longer believe that species gradually morph into new species. They believe that the fossil record shows a punctuated equilibrium, 'punk eek' to the irreverent, which essentially says that ~~evolution~~ revolution has long periods of stable *equilibrium*, which once in a

long while are *punctuated* by abrupt appearance and disappearance of life forms. (What causes the punctuations is accounted for by the suggestions that life forms evolve very slowly when things are on an even keel, but rapidly mutate substantial beneficial improvements when things turn chaotic. When I protested this, I was told that there were people who evolved HIV/AIDS resistance in a single generation, a premise that I cannot remotely reconcile either with my understanding of probability or of genetics.) As my IMSA biology teacher put it, "Evolution is like baseball. There are long periods of boredom interrupted by intense periods of excitement."

Now I am deliberately making a somewhat ambiguous term, because I intend to include old earth intelligent design movement's authors such as Philip Johnson, who wrote *Darwin on Trial*. Johnson argues that natural forces alone do not suffice to punctuate the equilibrium and push evolution revolution forward; but his interpretation of the fossil record is largely consistent with that of someone who believes in neo-Darwinian revolutionary punk eek. And so I lump Richard Dawkins and Philip Johnson together in the same cluster, a move that would probably leave them both aghast.

The distinction between them is between *revolutionary* punk eek adherents, who believe the universe is billions of years old, and young earth creationists, including perhaps some Jews, most Church Fathers, Evangelical conservatives who created Creation Science as an enterprise of proving a young earth scientifically, and Fr. Seraphim (Rose), who saw to it that Orthodox would not stop with quoting the Fathers but additionally import Creation Science into Orthodoxy.

Now let me give some dates, in deliberately vague terms. The age of the agricultural revolution and of civilization weighs in at several thousand years. The age of the world according to young earth creationists is also several thousand years. According to revolutionary punk eek, the age of the world is several billion years, but that's a little besides the point. The salient point is where you draw the line, a question which I will not try to settle, beyond saying that the oldest boundary I've seen chosen is some millions of years, and the newest boundary I've heard is hundreds of thousands of years. What this means in practice is that on young earth assumptions, agriculture is about as old as the universe, while on revolutionary punk eek assumptions, the beginning of the agricultural revolution occurred at absolute most in the past five percent of the time humans have been around, not leaving enough time for our nature to really change in any way that makes sense for revolutionary punk eek. Or to put it more sharply, young earth creationism implies that agrarian life has been around about as long as the first humans, and revolutionary punk eek implies that the agricultural revolution represents a big-picture eyeblink, a mere blip on the radar for people built to live optimally under normal hunter-gatherer conditions. To the young-earthier, there might be prehistory but there can't be very much of it; the normal state of the human being is at earliest agrarian, and there is not much argument that the ways of

agrarian society are normative. To the revolutionary punk eek adherent, there is quite a lot of prehistory that optimized us for hunter-gatherer living, and agrarian society and written history with it are just a blip and away from the baseline.

The other term besides revolutionary punk eek is pseudomorphosis, a term which I adapt from an Orthodox usage to mean, etymologically, conforming to a false shape, a square peg in a round hole. The revolutionary punk implication drawn by some is that we were optimized for hunter-gatherer living, and the artificial state known in civilisation and increasingly accelerating away from these origins is a false existence in something like the Call of C'thulu role playing game played by my friends in high school, where rifts occur in the fabric of reality and "mosters" come through them, starting with the relatively tame vampires and zombies and moving on to stranger monsters such as a color that drives people mad. A motley crew of heroes must seal these rifts, or else there will come one of the "Ancient Ones", a demon god intent on destroying the earth. (It is an occult picture, but not entirely different from the state of our world.)

I don't want to give full context, but I was in a discussion with my second thesis advisor after my studies, and he asked whether I would make 'allowances for greater ignorance in the past.' Now he was a member of a college with one of the world's best libraries for the study of Graeco-Roman context to the New Testament, and he was expert in rabbinic Jewish cultural context to the New Testament. Hello? Has he heard of the Babylonian Talmud? A knowledge of the Talmud is easily on par with a good liberal arts education, and it really puts the reader through its paces. And its point is not just a training ground with mental gymnastics that stretch the mind, but something far greater. My reply to him was, 'I do not make allowances for greater ignorance in the past. Allowances for different ignorance in the past are more negotiable.' And if it is true that we live in escalating pseudomorphosis, perhaps we should wonder if we should make allowances for greater ignorance in the present. I know much more about scientific botany than any ancient hunter-gatherer ever knew, but I could not live off the land for a month much of anywhere in the wild. Should I really be looking down on hunter-gatherers because unlike them I know something of the anatomical structure of cells and how DNA basically works? If a hunter-gatherer were to answer, an appropriate, if not entirely polite, answer would be, "Here is a knife, a gun, and a soldier's pack with bedroll and such. Live off the land for a month anywhere in the world, and then we'll talk."

To take an aside and try to give something of a concrete feel to what hunter-gatherers know that we do not, what might constitute 'greater ignorance in the present', I would like to give a long quote from Mander (I am tempted to make it longer), and point out that Mander is following a specific purpose and only recording one dimension. He does not treat for instance, interpersonal relations. Not necessarily that this is a problem; it may be expedient for the purpose of a written work to outline what a friend

does for work without making much of any serious attempt to cover who that friend is as a person and what people and things serve as connections. Mander describes what contemporary hunter-gatherers have in terms of perception that television viewers lack:

In *Wizard of the Upper Amazon* F. Bruce Lamb records the apparently true account of Manuel Cordova de Rios, a Peruvian rubber cutter, kidnapped by the Amaheuca Indians for invading their territory and forced to remain with them for many years. Rios describes the way the Indians learned things about the jungle, which was both the object of constant study and the teacher. They observed it first as individuals, experiencing each detail. Then they worked out larger patterns together as a group, much like individual cells informing the larger body, which also informs the cells.

In the evenings, the whole tribe would gather and repeat each detail of the day just passed. They would describe every sound, the creature that made it and its apparent state of mind. The conditions of growth of all the plants for miles around were discussed. This band of howler monkeys, which was over here three days ago, is now over there. Certain fruit trees which were in the bud stage three weeks ago are now bearing ripe fruit. A jaguar was seen by the river, and now it is on the hillside. It is in a strangely anguished mood. The grasses in the valley are peculiarly dry. There is a group of birds that have not moved for several days. The wind has altered in direction and smells of something unknown. (Actually, such a fact as a wind change might not be reported at all. Everyone would already know it. A change of wind or scent would arrive in everyone's awareness as a bucket of cold water in the head might arrive in ours.)

Rios tells many of the stories concerned with the "personalities" of individual animals and plants, what kind of "vibrations" they give off. Dreams acted as an additional information systems from beyond the level of conscious notation, drawing up patterns and meanings from deeper levels. Predictions would be based on them.

Drugs were used not so much for changing moods, as we use them today, but for the purpose of further spacing out perception. Plants and animals could then be seen more clearly, as if in slow motion (time lapse), adding to the powers of observation, yielding up especially subtle information to how plants worked, and which creatures would be more likely to relate to which plants. An animal interested in concealment, for example, might eat a plant which tended to conceal itself.

Reading these accounts made it clear to me that all life in the jungle is constantly of all other life in exquisite detail. Through this, the Indians gained

information about the way natural systems interact. The observation was itself knowledge. Depending on the interpretation, the knowledge might or might not become reliable and useful.

Each detail of each event had special power and meaning. The understanding was so complete that it was only the rare event that could *not* be explained—a twig cracked in a way that did not fit the previous history of cracked twigs—that was cause for concern and immediate arming.

Examples could easily be multiplied. There are many passages like that in the book, and many to be written for life. We seem to have a filter where 'knowledge' implicitly means 'knowledge of the sort that we possess', and then by that filter judge other cultures, especially cultures of the past, as knowing less than us. The anthropological term is ethnocentrism. I believe a little humility is in order for us.

Humans have eyes, skin, a digestive tract, and other features that are basic animal features. When studying wild animals, for instance, we expect them to function best under certain conditions. Now the locality of an organism can vary considerably: in North America, there are certain relatively generic species of trees that can be found over a broad swath of land, while in Australia, trees tend to be more specialized and occupy a very specific niche. But in some ways human adaptability is overemphasized. The human body can adapt to regularly breathing in concentrated smoke, in one sense: keeping on smoking is so easy it is hard to quit. But that does not mean that human lungs adapt to breathing in concentrated smoke on a regular basis. The ease with which a person or society can adjust to cigarettes exceeds any adaptation revolutionary punk eek would allow for lungs. Perhaps hunter-gatherers have ingested some smoke from fires, and possibly we have enough tolerance that we do not puff up with an allergic reaction at the first smoke. Nonetheless, in no quarter has the human body adapted to be able to smoke without damage to lungs and health.

For most of the human race to embrace the agricultural revolution, and the revolutions that follow, might be like smoking. We can adapt in the sense of making the change and getting used to it. But that does not include, metaphorically speaking, our lungs. We still have hunter-gatherer lungs, as it were, perhaps lungs that work better if we follow neo-Paleo diet and exercise, and we have adopted changes we have not adapted to.

What punk eek *revolutionists* have to give us

What is perhaps the most valuable thing revolutionary punk has to offer us is a question: "What conditions are we as revolutionary organisms best adapted to?" And *The Paleo Solution* offers a neo-Paleo prescription for diet and also exercise. This may not *exactly* be like what any tribe of hunter-gatherers ate, but it is lightyears closer

than fast food, and is also vastly closer than industrial or even agrarian diets. And the gym-owning author's exercise prescription is vastly more appropriate than a sedentary lifestyle without exercise, and is probably much better than cardiovascular exercise alone. And Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* argues, among other things, that humans do substantially better with natural organic sunlight than any of the artificial concocted lights we think are safer. They don't suggest social structure; the question of whether they held what would today be considered traditional gender roles is not raised, which may itself be an answer. (For the text Mander cites, the answer is 'Yes', although Mander, possibly due to other reasons such as brevity and focus, does not make this point at all clear.) And they don't complete the picture, and they don't even get to MacIntyre's point that our condition as dependent and ultimately vulnerable rational animals means that we need the virtues, but they do very well with some of the lower notes.

The argument advanced by vegetarians that we don't have a carnivore digestive tract is something of a breath of fresh air. It argues that meat calls for a carnivore's short digestive tract and vegetables call for an herbivore's long digestive tract, and our digestive tract is a long one. Now there is to my mind, a curious omission; for both hunter-gatherer and modern times, most people have eaten an omnivore's diet, and this fallacy of the excluded middle never brings up how long or short an omnivore's digestive tract is: apparently, we must either biologically be carnivores or herbivores, even though the people vegetarians are arguing with never seem to believe we should be straight carnivores who eat meat and only meat; even people who call themselves 'carnivores' in fact tend to eat a lot of food that is not meat, even if meat might be their favorite. But the question, if arguably duplicitous, is a helpful kind of question to ask. It asks, "What are we adapted to?" and the answer is, "Living like hunter-gatherers." That's true for the 2,000,000 or however many years the genus *Homo* has been around, and it's still true for the 200,000 years *Homo sapiens sapiens* has been around. Or if you want to subtract the 10,000 years since the agricultural revolution began and we began to experiment with smoking, 190,000 years before we created the singularity that opens rifts in the fabric of reality and lets monsters in, including (as is argued in *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, in the chapter on 'Artificial Light'), the 'color that makes people mad' from the phosphor glow of a television screen in a darkened room.

Some arguments vaguely like this have looked at written history, instead of archaeology. Sally Fallon, in the Weston A. Price spirit, wrote the half-argument, half-cookbook volume of *Nourishing Traditions*, which argues that we with our industrial diet would do well to heed the dietary solutions found in agrarian society, and prescribes a diet that is **much** better than the industrial diet. But she essentially only looks at recorded history, which is millennia newer than agricultural beginnings. But the

pseudomorphosis was already well underway by the times recorded in *Nourishing Traditions*, and not just diet. Everything had begun a profound shift, even if with later revolutions like electricity and computing the earlier agrarian patterns looked like the original pattern of human life. And indeed if you are a young earther, the first chapters of Genesis have agriculture in the picture with some of the first human beings. And so Bible-focused young earth approaches will not arrive at the correct answer to, "What conditions is man as an animal [still] best adapted to?" In all probability they will not arrive at the question.

Revolutionary punk eek will. It asks the question, perhaps with a Western focus, and its answers are worth considering. Not on the level of virtue and asceticism, perhaps, but the 'lower' questions are more pressing now. The default diet and the default level of exercise are part of a profoundly greater pseudomorphosis than when the agricultural revolution took root. And getting a more optimal diet and exercise now may be a more pressing concern, and a diet of more sunlight and better light, if you will, and other things. There is a certain sense in which sobriety is not an option for us; we have a gristly choice between being 5, 10, or 20 drinks drunk, and people who take into account this gift from revolutionary punk eek will be less drunk, not sober. But it is worth being less drunk.

So a word of thanks especially to secular adherents of revolutionary punk eek who do not see us who have perhaps made the mistake of civilization as any particular kind of "special flower," and ask, "What is *Homo sapiens sapiens* biologically adapted to as an animal and an organism?" They might not hit some of the high notes, but I am very grateful for the neo-Paleo diet. And I am grateful to Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* for exposing me to the unnatural character of artificial light and the benefits of real, organic sunlight. I've been spending more time outside, and I can feel a difference: I feel better. Thanks to *revolutionary punk eek!*

What to Own for Happiness (and what not)

People have said that money cannot buy happiness, and I would give a caveat to that.

Years back, I mused that only up to a certain point can money buy more necessities; it can only buy luxuries. Beyond another point, money cannot buy more luxuries; it can only buy status symbols. Beyond another point, money cannot buy additional status symbols; it can only bring power.

And to that I would add a Canadian roommate's comment, made in the 90's, that a middle class American has basically all the creature comfort there is to be had.

But there is a caveat. A good pair of walking or running shoes may not buy especially more comfort for your feet, but it can make more attainable the goal of walking or running and the health benefits that that brings. And really, as the video I quote below says, if the health benefits of exercise could be put into a pill, that would be the most important wonder drug in history. Walking or running shoes will not make you happy if you just buy them and don't exercise, but they can put regular exercise in better reach, and a solid exercise regimen can make you happier.

It is in this spirit that I would like to look at things that can make you happy. Getting more luxuries on Amazon brings only a fleeting pleasure, but some of the right purchases used rightly can help you to greater happiness.

So here are a few things that, used rightly, might contribute to happiness.

(One important caveat: with a few exceptions, like Infowars Turboforce energy drinks, the benefits do not turn on a dime. You're more likely to feel noticeably better

after a month of using EMF protective clothing and good nutritional supplements than in the next day or two. Give these things some time.)

A rugged outdoors computer

I spent more money buying a maxed-out GetAC x500 computer than I did on my car, as a computer that would let me work outside when weather permits and is built to last—for ages.

If you spend a fair amount of time on a laptop or desktop computer, it is a great advantage to have a computer with a sunlight-readable display. Macs usually have a brighter display than normal PC's, but rugged PC's are brighter than either. Rugged laptops are available on Amazon (you might consider a GetAC V110 or , and they can be built to last as a longer-term investment.

(If you just use mobile devices and don't really use a PC, then this item is optional.)

A stand desk, if you work from a desk

Standing with good posture is better for most people than sitting.

Lambs EMF protective clothing

We are surrounded by much higher doses of ambient wifi, radio, 3G, 4G, and 5G electromagnetic fields (EMF), and this can be a drain on your mood where you don't even recognize what is happening.

There is a lot of EMF protective clothing on Amazon, but this is an area where brands can vary in value significantly, and you can't easily tell good protective clothing from bad. I wear a long sleeve T-shirt (a regular T-shirt would also work), to protect organs in my torso, and a beanie to protect my brain.

A blocbag used like a sleeping bag, with an EMF protective T-shirt pulled over my head

While this does not offer absolute protection, it provides some opportunity to recharge.

One possible caveat: Throwing protective clothing through the wringer by putting it through the regular wash can slowly degrade its protective value. I don't wash protective clothes if I can't smell anything in the armpits, and when I do wash it, I rinse it with cold water, dry what I can with a towel, and hang it to air dry.

Infowars supplements

Vitamins, minerals, and other supplements can vary greatly in effectiveness and bio-availability, and the difference between a really good brand and a common brand is substantial.

I personally use Infowars multivitamin, vitamin C with zinc, an eyedropper's worth of iodine, and Turboforce.

At least one sun lamp

Indoors lighting is usually much dimmer than outdoors; it's enough to see but not enough to thrive. Seeing bright lights during the day can help naturally, and sunlight is on the shortlist in the video above about things that prevent diseases of civilization.

A light alarm

When I am woken up by the sound of a regular alarm clock, I don't feel very awake. There is something to be said for getting enough sleep, but I have found that I feel significantly more awake when I am woken by a simulated sunrise than just sound.

Amber goggles

Conversely to sun lamps and light alarms, among other healthy sleep habits, a pair of blue-blocking amber goggles can block stimulating blue light, ideally worn one to two hours before bedtime.

Rob Wolf, *The Paleo Solution: The Original Human Diet*

It is my considered judgment that the more I learn about how foods are produced, the more I think most of what is sold in the grocery stores needs a materials safety data sheet. Something of that wakeup call is found in Sally Fallon's *Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook that Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and Diet Dictocrats*, but the latter just looks at best solutions under conditions of civilization. The *Paleo Solution* looks at what humans have been optimized for hundreds of thousands of years longer than the paleontological eyeblink civilization has existed for.

One friend explained to me that Cheerio's, which are sold under claims like "I'm eating Cheerios to be alive longer for my loved ones," are harvested by poisoning the plants with herbicides so it will be easier to get the oats off. Quaker Oats are also really bad news.

One tip for people who are on a limited budget: Balanced consumption of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids is important and something that we as a society do really badly. Usually meat, for instance, is heavily skewed towards omega-6. Canned wild caught fish

(such as tuna and sardines) offers cheap omega-3 acids for people whose budget won't allow regular consumption of grass-fed, organic beef.

Orthodox fasting is done in agreement with your priest or spiritual father, but I might point out that fasting does not automatically mean grains and pasta; it is possible to keep a strict fast by eating Paleo vegetables.

***Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* by David Burns**

A good counselor can be very, very good and a bad counselor can be very, very bad; counseling can be a powerful resource, and Orthodox spiritual direction or pastoral counseling can be even better. I've known a couple of Orthodox mental health professionals, and they hold high regard for e.g. the "three column technique" laid out in *Feeling Good*.

This title can be helpful whether or not your own needs would benefit from counseling.

My own titles *Happiness in an Age of Crisis* and *The Luddite's Guide to Technology*

I've written a lot that relates to happy living in our present times, and *Happiness in an Age of Crisis* is shorter than the other work and covers essential things to understand happiness. *The Luddite's Guide to Technology* is a longer and fuller collection that looks more broadly about what is good for human persons and what particular engagement with technologies are helpful. More is often less here, and these books have something to say to human flourishing.

If your phone is running your life, read these. One admittedly drastic tip for getting a little bit of control over your phone usage is to keep your phone turned off, and then turn it on when you have a specific purpose to use it for, then turn it off. The added inconvenience is powerful.

Orthodox classics

The Bible (I recommend the Orthodox Study Bible, perhaps paired with the Classic Orthodox Bible which sounds more like a Bible) says quite a lot about how we are made to function, and I am excited that the Philokalia is widely read not only by monastics but not the lay faithful. (The fifth volume is one that I have so far not had pastoral encouragement to read; the link is to the other four volumes.)

These are used best under the guiding hand of an Orthodox priest.

The things you give away

The story is told of someone who had a lot of books, and asked, "Will I have my books in Heaven?"

The answer came, "Some of them."

"Which ones?"

"The ones you gave away."

There is a parable in the *Philokalia* which states that people come and lodge for the night in an inn; some sleep on beds and some sleep on the floor, but all alike leave with only the possessions they brought in. The intended meaning is that on earth some people live in luxury, some not, but you can't take it with you, and you will leave with only your actions to your credit.

One priest commented that he had never seen a trailer attached to a hearse; the footwear I wear will be of no further use to me when I die, even if I am buried with footwear on, but the boots sent to Ukraine will be helpful.

And this isn't just a point about the next life; it is a point about this life, too, and we profit more when we are generous: it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Generosity is a characteristic of a happy and joyful spirit; it is an abundance to be had even if one possesses little; it is a cause and effect of good spiritual health. And what we can buy that will make ourselves happier is dwarfed by what we can buy that will make others happier.

Things not to own

In *Bridge to Terebithia*, one of the ways that the author marks Lesley as rich and privileged is that her family Does Not Own a Television.

I have listed above possessions that I believe to be conducive to happiness, and there are others. I haven't explicitly talked about owning older technologies, such as paper books. But a great amount of the stuff that we accumulate isn't really helpful.

Phones can be useful, but they open a door to some things that are really not savory—and I do not just mean porn. There are many G-rated uses for a phone that are a distraction and orient us away from joy. My own recommendations for cellphone use are to use it in a way that is purely instrumental; the only game I play is chess, which I want to learn how to properly play. There is also something to be said for not owning the newest and hottest doodad. I have an iPhone 8 which I purchased, used, and which I have taken steps to protect for the longer term (i.e. a screen cover and a shock-absorbing case), and which I would not trade for an iPhone 13 Pro Max (or whatever is the hottest new doodad when you are reading this). I believe my phone supplies enough EMF radiation; I do not hold it to my head much, and I do not really want to hold a 5G EMF radiation source to my head at all. (Older phones are already plenty radioactive enough

to cause brain cancer in kids who always have a phone at their ear—and always on the same side they held the phone to.)

I do not know anyone who is happy to have a house that's brimming with stuff. It takes discipline, perhaps, not to buy things that will only bring satisfaction for a moment, and not buy things on impulse. But it's better, and less acquisitive purchasing decisions make for less cluttered houses. There is, in purchasing, something akin to the Weight Watchers maxim: "A minute on the lips, a lifetime on the hips."

General Omar Bradley, upon seeing atomic weapons, said, "We have grasped the mystery of the atom and we have rejected the Sermon on the Mount." Now we have grasped the mystery of a worldwide communication network that sports 5G radiation and continues to grow, and still rejected the Sermon on the Mount.

But Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount still apply:

"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

And if that was true of the more natural forms of wealth available in ancient times, *how much more is it relevant with today's technological smorgasbord in reach?*

What the Present Debate Won't Tell You About Headship

Today I'm going to talk about head and body (headship). And I say "headship" with hesitation, because in today's world asserting "headship" means, "defending traditional gender roles against feminism." And that maybe important, but I want to talk about something larger, something that will be missed if "headship" means nothing more than "one position in the feminist controversy."

One speaker didn't like people entering Church and saying, "It's so good to enter the Lord's presence." He said, "Where were you all week? How did you escape the Lord's presence?" And whatever Church is, it is absolutely not entering the one place where God is present. At least, it's not stepping out of some imaginary place where God simply can't be found.

But if we are always in the Lord's presence, that doesn't mean that Church isn't special. It is special, and it is the head of living in God's presence for all of our lives. Our time in Church is an example of headship. Worshipping God in Church is the head of a life of worship, and it is the head of a body.

There is something special about our time in Church. But the way we live our lives, our "body" of time spent, manifests that glory in a different way. Christ didn't say that people will know we are his disciples by our "official" worship, however much God's

blessing may rest on it. Christ said instead that all people will know we are his disciples by this, that we love one another. That isn't primarily in Church. That's in our day to day lives. If our time in Church crystallizes a life of worship, our love for one another is to manifest it. And that is the place of the body.

The relationship between head and body is the relationship between corporate worship and our lives as a whole. The body manifests the glory of the head. In my head I can decide to walk to a friend's house. But the head needs the body and the body needs the head, and I can only go to a friend's house if my head's decision to visit a friend's house is lived out in my body. "The head cannot say to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'"

The Father is the head of the Son. "No man can see God and live." God the Father is utterly beyond us; he transcends anything we could know; he is pure glory. If we were to have direct contact with him, we would be destroyed. And yet the Son is equal to the Father; the Son is just as far beyond this Creation, but there is a difference. The Son is the bridge between God and man, and God and his Creation. God the Father created the world through the Son, and the Son is just as glorious as the Father, but the Son can touch us without destroying us. The Father displays himself through the Son. The Father's love came to earth through the Son. The Father's wish that we may be made divine is possible precisely because the Son became man. And finally we can know the Father through the Son. If you have seen the Son, you have seen the Father.

We read in the New Testament that Christ is the head of man, that Christ is the head of all authority, that Christ is the head of the Church, and that Christ is the head of the whole Creation. If we think, with people today, that to have any authority over us, any head, is degrading, then we have to resent a lot more than a husband's headship to his wife. But that's not the only option. When Christ is the head of the cosmos, there is more than authority going on, even if we have a negative view of authority. Our Orthodox understanding that the Son of God became a man that men might become the sons of God, that the divine became human that the human might become divine, expresses what the headship of Christ means. Christ is the head, and that means that the Church is drawn up in his divinity. If we are the body of Christ the head, that doesn't mean we're just under his authority. It means that we are a part of him and share in his divinity. The teaching that we share in his divinity is very tightly connected to the teaching of "recapitulation", or "re-heading," where Christ being the head of the Church, and our sharing in Christ's divinity, are two sides of the same coin. Christ is the head, and we, the body, make Christ manifest to the world. Some people may not know Christ except what they see in us. We cannot have Christ as our head without being a manifestation of his glory, and if Christ is the head of the Creation and Christ is the head of the Church, that means that when we worship, inside this building and in our daily lives, we are leading the whole visible Creation in turning to God in glory, and living the life of Heaven here on earth.

Christ is the head of the whole Creation, not just the Church. Christ isn't just concerned with his people, but the whole created world. By him and through him all things were created. Icons, which reflect the full implications Christ's headship over his Creation, exist precisely because Christ is the head of the whole Creation. We use a censer, a building, icons, water, flowers, and other aspects of our matter-embracing religion as representatives of the whole material Creation over which Christ is head. Christ doesn't tell us to be spiritual as spirits who are unfortunately trapped in matter; far from it, we are the crowning jewel of the material Creation, and Christ's headship glorifies the whole Creation and makes it foundational to how we are saved. The universe is a symbol that manifests the glory of its head, Christ.

One example of headship that is immediate to me, although I don't know how immediate it is to the rest of you, is artistic creation. I create, write, and program, and in a very real sense I am at my fullest when I create. When I create, at first there is a hazy idea that I don't understand very well. Then I listen to it, and begin struggling with it, trying to understand my creation, and even if I am wrestling with it, I am wrestling less to dominate it than to get myself out of its way so I can help bring it into being. If in one sense I wrestle with it, in another sense I am wrestling with myself to let my creation be what it should be. If I were to simply dominate my creation, I would crush it, breaking its spirit. My best creations are those which I serve, where I use my headship to give my creations freedom and cooperate with them so that they are greater than if I did not give my creations room to breathe. My best work comes, not when I decide, "I am going to create," but when I cooperate with a creation, love it, serve it, and help it to become real, the creation becomes a share of my spirit.

A great many writers could say that, and I don't think this is something that is only found in writing, but how something far more general plays out. All of us are called to exercise headship over our work. In a family, the father is the head of the household and the mother is the heart of the household. The mother's headship over work in the home provides ten thousand touches that make a house a home. A mother's headship over the home is as much human headship over one's work as my headship over my creations and writing. What I do when I create is love my creation, serve it, develop it, work with God and with my creation to help it be real. If I'm not mistaken, when a woman makes a house into a real home, she loves it, serves it, develops it, and works with God and what she has to make it real. When a woman makes a house into a warm and inviting home, that's headship.

What is the relationship between women and the home? In societies where people have best been able to honor what the Bible says about men's and women's roles, there is a strong association between women and the home. The home, in those societies, was the main focus of business, charity work, and education, besides the much narrower role played by a home today. To say that women were mainly in the home is to say that they

held an important place in one of society's important institutions, an institution that was the chief home of business, education, hospitality, and what would today be insurance, and held many responsibilities that are denied to housewives today. The isolation felt by many housewives today was much less an issue because women worked together with other women; like men, they worked in adult company. I believe there should be an association between women and the home, and I believe the home should be respected and influential. And, for that matter, I believe that both men and women are sold short with the options they have today. But instead of going too deep into that sort of question, important as it may be, I would like to look at what headship means.

The sanctuary is the head of the nave. Part of what that means is that there is something richer than either if there were just an sanctuary or just a nave. But we'll miss something fundamental if we only say that the sanctuary is more glorious to the nave. They are connected and part of the same body. They are part of the same organism, and the sanctuary manifests the glory of the sanctuary. There is also a head-body relation between the saint and the icon. Or between the reality a symbol represents, and a symbol. Or between Heaven and earth. Bringing Heaven down to earth is a right ordering of this world. Heaven isn't just something that happens after death after we serve God by suffering in this world. "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has any heart imagined what God has prepared for those who love him," but God wants to work Heaven in our lives, beginning here and now. If we are bringing Heaven down to earth, we are realizing God's design that Heaven be the head of earth, in the fullness of what headship means.

What about husbands and wives? There's something that we'll miss today if we just expect wives to submit to their husbands, even if we recognized that that's tied to an even more difficult assignment for husbands, loving their wives on the model of Christ giving up his own life for the Church. And we need to be countercultural, but there's something we'll miss if we just react to the currents in society that make this unattractive. Quite a few heresies got their start in reactions against older heresies; it is spiritually dangerous to simply react against errors, and if feminism might have problems, simply reacting to feminism is likely to have problems. Wives should submit to their husbands, and husbands should love their wives with a costly love, but there's more.

It bothers me when conservatives say, "I want to turn the clock back... all the way back... *to 1954!*" If we're just reacting against some feminists when they say women should be strong and independent, and have no further reference point, we're likely to defend a femininity that says that women are weak and passive. What's wrong with that? For starters, it's not Biblical.

If you want to know God's version of femininity, read the conclusion of Proverbs. The opening of this conclusion is often translated, "Who can find a good wife?" That's

too weak. It is better translated as, "Who can find a wife of valor," with "valor" being a word that could be used of a mighty soldier. She is strong—physically strong. The text explicitly mentions her powerful arms. She is active in commerce and charity. There are important differences between this and the feminist picture, but if we are defending an un-Biblical ideal for womanhood, some delicate thing that can't do anything and is always in a swoon, then our reaction against feminism isn't going to put us in a much better spot.

And men should be men, but that doesn't mean that men should be rugged individuals who say, "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul!" That is as wrong as saying that Biblical femininity is weak and passive. Perhaps men should be rugged, but to be a man is to be under authority. Trying to be the captain of your soul is spiritually toxic, and perhaps blasphemous. There is one person who can say, "I am the captain of my soul," and it isn't Christ. Not even Christ can say that, but only God the Father. Christ's glory was to be the Son of God, so that the Father was the captain of his soul, and he did the Father's work. Even Christ was under the headship of the Father, and if you read what John says about the Father and the Son, the fact that Christ was under headship, under authority, is part of his dignity and his own authority. To be a man is, if things are going well, to be a contributing member of a community, and in submission to its authority. Individualism is a severe distortion of masculinity; it may not be feminine, but it is hardly characteristic of healthy masculinity. There are a lot of false and destructive pictures of what a man should be, as well as what a woman should be.

If simply reacting against feminism is a way to miss what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman, it is also a way to miss something more, to miss a broader glory. This something more is foundational to the structure of reality; it is a resonance not only with God's Creation, but within the nature of God and how the Father's glory is shown through the Son. This something more is in continuity with God's headship to Christ, Christ's headship to the Church, Christ's headship to the cosmos, Heaven's headship to earth, the sanctuary's headship to the nave, the spiritual world's headship to the physical world, the soul's headship to the body, contemplation's headship to action, and other manifestations of a headship relation. On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we proclaim:

...Thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ our true God, and honor as Saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in Holy Icons; on the one hand worshipping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord, and on the other hand honoring as true servants of the same Lord of all and accordingly offering them veneration... This is the Faith

of the Apostles, this is the Faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the Faith which has established the Universe.

What does this have to do with heads and bodies? The word "icon" itself means a body, and its role is to manifest the glory of the saints, as the saints are to manifest the glory of God.

We don't have a choice about whether we will live in a universe with headship, but we do have a choice whether to work with the grain or against it, work with it to our profit or fight it to our detriment. Let's make headship part of how we rejoice in God and his Creation.

What is Wrong with the World

G.K. Chesterton wrote a letter to the editor after a newspaper requested answers to the question, "What is wrong with the world?"

His answer, "Sir, I am." was the shortest letter to the editor in newspaper history.

St. Isaac the Syrian and St. Seraphim of Sarov said, "Acquire a spirit of peace within yourself, and ten thousand around you will be saved."

Everybody has an opinion about what needs to change after the riot.

Fortunately, with me the one political necessity is within my power: to recognize that "It is a trustworthy saying, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,'" and to repent of my sins and take them to confession.

(It may be noted that a book contest to come up with the most politically incorrect book was won by a book about Orthodox priest and monk Fr. Seraphim of Plantina: *Not of This World*, which was pointed out to be barely political enough to be politically incorrect: but the best politics are in fact not of this world.)

But I am preparing for something tomorrow that is more political than my voting.

I am going to confession and own up to my sin as best as I can. And try to do better.

Where is the Good of Women? Feminism Claims to be "The Women's Movement." But is it?

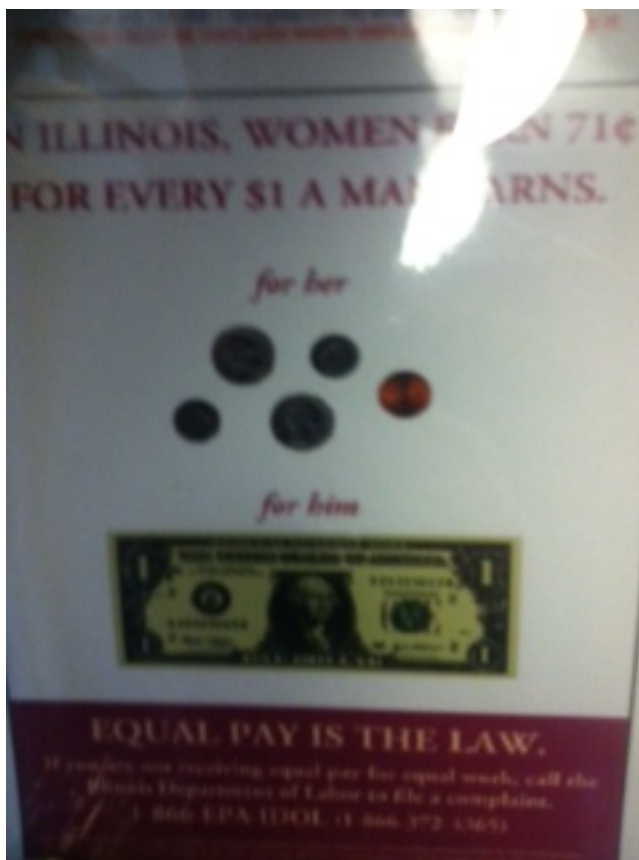
Three types of lies:

Lies, *Statistics*, and Infographics

Perhaps the poster girl for way looney left feminism is the scholar who called Newton's *Principia Mathematica* "Newton's Rape Manual," and I have more sympathy for that than you might think. The birth of science had a moral stench, both in being mingled with deep occult currents, and in being *advanced through a rhetoric of sexual violence for a very specific and deplorable reason*. I do not agree with that specific feminist professor about what Newton's *Principia Mathematica* might as well be called, but I also do not see that diagnosis as the kind that is inspired by hallucinogens.

To begin with, I would like to quote a portion of a poster, posted for government-required regulatory compliance at a once bastion of Christian conservatism, Wheaton College. My choice of this part of departure is not specifically focused on Wheaton, which was presumably not trying to be provocative, but to represent enough of a mainstream influence of feminism that I am not discussing a lunatic fringe of feminism, but something basic and (on feminist terms) not particularly controversial.

I apologize in advance for the poor quality of the picture as it was an attempt to take an accurate picture of a part of a poster that was roughly one to two feet above my head. I will reproduce the graphics as best I can, including the dark, dingy look of the coins (on the original you can see the scissors cuts where the pictures of the quarters had been cut out), but in clarity because I want to represent the poster fairly and not by the standards of my photography in a difficult shot. The poster says at the top, "In Illinois, a woman makes 71 cents for every dollar a man makes." Then there is a picture of 71 cents in coins, "for her" at the top, and a picture of a dollar bill, "for him" below. The picture is as follows:



In the interests of fairness, I want to start with a crisp reproduction of what the Infographic said. It looked like:

918

"The Good Parts"

For her:



For him:



And the natural response is *outrage*. But what if we tweak things a little and compare coins with coins? Then we have:

For her:



For him:



But the objection may come, "Um, that almost destroys the effect." And my response is, "Yes. That is exactly the point." And in this there are two visual lies exposed by this revamp:

1. Whatever a man gets, it looks like literally a dozen times what a woman gets. The sheer space taken for \$.71 in coins (and, following usual practice, as few coins as you can use to reach that amount), is dwarfed by the visual space taken by a dollar bill. For that matter, the visual space taken by a man's four quarters is dwarfed by the visual space taken by a dollar bill. This may only register subconsciously, but it is a powerful subconscious cue: the real, emotional impact

is not that a woman earns 71 cents on the dollar for a man, but more like a miniscule 5 to 10 cents on the dollar. This cue, which may only register subconsciously (compared to the revised comparison of \$.71 in coins and \$1.00 in the largest common coin, the quarter), is only more powerful for its subconscious effect.

2. Secondly, the Infographic registers something else that only renders subconsciously. Compared to the currencies of other countries, especially before the slightly new look for larger bills, paper currency was big currency, and real money. If you walked into a store and paid for something cash, you paid with bills. Coins, while having some value, are often only something you get back as the smallest remaining money and have to figure out what to do with. Not only is spare change a small sort of thing compared to real money, it was honestly a bit of a nuisance. Now people usually pay with plastic or other non-cash items, and money is a bit tighter for most of us, so we may want the change more, but saying that she gets change and he gets real money is an apples and oranges comparison; the effect is like saying that he is paid in cold, hard cash, while she is paid only in coupons.

Lies.

Statistics.

Infographics.

Now it is not simply the case that Infographics can only ever lie; the works of Tufte such as *Envisioning Information* and *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* never stop at tearing apart bad Infographics; they compellingly demonstrate that the visual display of information can be at one stroke beautiful, powerful, and truthful. Something a little more informative, if perhaps imperfect, to convey a 71% statistic would be to simply show 71% of a dollar bill:

For her:



For him:



But it is a serious misunderstanding of feminism to think that a feminist will argue this way. Instead it is another case of:

- Lies.
- Statistics.
- Infographics.*

The beating heart of feminism

I'm not sure how this plays out in feminism outside of feminist theology, but every feminist reader I've read has been in an extreme hurry to neutralize any sense that the Roman veneration of the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary. Now I have heard

Orthodox comment that Roman and Orthodox veneration vary: Romans stress the Mother of God's virginity, Orthodox stress her motherhood, and presumably there's more. But one finds among feminist theologians the claim that since the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary was both a virgin and a mother, that means that you're not really OK if you're a woman unless you are both a virgin and a mother. And never mind that spiritually speaking it is ideal for Orthodox Christians, women and men to have a spiritual virginity, and to give birth to Christ God in others, the Roman veneration means a woman isn't OK unless she is (literally) *both* a virgin *and* a mother. *Fullstop*. One gets the sense that feminists would sell a story that the Roman Catholic Church *reviles* the Virgin Mary, if people could be convinced of that.

A first glimpse of the good estate of women

I would like to make an interstitial comment here, namely that there is something feminism is suppressing. What feminists are in a hurry to neutralize is any sense that the veneration of the Mother of God could in any way be a surfacing of the good estate of women. What is it *they* want to stop you from seeing?

Let's stop for a second and think about Nobel Prizes. There is presumably no Nobel Prize for web development, but this is not a slight: web development is much newer than Nobel Prizes and regardless of whether Alfred Nobel would have given a Nobel prize to web development if it wasn't around, the Nobel Prize simply hasn't commented on web development. There is a Nobel Prize for physics, and (the highest one of all), the Nobel Prize for Peace. When a Nobel Prize is given to a physicist, this is a statement that not only the laureate but the discipline of physics itself is praiseworthy: it is a slight that there is no Nobel Prize for mathematics (rumor has it that Alfred Nobel's wife was having an affair with a mathematician). To award a Nobel Prize for physics is to say that physics is a praiseworthy kind of thing, and one person is singled out as a crystallization of an honor bestowed to the whole discipline of physics. And, if I may put it that way, the Mother of God won the Nobel Prize for womanhood.

Called the New Eve, She is reminiscent of the Pauline passage, And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. Christ is called the Last or New Adam, and Mary the Mother of God is called the New Eve. Let us not say that bestowing a Nobel Prize for physics on one scientist constitutes a rejection of every other.

At feasts of the Mother of God, the Orthodox Church quotes a passage from Scripture that seems at first glance surprising as a way to honor the Mother of God: a woman from a crowd tells Christ, "Blessed are the womb that bore you and the breasts

that you nursed at!" and Christ replies, "Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it." The text appears at first glance to downplay the significance of the Mother of God, and in fact has been taken to do so by Protestants. So why would the Orthodox Church read this text at all kinds of feasts in honor of the Mother of God?

The answer comes after a question: "Who heard the Word of God and kept it?" "Who pre-eminently heard the Word of God and kept it?" Of course many people have done so, but the unequalled answer to "Who pre-eminently heard the Word of God and kept it?" is only the Mother of God, She who said, "Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." The woman who spoke up at the crowd said, "Your mother must really be something because she bore you!", and Christ implies, "My Mother is really something because she obeyed." The Mother of God did not *achieve* the combination of virginity and motherhood; she *obeyed* God's command, and in the wake of that obedience, motherhood was added to her virginity. But taking the Mother of God as a role model for women does not mean that women need to be both virgins and mothers, any more than Evangelicals who ask "What would Jesus do?" feel themselves obliged to learn Aramaic and move to Israel. I don't want to downplay Mary's virginity and motherhood, both of which are sacred offices, but it is a serious confusion—or rather a serious duplicity—to say that venerating the Mother of God means that women aren't OK unless they pull off the combination of virginity and motherhood.

The Mother of God is She who obeyed, and obedience is for everyone, and highlighted for women. And while it may be easy enough for feminist theologians to excuse themselves from a fabricated straw obligation to be both virgins and mothers if they are to be OK as women, excusing oneself from obedience presents more of a pickle, and one that they don't want you to see. Feminism doesn't like obedience (especially of women to men); engineered, synthetic feminist "fairy tales" like *Ella Enchanted* make it clear that for a woman to be in a position of obedience is a curse: a clear and unmitigated curse.

The First Eve fell because she disobeyed; the Last or New Eve offered the perfect creaturely obedience and the gates of Hell began to crumble at her obedience. The Incarnation, the point has been plainly made, would have been absolutely impossible without the consent, obedience, and cooperation of the Mother of God as it would have been without the Holy Trinity. And only a woman could have first opened that door. The Theotokos is called the first Christian; she was the first of many to receive Christ, and men learn from her.

A look at early Antiochian versus Alexandrine Christology may also be instructive. In Antiochian Christology, Christ was significant pre-eminently because he was the Son of God, born of a Virgin, lived a sinless life, died as a sacrifice, and rose as the firstborn of the Dead. In Alexandrian Christology, Christ was significant as a teacher primarily. At

least one theologian has said that St. Paul's epistles don't make much of Christ, because not a single one of his parables comes up in St. Paul's writing. But this is a misunderstanding: St. Paul was in fact making a (proto-)Antiochian use of Christ, and the Christ who was the Son of God, died a sacrifice, and rose from the dead is of central significance to the entire body of his letters. Christ's teaching recorded in the Gospels is invaluable, but we could be saved without it, and many people effectively have been saved without that teaching as believers who did not have the Gospel in their language. But we could not be saved by a Christ who lacked the Antiochian distinctives: who was not Son of God or did not rise from the dead, trampling down death by death. If I may describe them in what may be anachronous terms, early Antiochian Christology held Christ to be significant as an archetype, while early Alexandrian Christology held Christ to be significant as an individual. And the distinction between them is significant. You do not know the significance of Christ as the New Adam until you grasp him as an archetype and not a mere individual on a pedestal, and you do not know the significance of the Mother of God as the New Eve until you grasp her as an archetype and not a mere individual on a pedestal.

On a level that includes the archetypal, the Mother of God is mystically identified by such things as Paradise, the earth, the Church, the Container of Christ, and the city, and many other things such as a life lived of prayer that completes its head in time spent at Church. To be a man is a spiritual office, and to be a woman is a spiritual office. The Mother of God serves as a paradigm, not only of Christians, but of woman. And that is noble, glorious, and beautiful.

There are more things that are beautiful about God's creation than are dreamed of in feminism—and more things than are dreamed of even in women.

I remember one Indian woman I spoke with in an online author's community; she was taking stories from Indian lore and trying to make concrete retellings of them: moving from the archetypes to individuals on a pedestal. And what I told her is, basically, don't. The archetypal stories were something I could well enough relate to; the archetypal (Indian) loving elder in the story had the same pulse and the same heart as loving elders I knew as a small (U.S.) child. The archetypal level is universal. Now what happens in the concrete is important, profoundly important, but you miss something if you cut out its archetypal head and heart and then try to talk with the body that is left over. And there is real *rapprochement* between men and women: Christ the New Adam and Mary the New Eve enjoyed indescribable intimacy, an interpenetration or *perichoresis* where she gave him his humanity and he gave her her participation in his divinity. The Mother of God's perpetual virginity stems from this; after such a *perichoresis* with God incarnate, a merely earthly husband's physical union was impossible. I have heard a complementarian Roman Catholic theology suggest that the word *homousios* to describe the relationship between men and

women: *homoousios* being the word of the Creed used to affirm that the Son is not an inferior, creaturely copy of the Father but of the same essence, fully of the same essence. The statement may be an exaggeration; if so, it was forcefully stating something true. I have attempted postmodern thick description of differences between men and women; I was wrong, not in believing that there are real differences, but in assuming a postmodern style of thick description in rendering those differences. St. Maximus the Confessor is described as describing five mediations in which any gulf is transcended: that between male and female, that between Paradise and the inhabited world, that between Heaven and Earth, that between spiritual and visible Creation, and ultimately that between uncreated and created nature, the chasm between God and his Creation. All of these chasms are real; all are transcended in Christ, in whom there is no male nor female, paradise nor merely earthly city, Heaven nor mere earth, spiritual nor merely physical, Creator nor mere creature. All these distinctions are transcended in a Christ who makes us to become by grace what He is by nature.

The beating heart throbbing head of feminism

I have mentioned two points of feminism: first, an infographic that was mainstream enough to be proclaimed as part of a regulatory compliance poster; and second, the neutered veneration of the Mother of God that is not allowed to mean anything positive for the estate of women. However, these are not intended as the core of a critique of feminism; in part they are intended as clues. Feminism gives a clue about its beating heart throbbing head in an unsavory infographic, and in its haste to neutralize any sense that the veneration of the Mother of God could be any good signal for women (or the ordinary kind—those who are not *both* virgins *and* mothers). Another author might have substituted other examples, and I must confess a degree of instance in that I keep bumping into feminism and I have tried to understand it, but there are depths unknown to most feminists and I would be wary of claiming exhaustive knowledge that I do not claim for cultures I have lived in for months or years. But I still observe, or have acknowledged, one major point.

One text, *Women's Reality: An Emerging Female System in a White Male Society* by Annd Schaef, admittedly considered dated by many feminists today, mentioned that the author mentioned that many men say that women understand them better than men. And this puzzled her, because on the surface at least, it looked quite frankly like a compliment paid, by men, to women. But then she put on her feminist X-ray goggles, observed that the beginning of 'understand' is 'under', and juridically decided that to "understand" is by nature to stand under, that is, to be an inferior. And so she managed to wrest a blatant affront from the jaws of an apparent (substantial) compliment.

There was a counselor at my church who was trying to prepare me for my studies in a liberal theology program, and he told me that there was something I would find very hard to understand in feminism. Now I found this strange as I had already lived in, and adapted to, life in four countries on three continents. And he was right. What I would not easily understand is subjectivism, something at the beating heart, or throbbing head, of feminism. And what is called subjectivism looking at one end is pride recognized by the others, and pride is a topic about which Orthodoxy has everything to say. Pride is the heart, and subjectivism the head, of what Orthodoxy regards as one of the deadliest spiritual poisons around.

It is said that the gates of Hell are bolted and barred from the inside. It is only an image, but some say that the fire of Hell is the Light of Heaven as it is experienced through its rejection. And Heaven and Hell are spiritual realities that we begin to experience now; and feminism is, if anything, bolted and barred from the inside. To pick another example, with the influential *You Just Don't Understand* by Deborah Tannen, the metamessage that is read into men holding doors for women was, "It is mine to give you this privilege, and it is mine to take away." And on that point I would comment: I won't judge this conversation by today's etiquette, in which more often than not people are expected to hold the door for other people; I will comment on the older etiquette that met feminist critique. And on that point I must ask whether any other point in the entire etiquette, much of which was gender-neutral then, received such interpretation? Did saying, "Please," or "Thank you," or "I'm sorry," ever carry a power play of "I extend this privilege to you and it is mine to take away?" More to the point, do body image feminists wish to find a sexist power play in the saying, "There are three things you do not ask a woman: her age, her weight, or her dress size."? Or Was it not just part of a standard etiquette that no one claimed to be able to take away?

But even this is missing something, and I do not mean "men who are fair and women who care." The unfairness is significant, not for being unfair in itself, but because it is the trail of clues left by something that breaches care. And to try to address this issue by reasoning is a losing battle, not because logic is somehow more open to men than women, but because you cannot reason subjectivism into truth any more than you can reason an alcoholic to stop drinking, fullstop. Now one may be able to make the case to a third party that it would better for a particular alcoholic to stop drinking, or that a particular feminist argument played fast and loose with the rules of logic, but it is madness to bring this to feminism. What is unfair in feminism is most directly speaking a breach of one of the lowest basic virtues of the Christian walk, namely justice, and caring is at essence about the highest of virtues in the Christian walk, namely ἀγάπη or love, but this is not what's wrong. Dishonest arguments in feminism are a set of footprints left by pride or subjectivism, and it is by pride that Satan fell from being an angel in Heaven to being the Devil. It is also through pride, here known under the label

of "consciousness raising", that just as Michael Polanyi has been summarized as saying that behaviorists do not teach, "There is no soul," but induce students into study in such a way that the possibility of a soul is never considered, feminists put on subjectivist X-ray goggles that let them see oppression of women in every nook and cranny, even in social politeness. And if you read Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, which has its merits even if they are limited, it is well worth studying what he says about bullies. Bullies do not see themselves as triumphant, or for that matter as oppressors, but as beleaguered victims. Everything has significance, and everything has hostile significance. Why did someone bump a bully in the hallway? The possibility that it was a crowded hall and growing children can be just a little bit clumsy with the current state of their bodies, is never even considered. An innocent bump in the hall is the tip of an assault, the tip of an iceberg in which a piece is moved in chess to achieve their defeat. And the bully's actions are only a modest self-defense. The bully has X-ray goggles that make everything plain, and the bully's state of mind is what is built up by the X-ray goggles of "consciousness raising."

"Consciousness raising" is a brilliant euphemism for taking women who are in many cases happy and well-adjusted and transforming them into alienated, hostile women who believe that everything outside of feminism has it in for them.

Unpeeling the infographic a little further

In my discussion above, I left unchallenged the figure that women make \$0.71 on the dollar compared to what men make. How can I put this? Subjectivists do not go out of their way to use statistics honestly. Subjectivists go for the most convenient cherry-picked data they could. As others have said, they use statistics as a drunken man uses lampposts: for support rather than illumination.

Christina Sommer's *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women* suggests that that book does not follow the *ceteris paribus* principle of comparing with all other things being equal. Motherhood is hard to grind out of women, and spending significant time with her young children is hard to grind out of most women. The "71 cents on the dollar" figure keeps cropping up; in one discussion I remember it was repeatedly claimed that women made 69 cents on the dollar until one person said "Please either substantiate this statistic or stop bringing it up. The comparison in that study compared men who had a single, so to speak, major time commitment to their work, to women who were working hard to juggle a major time commitment to work with a major time commitment to their younger children. When things were genuinely *ceteris paribus*, when men were only compared to women who had worked without reduced employment to care for children, then the figure was more like 86-91 cents on the dollar.

Is 86+ cents on the dollar in 1987 and a closing gap acceptable?

There was a short story that a roommate read to me in high school; it offended me and I was I was horrified. It showed a hiring manager saying, "Inspid. Pathetic. Disgusting. Miserable." as he threw one more resume into the trash. Then a doorkeeper said, "Your 3:00 is here." The manager said, "You've got some balls applying for a position like this. Why are you wasting my time?" The applicant said, "I have wanted to work with this company all my life. I want this position; I have friends, family, and a religion, but all of them are secondary; I will miss the birth of a child if that is what it takes to work." The manager said, "Get out. Are you going to go by yourself or will I have to call to have security escort you off the premises?"

In a flash, the applicant leveled a .45 magnum at him and said, "I *want* this job. Now will you hire me or do I have to blow you away?" The hiring manager said, "Very well. Report to my desk at 8:00 AM Monday." After the applicant left the room, the manager pulled the intercom and told the doorkeeper, "Tell all of the other applicants to _____ off. We have our man."

This story horrified me a great deal more than an F-bomb alone, and it was part of an attempt on his part to convince me that no one ever does any action for any motive besides financial gain. (In the past I've had several people try to convince me of the truth of this point. In no case did any of these people stand to benefit financially from their efforts to persuade me. *But I digress.*) However, my roommate was trying to help me appreciate something about the business world that this caricature caught right on target.

Women in the business world have been advised to make a practice of asking, "What's in it for me?" And for that matter, compassionate men may be advised to make a practice of asking, "What's in it for me?" and play by the rules of a jungle because compassionate men do not do the best at succeeding in the business world. Now must you ask, "What's in it for me?"

The answer is a simple "No, it's optional," but there's a caveat. If you do not negotiate based on "What's in it for me?", you are less likely, man or woman, to receive more paycheck, prestige, power, and promotion. In the short story it did not strictly speaking need to be a *man* who negotiated with a gun in a job interview. But it is more often a man and not a woman who is mercenary to that degree. I myself do not naturally gravitate towards that thinking even if I've been advised to, and my salary history is an IT salary history, which is something to be thankful for, but it has been below average for many of the areas I've been working in, and whatever gifts I may have are applied on the job without necessarily receiving even average pay.

Let us ignore for one moment the Times cover story about "The Richer \$ex," meaning women. Is it possible that the following could be justified?

For the love of money is the root of all evils: "I climbed to the top of the corporate ladder only to discover that it was leaning against the long building:" even if you win the rat race, you're still a rat: the best things in life are *still* free. I might comment that while I am meticulously analyzing money, the premises are wrong. We've been barking up the wrong tree. I'm answering the wrong question. There is great gain in godliness with contentment: more than money can buy. It would speak well of us to be concerned, less than if someone else is making more than we could, than with the things that are truly important in life. The more inequity disturbs you, the more you stand to profit from "Maximum Christ, Maximum Ambition, Maximum Repentance" for what is more important, and "Money" for what is less.

For him, *ceteris paribus*



For her, *ceteris paribus*



Could there be possibly more important questions for women than the question that began and ends this article?

The war against *real* women

In the Catholic social encyclicals, the modern ones since *Rerum Novarum*, the tone prior to Pope John Paul was celebratory, or sometimes complaining that the encyclicals were not progressive enough. But one thread out of this many-patched quilt is the call (added or amplified) for a "living wage". That wage was something like \$15 or \$20 per hour, but not really set in stone. And there is a legitimate concern: perhaps not as dramatic as the situation in sweatshops, but being a greeter in Wal-Mart may be a great way for a kid to earn some change, but eking out a living on what Wal-Mart pays most employees in its stores is not really possible. Now there may also be a point in that the position labeled as progressive would result, not in a great many people earning \$15-\$20 an hour, but a great many people earning \$0 an hour because businesses that can only keep employees paid a living wage have a short lifespan. (But let's brush this under a rug.)

The consistent call was for work to pay a living wage, with one notable exception. Pope John Paul II called for a man to be able to earn a "family wage", meaning not a living wage for an individual but some sort of support that would be sufficient for a family to live off of. And this was universally derided by feminist commentators, and not because John Paul II failed to also specify that women should be able to earn a family wage.

I'm not sure if you've heard, either in the context of artificial intelligence-related transhumanism or of planned exploration of Mars, the term 'Melanesian'. The term may be racially charged, but I'm going to ignore that completely. The thought is vile on

grounds that make it completely irrelevant whether the people being derided belong to one's race or another. The basic idea of being 'Melanesian' is that for ages untold people have hunted, built, crafted things with their hands, told stories and sung songs, made love and raised children, and all of this is innocent enough in its place, but now we are upon the cusp of growing up, and we must leave 'Melanesian' things behind. The John 3:16 of the Mars Society is "Earth is the cradle of humankind, but one does not remain in a cradle forever." We must grow up and leave 'Melanesian' things behind. Now the exact character of this growing up varies significantly, but in both cases the call to maturity is a call to forsake life as we know it and use technology to do something unprecedented. In the case of transhumanism, the idea is to use human life as a discardable booster rocket that will help us move to a world of artificially intelligent computers and robots where mere humans will be rendered obsolete. In the case of the Mars Society, it is to branch out and colonize other planets and the furthest reaches of space that we can colonize, and in the "Martian" (as Mars Society members optatively call themselves) mind heart, this mission, and the question of whether we are "a spacefaring race", bears all the freight one finds in fully religious salvation.

All this is scaled back in the feminists who comment on Pope John Paul II's call for a family wage, but there is something there that is not nearly so far on a lunatic fringe as transhumanism or the Mars Society, but much more live as a threat as it would be a brave soul who would call this a lunatic fringe. The feminist critique of Pope John Paul II's call for a family wage is that it is unacceptable, and men should earn low enough amounts of money that it takes both parents' work to support them. Women are to be made to "grow up", and however much it may be untenable to deny a woman's right to attend university or a woman's work to do any job traditionally done by men, it is absolutely out of the question to allow a woman's right to do a job traditionally done by women. They are to be pushed out of the nest and made to grow up. They are to be compelled by the economics of a situation where a husband cannot earn a family wage to work like a man.

The argument has been advanced that women are "The Richer \$ex." The question has been raised about whether men have become "the second sex", as was the title of a classic of French feminism. A book could easily be pulled on *The War Against Boys*, and discussion could be made of how school and the academy are a girl's game—and one Wheaton administrator described how some of the hardest calls he has to make is to explain to one parent why her daughter, with a perfect record of straight A's, was rejected by Wheaton—and explain that Wheaton has four hundred others like her; Wheaton, which has a 45% male student body, could admit only female applicants with straight A's and still be turning people away.

But the argument discussed just above is something of a side point. To put it plainly, feminism is anti-woman. Perhaps ire against men is easily enough found; Mary

Daly, now unfashionable, makes a big deal of "castration" and defines almost every arrangement of society not ordained by feminism as "rape." (This would include most of all societies in all of history that we have recorded.) And if Mary Daly is now unfashionable, she is unfashionable to people who follow in her wake and might be voiceless today if she had not gone before them. And Mary Daly at least may well wear a reform program for men on their sleeve. But others who have followed her, and perhaps used less brusque rhetoric, wear a reform program for women next to their hearts.

I would like to pause for a moment to unpack just what it may mean to elevate anger to the status of a central discipline. And gender feminism, at least, does make an enterprise fueled by anger.

Every sin and passion in the Orthodox sense is both a miniature Hell, and a seed that will grow into Hell if it is unchecked. Different ages have different ideas of what is the worst sin. Victorians, at least in caricature, are thought to have made sexual sin the worst sin. In the New Testament, sexual sin is easily forgiven, but in an age where men have Internet porn at their fingertips, it would be helpful to remember that lust is the disenchantment of the entire universe: first nothing else is interesting, and then not even lust is interesting: there is misery. Getting drunk once might feel good, but the recovering alcoholic will tell you that being in thrall to alcohol and drunk all of the time is suffering you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. Many people today think pride, the sin that cast an angel out of Heaven to be the Devil, is the worst sin and all of us have a stench to clean up here. And to the Church Fathers, to whom love was paramount, anger was perhaps the greatest danger. Today we say that holding a grudge is like drinking poison and hoping it will hurt the other person, or that 'anger' is one letter from 'danger'. The Fathers said, among other things, that it makes us more like the animals, and by implication less like what is noble and beautiful in the race of mankind. And it is one thing to lose one's temper and find that dealing that with one particular person tries your patience. It is another thing entirely to walk a spiritual path that is fueled by the passion of anger. And this feminist choice is wrong. It is toxic, and we should have nothing to do with it.

Gender feminism may elevate anger to the status of central spiritual discipline, but to quote *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women*:

Writers of both contemporary history and science texts, especially for the primary and secondary grades, make special efforts to provide "role models" for girls. Precollege texts now have an abundance of pictures; these now typically show women working in factories or looking through microscopes. A "stereotypical" picture of a woman with a baby is a frowned-upon rarity...

In an extensive study of the new textbooks written under feminist guidelines, New York University psychologist Paul Vitz could find no positive portrayal of romance, marriage or motherhood.

Although this is not directly a remark about feminism, something of my joy in *A Wind in the Door* was lost when I learned that Madeleine l'Engle viewed kything, the main supernatural element in the book, regarded it as literal fact. The idea that a reader is supposed to entertain a willing suspension of disbelief is not disturbed, but she meant, literally, that ordinary people should be able to send things directly, mind to mind. And what I took to be a beautiful metaphor (perhaps today I would say it needs to be transcended in the noetic realm), made for an ugly literal claim. And the same thing happened when I read Terry Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men*, which is presented as a novel of Discworld. It is not set in Ankh-Morpork, nor does any standard Discworld character or setting make more than one or two combined cameo appearances. So it is duplicitously called a novel of Discworld. And it is in fact not really centered on the Wee Free Men, who certainly make nice ornaments to the plot but never touch the story's beating heart. The story is Wiccan and advertises witchcraft; like Mary Daly, who gives a duplicitous acknowledgement of Christ's place (I parsed it and told the class point-blank, "I am more divine than her Christ"), argues for Wicca and witchcraft, tells how one may become a witch, and in her 'Original Reintroduction' written some decades after writes with a poetic and highly noetic character which drips with unnatural vice as much as Orthodox Liturgy drips with glory and Life. It was in reading *The Wee Free Men* that I first grasped *why* the Fathers called witchcraft unnatural vice. Never mind that witches deal in plants, and probably know a great many more details than the rest of us. There is a distinction like that of someone who studies available books on anatomy, physiology, and biochemistry, perhaps learning more than those in the medical profession, but to be an assassin ("If a sword blow hits the outside of the arm about a third of the way from the elbow to the shoulder, you can sever an artery and cause substantial bleeding."). The analogy is not exact; I believe it misses things. But the entire Wiccan use of plants constitutes unnatural vice.

And in the shadow of those following Mary Daly, there is never a reform program for men that leaves women untouched. Maybe the reforms for men may be more clear; but good old-fashioned chauvinist men are almost a distraction compared to women who resist feminist improvement.

The Good Estate of Woman

Is it demeaning that the Bible says of the ambitious woman, Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing? Or is it not much more demeaning to say of the ambitious woman, "She shall be saved *from* childbearing?"

Women desire quite often simply motherhood. The very strength of the desire for romance, marriage, and motherhood in the face of gargantuan opposition says that what feminism is trying to free women from is an estate of happiness that women have yearned for from time immemorial. If it is prescribed hard enough that women will enter the workforce and work at some job wanted by men, she very well may do that—in addition to wanting children. Wendy Shalit in *A Return to Modesty*:

"Just because you're a woman doesn't mean you can't be a doctor or a lawyer." Girls of my generation grew up on this expression. "Just because you're a woman." It was a motto like motner's milk to us, and now it is the philosophy behind Take Our Daughters to Work Day. "Just because you're a woman." In other words, being a woman is a kind of handicap that with hard work, one can overcome. Some are born deformed; others are born women; but be brave. I'm sure you'll make the best of it.

Yet now that we are free to be anything, doctors and lawyers, now that we've seen that women can be rational, and that men can cry, what we most want to know, and what we are not permitted to ask, is what does it mean to be a woman in the first place? Not in terms of what it won't prevent us from doing—we are not unaware of our bountiful options—but what is meaningful about being a woman? Rosie the Riveter was riveting only because she didn't usually rivet, and now that so many Rosies do, we most long to know what makes us unique again.

Two different women said to me, nervously, before graduation, What's wrong with me? I want to have children. One had landed a job with an investment banking firm; the other was *supposed* to land a job with an investment banking firm because that's what her father wanted, but the scouts who came to campus complained she wasn't aggressive enough. *What's wrong with me? I want to have children...* [emphasis original]

I think of a friend from college who was a powerful athlete, and for that matter was into boxing, and after college wanted to... *settle down and be mother to a family, and a large one at that.*

There is the Calvin and Hobbes strip where Hobbes says, "You can take the tiger out of the jungle, but you can't take the jungle out of the tiger." And what it seems is that women can be pushed to be androgynous or like men in so many ways, and yet you still can't take the jungle out of the tiger.

And perhaps women's happiness is found in cutting with the grain of motherhood than against it.

And on this point I would like to pause for what is for feminism the Right by Which Women's Rights Stand or Fall: the right to choose whether to have an, um, "uterine contents shower." An older generation of feminist called abortion the ultimate violation of a woman; but I wish to make another point here. If you want *pro-choice*, real *pro-choice*, dial 1-800-4-HOPE-4-1. There is counseling which does not make this choice for a woman, and which stands by women who choose abortion as well as those who do not. (And let's not get in to how many abortions women are pressured into, against their choice, who are pressured into it by "boyfriends" and men who have no desire to shoulder the responsibilities of a father to raise a child.) And this is decisively *pro-choice* compared to the "counseling" provided by an abortion clinic, which is essentially a five minute sales pitch presenting abortion as the only live option. And if you have had an abortion, and are hurting, recognize that what abortion clinics by law offer as post-abortion counseling is no more helpful than the pre-abortion counseling; again, dial 1-800-4-HOPE-4-1 and be connected with the healing power of counseling that recognizes abortion as an experience that many have found traumatic. Counselors are complaining that political correctness is preventing them from adequately offering post-abortion counseling. And the "it's part of her body" is an illusion, a legal fiction. Nobody believes it, or at least women going through an abortion don't. Feminist landmarks like the sacrament of abortion, in a chapter called "the cure for guilt," advocate grieving that explains to the child why the separation is needed. It's not scraping away some unwanted tissue from a woman's body; it is striking a woman's motherhood, sort of a spiritual equivalent to kicking a man in the testicles. Feminism is anti-woman, and perhaps the single greatest instance of this is that it supports the right of women, not to be mothers, but to have their motherhood injured. It is a bit like claiming to be pro-man, and having the single greatest test of one's support for men be in his reproductive freedom, namely the inalienable right to opt-in to a hard kick in the groin.

And perhaps in place of a spiritual discipline of anger that puts on feminist X-ray goggles and finds oppression and insult lurking around every corner and in the most innocent of acts, women might place such spiritual disciplines as thanksgiving.

The darker the situation, the more we need thanksgiving. In the last major ordeal I went through, what saved me from despair was counting my blessings, and being mindful and thankful for innumerable things and people, and telling other people how thankful I was for them. I don't know how else I could have had such joy at such a dark moment.

The properly traditional place for women is not exactly for men to be at work and women to be at home without adult company; the traditional placement for both men and women was to work in adult company, doing different work perhaps but doing hard work in adult company. Feminists have a point that the 1950's ideal of a woman alone

without adult company all the worklong day can induce depression, and cutting with the grain of motherhood does not automatically mean reproducing the 50's. The perfect placement is for men to be with other men doing the work of men and women to be with women doing the work of women, and that is denied to men as well as women. *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Policies Are Harming Young Men* attests that school has become girls' turf. My own experiences in schooling were that in almost all areas that truly interested me, I was self-taught. Working first in math, then in theology, there was something more than the naive outsider's question to academic theology: "Yes, I understand that we need to learn multiple languages, the history of theology, philosophy of religion, hermeneutics, and so on, but when are we going to study real theology?" This question is not in particular a man's question; it could just as plausibly have been spoken by a young woman. But work and school both place its members as neuters; there may be some places of schooling that may be 80% male (I've been there), and there may be places of schooling that may be 80% female (I've been there), but the traditional roles for men and women are not optional; they are taken off the table altogether, leaving those who would have traditional roles holding the short straw.

But to say that and stop is misleading. I remember when I asked an Orthodox literature professor for his advice on a novella I was working that was a fantasy world based on the patristic Greek East instead of the medieval Latin West, and his advice, were I wise enough to listen to it (I wasn't), was simply, "If Orthodoxy is not to work for the here and now, it simply isn't worth very much." And Orthodoxy has fashioned men and women who have thrived under pagan antiquity, under Constantine, under the devious oppression of Julian the Apostate, under the fairy-like wonderland of nineteenth century Russia, under the Bolshevik Revolution, under centuries in the Byzantine Empire, under Muslim rule after Byzantium shrunk and finally modern era guns ended the walls erected by a Byzantine Emperor ages before, in France by those fleeing persecution, in America under parallel jurisdictions. In every age and at every time the Orthodox Church has found saints who chanted, as the hymn in preparation for Communion states, "Thou, who art every hour and in every place worshipped and glorified..." And if you think our world is too tangled to let God work his work, there is something big, or rather Someone Big, who is missing from your picture. God harvested alike St. Zosima and St. Mary of Egypt. And it is not just true that God has fashioned and has continued to fashion real men in the intensely masculine atmosphere of a monastery of men; calling men's monasteries simply schools that make men is to focus on a minor key. Helping men be men, and channeling machismo into povdig or ascetical feats, is a matter of seeking the Kingdom of God and having other things be added as well. I have heard of one man be straightened out on Mount Athos from his addiction to pornography and then depart and be married; that may not be the usual path on Mount

Athos, but the strong medicine offered on Mount Athos is sufficient to address the biggest attack on manhood this world offers, and it is a place of salvation.

What prescription would I suggest for women? To get a part-time job while children are at school? To homeschool, and have some team teaching? To just stay at home? All of these and more are possibilities, but the most crucial suggestion is this:

Step out of Hell.

In *From Russia, With Love: A Spiritual Guide to Surviving Political and Economic Disaster*, I wrote:

The Greek word hubris refers to pride that inescapably blinds, the pride that goes before a fall. And subjectivism is tied to pride. Subjectivism is trying, in any of many ways, to make yourself happy by being in your own reality instead of learning happiness in the God-given reality that you're in. Being in subjectivism is a start on being in Hell. Hell may not be what you think. Hell is light as it is experienced by people who would rather be in darkness. Hell is abundant health as experienced by people who would choose disease. Hell is freedom as experienced by those who will not stop clinging to spiritual chains. Hell is ten thousand other things: more pointedly, Hell is other people, as experienced by an existentialist. This Hell is Heaven as experienced through subjectivist narcissism, experiencing God's glory and wishing for glory on your own power. The gates of Hell are bolted and barred from the inside. God is love; he cannot but ultimately give Heaven to his creatures, but we can, if we wish, choose to experience Heaven as Hell. The beginning of Heaven is this life, but we can, if we wish, be subjectivists and wish for something else and experience what God has given us as the start of Hell.

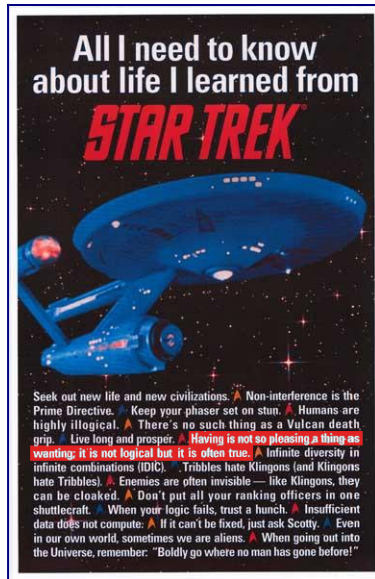
Step out of Hell, pray, and accept what God gives you.

Who is Rich? He who is Content.

In "A Pet Owner's Rules," I wrote of God as a Pet Owner who has only two rules: to enjoy freely of the gifts he has given, and "Don't drink out of the toilet." I wrote, "Strange as it may sound, it takes sobriety to enjoy even drunkenness. Drunkenness is drinking out of the toilet... It takes chastity to enjoy even lust... It takes contentment to enjoy even greed... As G.K. Chesterton said, it takes humility to enjoy even pride..."

I would like to zero in on it taking contentment to enjoy even covetousness.

When I was an undergraduate, one of my suitemates had an "I Learned It All From Kindergarten"-style poster, except it was in this case it was "All I Need to Know About Life I Learned from Star Trek," and one of the entries was, "Having is not so pleasing a thing as wanting; it is not logical but it is often true."



Whatever your opinion of Star Trek may be, I regard this specific lesson (which I don't remember meeting in any Star Trek TV show or movie that I've watched), as an unfortunate lesson. Possibly there is more pleasure in starting to covet something than being in contentment before; twentieth century critiques offering conservative warnings about capitalist society where people like corporations because they sell them such desirable and coveted things; advertising perennially creates a spirit of discontent with whatever one has. And here what is a great good appears small and what is small in its merits appears great: the greatness of being content with what you have appears a trivial thing, and the triviality of things that can be acquired by chasing covetousness appears deceptively great.

The Orthodox Church does us a service in exhorting us to be content with what we have. In fact, through the purifying fire of fasting (for instance), the Orthodox Church does us a service by exhorting us to be content with less than what we have.

St. Paul tells us, "Godliness with contentment is great gain... The love of money is the root of all evil." St. John Chrysostom magnifies this good dose of clear thinking, with great beauty and eloquence, about what is real treasure and hollow and what is and is not truly desirable; if you want an entryway into his magnificent collection, one highly recommended work is *A Treatise to Prove That Nothing Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*, as bringing great clarity about what is truly desirable, and what is truly to be feared.

What did St. Paul have in mind when he called a form of covetousness "the root of all evil?" Let me give one educated guess about two people who coveted more than reigning as lords in Paradise. Adam and Eve did not fall because they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; God's Plan A had always been for them to eat

that fruit, *in the right way, and when they were ready for it*. The ban was only meant to be temporary while they grew. Adam and Eve fell because they went behind God's back and had the fruit on their own terms, not God's. And that is why what God intended as a profound blessing was received as the venomous sting of death, that opened the door to every sin, suffering, and sorrow known to man.

Now for this article, I personally find it annoying when other people use a made-up term known only to themselves without explaining what they mean and expect other people to understand them, and here I'm going to do half half better by using some made-up terms, but explain what no standard term I'm aware of meaning. In each case I will explain the term, and I'm sorry if this is confusing. I'll try to be understandable, but here I think new terms will be fruitful.

In my own covetousness I have experienced some future purchase as mediating humanity. What I mean by mediating humanity is that I feel that I will not be full and complete as a human being until I get whatever hot new thing I just can't live without. But whenever I get whatever junk I need to have, it thrills for a short while but the thrill quietly slips away, and I soon finding myself needing some other acquirement to *mediate* my being fully *human*. Ick!

When I was getting ready to study theology, I had some money and used it to buy a computer that ended up lasting me for several years: an IBM ThinkPad (a respected brand, for good reason), with 15" of screen real estate, having 1GB RAM and a 1GHz processor. That's still plenty for running Linux, and it was quite respectable for a laptop when I bought it in 2002 and several years after.

When I was working out buying a computer that I would have last me for a long time, I worked out the details of a practical investment, but there was something holding me back. My conscience wasn't quiet. I didn't see why this wouldn't be an optimal solution to a rational problem, but my desire was in part what I call sacramental shopping. Not too far in meaning from mediating humanity, sacramental shopping is an ersatz sacrament, a sacrament made much dumber. Not that we are not to live by consuming: the Holy Mysteries are quite specifically there for us to feed on and live by consuming. But we are missing something if we shop for merchandise to give us life. And, finally, I repented of my seeking sacramental shopping and accepted my conscience's "No," whole cloth. And then my conscience surprised me by changing, and I purchased the computer as a careful investment, but only a rational choice and not sacramental shopping.

Indulging covetousness does not satisfy. It can't. Contentment is what satisfies.

St. Basil said of lust that it is like a dog licking a saw. The dog continues because of the taste, but the taste is of his own blood, of his own woundedness. And so, really is seeking contentment from indulging covetousness. The pleasure is the pleasure of our own woundedness.

But in all this, and in A Pet Owner's Rules, the bit about not drinking out of the toilet is only a footnote to the #1, central rule: "I am your owner. Receive freely of the food and drink I have provided for your good!" We are perhaps content to feed a dog canned or dry pet food and water, but "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has any heart imagined" what the Pet Owner in Heaven has for us, beginning not after the Last Judgment but here and now. I remember a time visiting a monastery where I was bowled over by humility by a layman who was not even a novice, just one of the people who worked in the kitchen, and I came back and wanted to see him, not because he was kind to me (although I assure you that he was very warm and kind), but because I wanted to catch some crumbs from under the table of his humility. My two thoughts were that I had not dreamed there were such things in Heaven or on earth, and a perhaps brash thought, "I want the mint [spiritual money-printing machine]!" because his humility really had reached that degree, and I wanted the source of such money. (Perhaps we are commanded in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not store up treasures on earth," but that is a #2 helper, a footnote, to "Store up treasures in Heaven," and humility is one such treasure, legitimate to have and legitimate to desire and seek.) And let us ascend!

Again, as we climb higher, we may say this. Sacramental shopping is alchemy made dumber: alchemy—the spiritual tradition of transforming metals and men with a technique that would circumvent the need for a lifetime of hard discipline. Alchemy is much more confusingly similar to Truth than sacramental shopping, but alchemy is sacramental Christianity made dumber. Boethius lamented the person who fathered the practice of adorning with lifeless jewels and gold the human body: the living artwork of God. And what is the transformation into gold, possible or impossible, besides the transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ himself?

And beyond that, we are to heed St. Athanasius that we are not to command the driver's seat for ourselves. Our participation in the Holy Mysteries is to recognize ourselves a partner in a Great Dance where God himself seeks our consent to transform us. All of creation is blessed to follow God's lead, and we humans are blessed to actively participate in our following God's lead. We are not solipsists who on our own are worthy to be transformed by the Body and Blood of Christ. We must not count ourselves worthy of things much lesser: but God laughs and beckons us further up and further in!

And beyond even that, we cannot overreach. Not in anything truly important, that is. We may be forbidden to seek the office or honors of Bishop, Archbishop, Metropolitan, Patriarch, or Pope, but not one of us is forbidden to seek repentance, Heaven's best-kept secret, nor asceticism, nor moral character worthy of such office. Humility, true humility, is a wonder such as we can scarcely even guess; when we meet a truly humble man we may say, "I'd have been a better man all my life if I'd known there were things like this." And in deifying transformation, we cannot pursue too much or

too hard. Possibly we can pursue unwisely, as novices who attempt impossible virtues, or monastics who attempt warfare above their strength, but this is not really a matter of wanting too much good for ourselves, but traps beside the way of virtue that miss the mark and seek good in a premature and flawed way. We are summoned perhaps to let go of dust and ashes like coveted silver and gold, but only that we may be made able to grasp Silver beyond silver and Gold beyond gold, the Treasure for Whom every treasure in Heaven and on earth is named. We may be forbidden to seek fame and praise before men: I am perhaps forbidden to seek fame before my fellow laity, or the Readers, or the Subdeacons, or the Deacons, or the Priests and Archpriests, or my Archbishop, or ROCOR's Metropolitan, or the Patriarch of Moscow, but that is only because all of us are summoned to seek fame before God himself, a God who Wonders at our slightest act or thought of good. I may be forbidden to be impressed with myself: but that is so that God may be eternally impressed.

One priest complained that no one ever confessed covetousness. Covetousness is one of many gates of Hell, if indeed Hell has more than one gate. The virtues are one Virtue, and consequently there is really only one vice we need shed. But if we shed covetousness, with it open not only Heavenly contentment, but the gates of Heaven open to live here on earth.

Perhaps some day we may speak of love.

Why I'm Glad I'm Living Now, at This Place, at This Time, in This World



First Things, in a column by Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, muses,

The clock is ticking, and many in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee are counting the days, the hours, and even the minutes before Archbishop Rembert Weakland has to submit his resignation at twelve noon on his seventy-fifth birthday. I am told that the champagne bottles will be popped at 12:01 p.m. upon receiving the fax from Rome that the resignation is accepted. **Truth to tell, I've always had something of a soft spot for the Archbishop. He's liberally daffy but more amusingly candid than most of that persuasion. Of course he has a very high opinion of himself, but he's never tried to hide it. I particularly liked his public statement that he would have made a great Bishop of Salzburg in the time of Mozart but ended up as Bishop of Milwaukee in the time of rock and roll. There's something perversely refreshing about a bishop who doesn't mind saying that he's too good for the people he's called to serve.**

If I had been meant to live in Salzburg at Mozart's time, God would have done that. If I had been meant to live in the Middle Ages, in the desire that underpinned my second novel, God would have done that. And if I had been made to live in the age of many Church Fathers, God would have done that too. As it is, God's providence has placed me here and now... and God may make of me a Church Father anyway, without a time machine. To nostalgic Romans, it may be a sadness that the door to the Middle Ages is closed, but to Orthodox living at the corner of east and now, the door to being patristic remains ever open, and I may die (or be subtilized by the returning Christ) a Church Father anyway. As things are, God has given me a whole lot of being in the right place in the right time, and put me in the days of... myself! I got onto the web by accident (or rather by providence that I did not see as significant) and I have multiple major websites and a big bookshelf on Amazon.

As I write, incidentally, the majority of U.S. flags I've seen are black and white with a strip of color, the old "Don't tread on me" rattlesnake flag is seen not infrequently, and when I popped in to LinkedIn turned up a friend reflecting on a news item that grandmas are buying shotguns. I did not expect that, but I am not in the least surprised.

And one other thing: I can't meaningfully prep apart from measures I have taken that have been unfruitful. I am on maintenance medications, and if I stop taking them, I'll die *within* days. And as I write I seem to have COVID.

And in all this, I am grateful. St. John Chrysostom's final words were, "Glory be to God for all things!" and I echo them. I have food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and really quite a lot of things that I do not need and I am not entitled to. I only need to be faithful

today with what I have today. God will bring tomorrow, and not knowing what tomorrow may bring is much less important if you know Who will bring tomorrow.

And my death is, basically, non-negotiable. God, in his great mercy, does not let us know ahead of time when we die, because we would put off repentance and be incorrigible sinners in the hour of death. A few saints know ahead when they will die. They are so secure spiritually that they will not be less faithful for knowing. For the rest of us, it is mercy that we do not know. I could, possibly, die within days. I could for that matter die sooner: when I got my first COVID injection, a blood clot formed in my leg and dislodged to make trouble in my lungs, and the doctor said I was lucky I got to the hospital when I did, because it could have killed me. I think COVID injections are the greatest breakthrough in human health since DDT, but I digress. I could die an old man, like my grandfather who lived to be 95. I could live to see the returning Christ. And which of these, or other possibilities, hold, is not my concern. Each day has enough trouble of its own—and I have found solving a life's problems on a day's resources to be an entirely preventable ticket to despair.

Some people think that this life is only a preparatory life and is therefore unimportant. St. Nikolai, in *Prayers by the Lake*, talked (I forget exactly where) about how birth and death are only an inch apart, and the ticker tape goes on forever.

This makes what we choose in this life incredibly important. We can only "save for retirement" between birth and death. We can only repent between birth and death. After death, improving the lot we have eternally chosen in this life will be impossible. I wish to live in repentance for the rest of my life, but I have not gotten to monasticism yet, but if death cuts short my attempts, that matters less than you might think. God treats an active intent as if the person had done what is intended; I do not see I can rightly stop seeking monastic repentance, but if I am faithful and fail, I am in the same position as martyrs said to be "baptized in their own blood" because they were martyred before they could even reach baptism.

And, to borrow from a childhood favorite, *A Wind in the Door* (my esteem is much less for it now), the heroine "felt as though fingers were gentle fingers pushing her down," I sought to stay when I visited Mount Athos and was told that the conditions for being made a saint are in America, and implicitly reminded that monastic "white martyrdom" is an artificial surrogate to the "red martyrdom" of the Church in a hostile world.

I would like to quote a unicorn in C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, though I'm not sure it applies to our world:

He said that the Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve were brought out of their own strange world only at times Narnia was upset, but she mustn't think that things were always like that. In between their visits there

were hundreds and thousands of years when peaceful king followed peaceful king till you could hardly remember their names or count their numbers, and there was really hardly anything to put in the History Books.

As to the question of why God did not create Narnia and bring me to it, I reply that every excellence is incomparably excelled in what "eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor any heart imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." I can't get to a real Narnia, but I'm trying to get to a real "better than Narnia," a "better than Narnia that begins on earth, as I discuss in "A Pilgrimage from Narnia:"

A Pilgrimage from Narnia

Wardrobe of fur coats and fir trees:
Sword and armor, castle and throne,
Talking beast and Cair Paravel:
From there began a journey,
From thence began a trek,
Further up and further in!

The mystic kiss of the Holy Mysteries,
A many-hued spectrum of saints,
Where the holiness of the One God unfurls,
Holy icons and holy relics:
Tales of magic reach for such things and miss,
Sincerely erecting an altar, "To an unknown god,"
Enchantment but the shadow whilst these are realities:
Whilst to us is bidden enjoy Reality Himself.
Further up and further in!

A journey of the heart, barely begun,
Anointed with chrism, like as prophet, priest, king,
A slow road of pain and loss,
Giving up straw to receive gold:
Further up and further in!

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner,
Silence without, building silence within:
The prayer of the mind in the heart,
Prayer without mind's images and eye before holy icons,

A simple Way, a life's work of simplicity,
Further up and further in!

A camel may pass through the eye of a needle,
Only by shedding every possession and kneeling humbly,
Book-learning and technological power as well as possessions,
Prestige and things that are yours— Even all that goes without saying:
To grow in this world one becomes more and more;
To grow in the Way one becomes less and less:
Further up and further in!

God and the Son of God became Man and the Son of Man,
That men and the sons of men might become gods and the sons of God:
The chief end of mankind,
Is to glorify God and become him forever.
The mysticism in the ordinary,
Not some faroff exotic place,
But here and now,
Living where God has placed us,
Lifting where we are up into Heaven:
Paradise is wherever holy men are found.
Escape is not possible:
Yet escape is not needed,
But our active engagement with the here and now,
And in this here and now we move,
Further up and further in!

We are summoned to war against dragons,
Sins, passions, demons:
Unseen warfare beyond that of fantasy:
For the combat of knights and armor is but a shadow:
Even this world is a shadow,
Compared to the eternal spoils of the victor in warfare unseen,
Compared to the eternal spoils of the man whose heart is purified,
Compared to the eternal spoils of the one who rejects activism:
Fighting real dragons in right order,
Slaying the dragons in his own heart,
And not chasing (real or imagined) snakelets in the world around:
Starting to remove the log from his own eye,

And not starting by removing the speck from his brother's eye:
Further up and further in!

Spake a man who suffered sorely:
For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time,
Are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in
us, and:
Know ye not that we shall judge angels?
For the way of humility and tribulation we are beckoned to walk,
Is the path of greatest glory.
We do not live in the best of all possible worlds,
But we have the best of all possible Gods,
And live in a world ruled by the him,
And the most painful of his commands,
Are the very means to greatest glory,
Exercise to the utmost is a preparation,
To strengthen us for an Olympic gold medal,
An instant of earthly apprenticeship,
To a life of Heaven that already begins on earth:
He saved others, himself he cannot save,
Remains no longer a taunt filled with blasphemy:
But a *definition* of the Kingdom of God,
Turned to gold,
And God sees his sons as more precious than gold:
Beauty is forged in the eye of the Beholder:
Further up and further in!

When I became a man, I put away childish things:
Married or monastic, I must grow out of self-serving life:
For if I have self-serving life in me,
What room is there for the divine life?
If I hold straw with a death grip,
How will God give me living gold?
Further up and further in!

Verily, verily, I say to thee,
When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself,
And walkedst whither thou wouldest:
But when thou shalt be old,

Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee,
And carry thee whither thou wouldest not.
This is victory:
Further up and further in!

And for our world, I would quote C.S. Lewis in saying that "humanity has always been on a precipice." Such study as I have had of Byzantine history leads me not to wonder that Constantinople fell, but that over a millennium after Constantine, after many times the Empire should have resolved, it took modern *cannons* to break through Constantinople's walls and subdue the great city. "Humanity has always been on a precipice"—and it seems to be increasingly more of a precipice.

It is believed by some Orthodox that Hinduism has room for the demonic and OrthoChristian.com describes Orthodox mission in India as "Perpetual Embers," but do not speak ill to a Hindu of Krishna and the milk-maids. However, it is not provocative to call Kali demonic: a goddess of death who wears a necklace of skulls and bestows madness as her special blessing. Or at least I don't see why it need offend a Hindu.

I have what I would call an "unintendedly kept loan" in that I was loaned a copy of the Bhagavad-Gita ("Song of God") by an Indian woman, and then lost all contact and don't see how to return it. Nor was the loan small; the Bhagavad-Gita was accompanied by commentary, as is Hindu tradition to unpack their greatest classic, in a beautiful two-volume boxed set. And the front matter talked about our being in the "Kali-yuga," or age of Kali. I don't know or understand what exactly a Hindu would mean by the Kali-yuga, but I can take a guess. And I have had some contact with the movement called "Traditionalists," which find certain underlying themes in many world religions that are threatened in the modern way of life and are sympathetic to Hindus who would see a Kali-yuga:

There is a singularity which has developed over past centuries, was present in decisive breaks made in the scientific revolution that paved the way to hard science as we know it, and has been unfolding and accelerating, and now crassly has vomited TV's and cellphones on Africa, the poorest continent. One obvious question is, "Do you mean the Book of Revelation?" and my answer is an emphatic "Yes... and No..." There are certain things which I believe we have been told will pass as Revelation is fulfilled. These include great tribulation, the coming of the Antichrist, and the return of Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead, and the glorious resurrection. But trying to pin down Biblical prophecy down in detail is essentially an attempt to get a crystal clear view into deep waters that are impregnably and unfathomably murky. Don't, at least not before the prophecies have been fulfilled.

However, while I have extreme suspicion for detailed point-for-point pinpointing the events in Revelation, I think it is a much more possible and profitable measure to

study the singularity we are in as a singularity, a point I explore with some video in *Revelation and Our Singularity*.

A student of World War II may be able to pinpoint a linchpin in German manufacturing. There was a single point of failure in a ball bearing factory. If that factory had been taken out, it would all but destroyed Nazi Germany's capability to produce cars, trucks, tanks, and airplanes. Now let me ask: where is the linchpin in our technological society? *Trick question!* There are so many that no one knows how many there are. One of the most Luddite statements I've read is from a computer programmer: "If builders built buildings the way computer programmers write programs, the first woodpecker that came along would destroy civilization."

At Honey Rock, there was a delightful place called "the Web" that used World War II cargo netting to make a great amusement for kids. It, after several decades, fell beyond safe use, and the camp's people tried hard to find replacements. There were none to be found, came the conclusion from their research. Furthermore, it is now a respectable number of decades since technological museum curators have computer media that they believe to likely be intact but which they have no idea how to interpret. Cryptanalysis can break all sorts of very well-engineered codes. However, storage media produced with neither the desire nor attempt towards secrecy cannot straightforwardly read media that was intended to be straightforward to read.

To put things in miniature, like almost any at least half-serious website I have switched from sending unencrypted HTTP to confidential HTTPS. This was a right decision, I believe. However, to do that I need to get a stream of certificates, and if someone by any means shut down my ability to obtain certificates, my website would practically be dead in the water. Search engines would now be linking to security error pages; even bookmarks wouldn't work. I might be able to get the word out that my website was served via HTTP, if I wasn't blocked from social media by that time, but my use of the recommended practice of serving webpages confidentially via HTTPS introduces one more single point of failure. (That's why I'm revamping and roughly doubling my "Complete Works" collections in paperback. Amazon believes it has a total right to delete anything from a Kindle any time.) We are going from fragile to more and more and more fragile, to an effect like that in *The Damned Backswing*.

In a homily a few weeks back, my priest said,

Let us go to the Egyptian desert, and overhear a conversation taking place between a group of monks led by Abba Iscariot. This took place in the third century and the conversation went like this.

Abba Iscariot was asked, "What have we done in our life?"

The Abba replied, "We have done half of what our fathers did."

When asked, "What will the ones who come after us do?"

The Abba replied, "They are doing the half of what we are doing now."

And to the question, "What will the Christians of the last days do?"

He replied, "They will not be able to do any spiritual exploits, but those who keep the faith, they will be glorified more than our fathers who raised the dead."

We live in an *exciting* time.

My spiritual director said, "We think we are not on Plan A any more, not on Plan B, not on Plan C, and so on down the alphabet, *but God is always on Plan A.*"

If you wonder how that could possibly be, I invite you to read "God the Spiritual Father."

Why Tithe?

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

One priest I know, former Evangelical Orthodox, said that a youth in the parish had asked him for a pastoral reference. When the priest got the form, it asked, "To your knowledge, has this person received Christ as his or her Lord and Savior?"

The priest said that what he wanted to write was, "Yes, almost every single Sunday!"

Protestant converts to Orthodoxy can take some things to excess, and The Protestant Phenotype tells of problems with converts I've never seen in other Orthodox. However, it is sad if tithing is only really done by Orthodox who were Protestant and when they were Protestant they recognized and practiced the Biblical necessity of tithing.

A financial advisor said, "I have never seen a person driven to financial ruin by tithing." Neither have I.

One question which is asked is, "What do we *get* if we tithe?"

My answer to that question is as follows:

Every good thing you have was given to you from God. Your money, your possessions, your friends and family, the saints and angels' care for you from Heaven, your life, God himself is in your life because of God's generosity. And God does not owe you any of this.

And this generous God who has given you so much, said (Mal 3:10, Classic Orthodox Bible), "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.")

Proverbs says a lot about money, and in it is the promise, Proverbs 19:17, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." And this comes from the same source as tithing.

As my own dear Vladyka has said, "The Lord never remains in debt." The Akathist to St. Philaret chants:

To thee, O camel who passed through the eye of the needle, we offer thanks and praise: for thou gavest of thy wealth to the poor, as an offering to Christ. Christ God received thy gift as a loan, repaying thee exorbitantly, in this transient life and in Heaven. Rejoice, O flowing fountain of Heaven's treasures! (Repeated thrice.)

Giving to the Lord and the poor is something we owe... but God does not receive any of our gifts. He receives them all as loans, to be repaid at heavy interest.

Besides the fact that giving feels wonderful, it builds us a character of bubbling up generosity, like a fountain, a fruit of the Spirit, that is the very opposite of a tight fist. God wants you to live his own overflowing and abundant life. You get a character that is healthier and experience more of the abundance of Heaven itself.

And what may come with all that is that tithing may transform you into eternal life, where God himself repays you for all eternity with riches we cannot even imagine on earth.

Incidentally, this is the one point in Scripture where we are all called to put God to the test. The general rule is not to tempt God. And here we are not merely permitted but abundantly invited to tempt the Lord and find in it an occasion where God will give you good things you cannot even imagine now.

Ten percent is a baseline; God never remains in debt if you give him more, and if you give more than 10% you are entering a blessing.

But I do not want to go into that here.

God has given, and continues to give, everything we have. If we salute God with our tithes, his every blessing is on the 90% we keep.

Tithing is too good a treasure to only leave for converts.

Don't miss out on the blessings of tithing!

And if you're really not used to it, try this. Start giving just 1% of your income with your parish. Then, with each fast, increase it a little more, maybe another 1%, until you reach 10%. It's easier than you think.

Why this Waste?

"Why This Waste?" quoth the Thief,
Missing a pageant unfold before his very eyes,
One who sinned much, forgiven, for her great love,
Brake open a priceless heirloom,
An alabaster vessel of costly perfume,
Costly chrism beyond all price anointing the Christ,
Anointing the Christ unto life-giving death,
Anointed unto life-giving death,
A story ever told,
In memory of her:

"Why This Waste?" quoth also the Pious,
Kings and Priest and Prophet one,
Regarding in Heaven and earth a cornucopia great of blessing,
Rank on rank of angelic host,
Seraphim, cherubim, thrones, domonions, powers, authorities, principalities,
archangels and angels,
Sapphire Heavens and an earth growing living emeralds,
A sun of gold, a moon of silver,
A Theotokos eternally reigning after Heaven kissed earth,
The Son of God who opened the womb of death,

Pageantry of uncreated God and creation made one with God,
"Why This Waste?" indeed.

"Why This Waste?" quoth the Skeptic,
A pageant missed, other else ignored,
A hawk's eye opened to root out magical thinking in the Pious,
A man's eye closed to his own magical thinking one must needs embrace,
Materialist or naturalist to be,
"I see no evidence of God or any spirit,"
Quoth he through his spirit,
With the breath of God.

"Why This Waste?" quoth the Mother,
A child borne in her womb,
Soon become a corpse nestled in her bosom,
Rejecting the empty consolation of lies that lie evil away,
Facing the stark, hard truth,
Of clay in the hands of the potter,
Dust is she too,
To dust also to return,
The last word, this is not:
"Why This Waste?" quoth not another Mother,
Whose Son's death as a sword her heart pierced,
And seeth the infant son lost,
In no wise lost, but found on her Son's throne in Heaven.

"Why This Waste?" quoth the Father Almighty,
Seeing his creation enter sin, death, and decay,
Then moved Heaven and earth, nay the two hands of his Son and Spirit,
To right things wrong, straighten all things bent,
Until sinners should become saints,
The physical body sown in dishonor raised in honor,
Spiritual, incorruptible, imperishable, glorious,
Every move Satan makes one step closer to God sealing checkmate,
The triumph of God using every attack of Satan in victory eternal.

"Why This Waste?" quote you and I,
Having lost some things in a global economic crisis,
More losses to come, it would seem.

It would seem.
Fearing that the providence of God,
Faieth us in a disaster.
"Why This Waste?" quote we in error,
Mistaking the limits of sight for those of faith itself.

Why This Waste?

Will There Be a Place for Me?

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Do not worry for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Do you think you can add one single hour to your life by worrying? You might as well try to worry your way into being a foot taller!

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

-The Sermon on the Mount (COB)

The year was 2006 and I was studying at Fordham. A doctor made a mistake that let me be stressed to the point of uninterrupted waking nausea for weeks.

Part of my attendance at Cambridge, and then Fordham, was to get a PhD, the unofficial union card to teaching at university level, and the issue was not whether I would have the superhuman honorific of "Dr. Hayward." Or rather that was a secondary issue that did not help, but my fear was of something much worse: "Will there be a place for me?"

Before all of that, another physician had prescribed medications that made for a year of idleness, lying on my bed, staring at my light bulb, and thinking "This is worse than watching television." When the idleness ended, I found that my interests in the humanities came back quickly, computer work came back more slowly and perhaps not quite as well, but my discipline, mathematics, never came back. I had reconnected with math after four months away from math once before, and that was when I was significantly younger.

My study of academic theology was meant as retooling; since the door to mathematics was closed, information technology work had been a square peg in a round hole, and I looked for what next. I inquired about interdisciplinary PhD, and was told to pick a single academic discipline as his department had tremendous difficulties placing "American Studies" PhD's whose skills were divided between American history and literature: history departments wanted to hire a proper history PhD, and literature departments wanted to hire a proper literature PhD. And advised to pick one discipline, I picked the one that mattered to me most: theology.

And when things were turning ugly around Fordham, the question "Will there be a place for me?" was a question of what Providence I would be given. I've made a couple of forays at trying to teach theology without a PhD and without an Orthodox seminary degree, but no one has nibbled, and that may be just as well. But that left me with the square peg, round hole, and strong personalities who consider it disrespectful for a subordinate to be smarter than them. And I was going ahead, flailing.

Part of what I had worried before Fordham was how I would handle the daily grind, but for me a day's worth of daily grind is doable one day at a time. And after my parents explained that they were not going to keep the house indefinitely for me, I was able to retire on disability, and when Section 8 housing would have required injections I am not morally comfortable with, a door had been open and I have been a welcome guest at the little gem of St. Demetrios Skete.

There has always been a place for me. I don't know if I will die in a FEMA camp, but Paradise is wherever the saints are, and I am with (s)aints now. There has always

been a place for me, and I believe God always will provide for me if I am faithful. I would recall the Akathist hymn "Glory to God for All Things:"

Glory to God for All Things

ODE 1

Everlasting King, Your will for our salvation is full of power. Your right arm controls the whole course of human life. We give You thanks for all Your mercies, seen and unseen: For eternal life, for the heavenly joys of the Kingdom which is to be. Grant mercy to us who sing Your praises, both now and in the time to come. Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

IKOS 1

I was born a weak, defenseless child, but Your angel spread his wings over my cradle to defend me. From birth until now, Your love has illumined my path, and has wondrously guided me towards the light of eternity. From birth until now the generous gifts of Your Providence have been marvelously showered upon me. I give You thanks, with all who have come to know You, who call upon Your Name:

Glory to You for calling me into being.

Glory to You, showing me the beauty of the universe.

Glory to You, spreading out before me heaven and earth, like the pages in a book of eternal wisdom.

Glory to You for Your eternity in this fleeting world.

Glory to You for Your mercies, seen and unseen.

Glory to You, through every sigh of my sorrow.

Glory to You for every step of my life's journey, for every moment of glory.

Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 2

O Lord, how lovely it is to be Your guest. Breeze full of scents — mountains reaching to the skies — waters like a boundless mirror, reflecting the sun's golden rays and the scudding clouds. All nature murmurs mysteriously, breathing depths of Your tenderness. Birds and beasts of the forest bear the imprint of Your love. Blessed are you, mother earth, in your fleeting loveliness, which wakens our yearning for happiness that will last forever in the land where, amid beauty that grows not old, rings out the cry: Alleluia!

IKOS 2

You have brought me into life as if into an enchanted paradise. We have seen the sky like a chalice of deepest blue, where in the azure heights the birds are singing. We have listened to the soothing murmur of the forest and the melodious music of the streams. We have tasted fruit of fine flavor and the sweet-scented honey. We can live very well on your earth. It is a pleasure to be your guest.

Glory to You for the feast-day of life.
Glory to You for the perfume of lilies and roses.
Glory to You for each different taste of berry and fruit.
Glory to You for the sparkling silver of early morning dew.
Glory to You for the joy of dawn's awakening.
Glory to You for the new life each day brings.
Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 3

It is the Holy Spirit Who makes us find joy in each flower—the exquisite scent, the delicate color — the beauty of the Most High in the tiniest of things. Glory and honor to the Spirit, the Giver of Life, Who covers the fields with their carpet of flowers, crowns the harvest with gold, and gives to us the joy of gazing at it with our eyes. O be joyful and sing to Him: Alleluia!

IKOS 3

How glorious You are in the springtime, when every creature awakens to new life and joyfully sings Your praises with a thousand tongues! You are the source of life, the destroyer of death. By the light of the moon, nightingales sing, and the valleys and hills lie like wedding-garments, white as snow. All the earth is Your promised bride awaiting her spotless Husband. If the grass of the field is like this, how gloriously shall we be transfigured in the Second Coming, after the Resurrection! How splendid our bodies, how spotless our souls!

Glory to You for the warmth and tenderness of the world of nature.
Glory to You for the numberless creatures around us.
Glory to you for the depths of Your wisdom—the whole world a living sign of it.
Glory to You: On my knees, I kiss the traces of Your unseen hand.

Glory to You, enlightening us with the clarity of eternal life.
 Glory to You for the hope of the unutterable, imperishable beauty of
 immortality.
 Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 4

How filled with sweetness are those whose thoughts dwell on You: how
 life-giving Your holy Word. To speak with You is more soothing than
 anointing with oil, sweeter than the honeycomb. To pray to You lifts the
 spirit, refreshes the soul. Where You are not, there is only emptiness; hearts
 are smitten with sadness; nature, and life itself, becomes sorrowful. Where
 You are, the soul is filled with abundance, and its song resounds like a torrent
 of life: Alleluia!

IKOS 4

When the sun is setting, when quietness falls, like the peace of eternal
 sleep, and the silence of the spent day reigns, then in the splendor of its
 declining rays, filtering through the clouds, I see Your dwelling-place. Fiery
 and purple, gold and blue, they speak prophet-like of the ineffable beauty of
 Your presence, and call to us in their majesty. We turn to the Father:

Glory to You at the hushed hour of nightfall.
 Glory to You, covering the earth with peace.
 Glory to You for the last ray of the sun as it sets.
 Glory to You for sleep's repose that restores us.
 Glory to You for Your goodness, even in time of darkness, when all the world
 is hidden from our eyes.
 Glory to You for the prayers offered by a trembling soul.
 Glory to You for the pledge of our reawakening on the glorious last day, that
 day which has no evening.
 Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 5

The dark storm-clouds of life bring no terror to those in whose hearts
 Your fire is burning brightly. Outside is the darkness of the whirlwind, the
 terror and howling of the storm, but in the heart, in the presence of Christ,
 there is light and peace, silence. The heart sings: Alleluia!

IKOS 5

I see Your heavens resplendent with stars. How glorious You are, radiant with light! Eternity watches me by the rays of the distant stars. I am small, insignificant, but the Lord is at my side: Your right arm guides me wherever I go.

Glory to You, ceaselessly watching over me.

Glory to You for the encounters You arrange for me.

Glory to You for the love of parents, for the faithfulness of friends.

Glory to You for the humbleness of animals which serve me.

Glory to You for the unforgettable moments of life.

Glory to You for the heart's innocent joy.

Glory to You for the joy of living, moving, and being able to return Your love.

Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 6

How great and how close You are in the powerful track of the storm! How mighty Your right arm in the blinding flash of the lightning! How awesome Your majesty! The voice of the Lord fills the fields, It speaks in the rustling of the trees. The voice of the Lord is in the thunder and the downpour. The voice of the Lord is heard above the waters. Praise be to You in the roar of mountains ablaze. You shake the earth like a garment; You pile up to the sky the waves of the sea. Praise be to You, bringing low the pride of man. You bring from his heart a cry of penitence: Alleluia!

IKOS 6

When the lightning flash has lit up the camp dining hall, how feeble seems the light from the lamp. Thus do You, like the lightning, unexpectedly light up my heart with flashes of intense joy. After Your blinding light, how drab, how colorless, how illusory all else seems.

Glory to You, the highest peak of men's dreaming.

Glory to You for our unquenchable thirst for communion with God.

Glory to You, making us dissatisfied with earthly things.

Glory to You, turning on us Your healing rays.

Glory to You, subduing the power of the spirits of darkness and dooming to death every evil.

Glory to You for the signs of Your presence, for the joy of hearing Your voice

and living in Your love.
 Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 7

In the wondrous blending of sounds, it is Your call we hear. In the harmony of many voices, in the sublime beauty of music, in the glory of the works of great composers, You lead us to the threshold of paradise to come, and to the choirs of angels. All true beauty has the power to draw the soul towards You and make it sing in ecstasy: Alleluia!

IKOS 7

The breath of Your Holy Spirit inspires artists, poets, scientists. The power of Your supreme knowledge makes them prophets and interpreters of Your laws, who reveal the depths of Your creative wisdom. Their works speak unwittingly of You. How great are You in Your creation! How great are You in man!

Glory to You, showing Your unsurpassable power in the laws of the universe.
 Glory to You, for all nature is filled with Your laws.
 Glory to You for what You have revealed to us in Your mercy.
 Glory to You for what you have hidden from us in Your wisdom.
 Glory to You for the inventiveness of the human mind.
 Glory to You for the dignity of man's labor.
 Glory to You for the tongues of fire that bring inspiration.
 Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 8

How near You are in the day of sickness. You Yourself visit the sick. You Yourself bend over the sufferer's bed; his heart speaks to You. In the throes of sorrow and suffering, You bring peace; You bring unexpected consolation. You are the Comforter. You are the Love which watches over and heals us. To You we sing the song: Alleluia!

IKOS 8

When in my childhood I called upon You consciously for the first time, You heard my prayer; You filled my heart with the blessing of peace. At that moment I knew Your goodness, knew how blessed are those who turn to You. I started to call upon You, night and day, and even now, I call upon Your Name:

Glory to You, satisfying my desires with good things.
Glory to You, watching over me day and night.
Glory to You, curing affliction and emptiness with the healing flow of time.
Glory to You; no loss is irreparable in You, giver of eternal life to all.
Glory to You, making immortal all that is lofty and good.
Glory to You, promising us the longed-for meeting with our loved ones who have died.
Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 9

Why is it that on a feast-day the whole of nature mysteriously smiles?
Why is it that then a heavenly gladness fills our hearts, a gladness far beyond that of earth, and the very air in church and in the altar becomes luminous? It is the breath of Your gracious love; it is the reflection of the glory of Mount Tabor. Then do heaven and earth sing Your praise: Alleluia!

IKOS 9

When You called me to serve my brothers and filled my soul with humility, one of Your deep-piercing rays shone into my heart; it became luminous, full of light, like iron glowing in the furnace. I have seen Your face, face of mystery and of unapproachable glory.

Glory to You, transfiguring our lives with deeds of love.
Glory to You, making wonderfully sweet the keeping of Your commandments.
Glory to You, making Yourself known where man shows mercy on his neighbor.
Glory to You, sending us failure and misfortune, that we may understand the sorrows of others.
Glory to You, rewarding us so well for the good we do.
Glory to You, welcoming the impulse of our heart's love.
Glory to You, raising to the heights of heaven every act of love in earth and sky.
Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 10

No one can put together what has crumbled into dust, but You can restore a conscience turned to ashes; You can restore to its former beauty a soul lost and without hope. With You, there is nothing that cannot be

redeemed. You are Love; You are Creator and Redeemer. We praise You, singing: Alleluia!

IKOS 10

Remember, my God, the fall of Lucifer, full of pride; keep me safe with the power of Your grace. Save me from falling away from You; save me from doubt. Incline my heart to call upon You, present in everything.

Glory to You for every happening, every condition Your Providence has put me in.

Glory to You for what you speak to me in my heart.

Glory to You for what you reveal to me, asleep or awake.

Glory to You for scattering our vain imaginations.

Glory to You for raising us from the slough of our passions through suffering.

Glory to You for curing our pride of heart by humiliation.

Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 11

Across the cold chains of the centuries, I feel the warmth of Your breath; I feel Your blood pulsing in my veins. Part of time has already gone, but now You are the present. I stand by Your cross; I was the cause of it. I cast myself down in the dust before it. Here is the triumph of love, the victory of salvation. Here the centuries themselves cannot remain silent, singing Your praises: Alleluia!

IKOS 11

Blessed are they that will share in the King's banquet; but already on earth You give me a foretaste of this blessedness. How many times with Your own hand have You held out to me Your Body and Your Blood, and I, though a miserable sinner, have received this Sacrament, and have tasted Your love, so ineffable, so heavenly!

Glory to You for the unquenchable fire of Your grace.

Glory to You, building Your Church, a haven of peace in a tortured world.

Glory to You for the life-giving water of baptism in which we find new birth.

Glory to You, restoring to the penitent purity white as the lily.

Glory to You for the Cup of Salvation and the Bread of eternal joy.

Glory to You for exalting us to the highest heaven.

Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 12

How oft have I seen the reflection of Your glory in the faces of the dead. How resplendent they were, with beauty and heavenly joy; how ethereal, how translucent their faces; how triumphant over suffering and death, their felicity and peace. Even in the silence they were calling upon You. In the hour of my death, enlighten my soul, too, that it may cry out to You: Alleluia!

IKOS 12

What sort of praise can I give You? I have never heard the song of the cherubim, a joy reserved for the spirits above. But I know the praises that nature sings to You. In winter, I have beheld how silently in the moonlight the whole earth offers You prayer, clad in its white mantle of snow, sparkling like diamonds. I have seen how the rising sun rejoices in You, how the song of the birds is a chorus of praise to You. I have heard the mysterious murmurings of the forests about You, and the winds singing Your praise as they stir the waters. I have understood how the choirs of stars proclaim Your glory as they move forever in the depths of infinite space. What is my poor worship? All nature obeys You, I do not. Yet while I live, I see Your love, I long to thank You, pray to You, and call upon Your Name:

Glory to You, giving us light.

Glory to You, loving us with love so deep, divine, and infinite.

Glory to You, blessing us with light, and with the host of angels and saints.

Glory to You, Father All-Holy, promising us a share in Your Kingdom.

Glory to You, Holy Spirit, Life-giving Sun of the world to come.

Glory to You for all things, holy and most merciful Trinity.

Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 13 (*Repeated three times.*)

Life-giving and merciful Trinity, receive my thanksgiving for all Your goodness. Make us worthy of Your blessings, so that, when we have brought to fruit the talents You have entrusted to us, we may enter into the joy of our Lord, forever exulting in the shout of victory: Alleluia!

IKOS 1

I was born a weak, defenseless child, but Your angel spread his wings over my cradle to defend me. From birth until now, Your love has illumined my path, and has wondrously guided me towards the light of eternity. From

birth until now the generous gifts of Your Providence have been marvelously showered upon me. I give You thanks, with all who have come to know You, who call upon Your Name:

Glory to You for calling me into being.
 Glory to You, showing me the beauty of the universe.
 Glory to You, spreading out before me heaven and earth, like the pages in a book of eternal wisdom.
 Glory to You for Your eternity in this fleeting world.
 Glory to You for Your mercies, seen and unseen.
 Glory to You, through every sigh of my sorrow.
 Glory to You for every step of my life's journey, for every moment of glory.
 Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

ODE 1

Everlasting King, Your will for our salvation is full of power. Your right arm controls the whole course of human life. We give You thanks for all Your mercies, seen and unseen: For eternal life, for the heavenly joys of the Kingdom which is to be. Grant mercy to us who sing Your praises, both now and in the time to come. Glory to You, O God, from age to age.

This song was composed by a high-ranking Orthodox bishop, a few days before death, in a concentration camp.

The song and the beauty in *Fr. Arseny: Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father* is paradise, wherever the saints are—even in a concentration camp. And the two most beautiful passages in *The Soul's Longing: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on Biblical Interpretation* are from concentration camps.

I do not predict that either of us will die in concentration camps, but God's bard said, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." And my delightful monastery has blessings that I hadn't even had before going on; one of the fringe benefits is a sweet cat, who is very outgoing, and astonishingly enough doesn't irritate my allergies. The men at the monastery are like the St. Anne's company in C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (though, perhaps, without saving the rest of the world, and perhaps without Merlin).

And on a note of "I do not know what tomorrow will bring, but I know Who brings tomorrow," I believe that I have a chance, and have really always had the chance, to complete my life in triumph (or be subtilized by the returning Christ). I have in the mean time every grace that I need, and really quite a few niceties I do not need but are something to be grateful for.

Some people, learning that I have not been worrying, seem to think that I am fundamentally better at having my ducks in a row. *I deny the charge*. What I have learned, besides that trying to solve a life's problems on a day's research is a ticket to overpowering despair, is how to make peace with a life that will never be under control, or at least not *my* control. It is a wonderful world that way.

"Will there be a place for me?" is a serious question, but I've had places for me come out of the blue. If we trust God, he has every ability to make a place for us. And trust is possible, and more than that is trust, when we trust what we cannot see.

As St. John Chrysostom said as his very last words, "Glory to God for All Things!"

A Wonderful Life

Peter never imagined that smashing his thumb in a car door would be the best thing to ever happened to him. But suddenly his plans to move in to the dorm were changed, and he waited a long time at the hospital before finally returning to the dorm and moving in.

Peter arrived for the second time well after check-in time, praying to be able to get in. After a few phone calls, a security officer came in, expressed sympathy about his bandaged thumb, and let him up to his room. The family moved his possessions from the car to his room and made his bed in a few minutes, and by the time it was down, the security guard had called the RA, who brought Peter his keys.

It was the wee hours of the morning when Peter looked at his new home for the second time, and tough as Peter was, the pain in his thumb kept him from falling asleep. He was in as much pain as he'd been in for a while.

He awoke when the light was ebbing, and after some preparations set out, wandering until he found the cafeteria. The pain seemed much when he sat down at a table. (It took him a while to find a seat because the cafeteria was crowded.)

A young man said, "Hi, I'm John." Peter began to extend his hand, then looked at his white bandaged thumb and said, "Excuse me for not shaking your hand. I am Peter."

A young woman said, "I'm Mary. I saw you earlier and was hoping to see you more."

Peter wondered about something, then said, "I'll drink for that," reached with his right hand, grabbed a glass of soda, and then winced in pain, spilling his drink on the table.

Everybody at the table moved. A couple of people dodged the flow of liquid; others stopped what they were doing, rushing to mop up the spill with napkins. Peter said, "I keep forgetting I need to be careful about my thumb," smiled, grabbed his glass of milk, and slipped again, spilling milk all over his food.

Peter stopped, sat back, and then laughed for a while. "This is an interesting beginning to my college education."

Mary said, "I noticed you managed to smash your thumb in a car door without saying any words you regret. What else has happened?"

Peter said, "Nothing great; I had to go to the ER, where I had to wait, before they could do something about my throbbing thumb. I got back at 4:00 AM and couldn't get to sleep for a long time because I was in so much pain. Then I overslept my alarm and woke up naturally in time for dinner. How about you?"

Mary thought for a second about the people she met. Peter could see the sympathy on her face.

John said, "Wow. That's nasty."

Peter said, "I wish we couldn't feel pain. Have you thought about how nice it would be to live without pain?"

Mary said, "I'd like that."

John said, "Um..."

Mary said, "What?"

John said, "Actually, there are people who don't feel pain, and there's a name for the condition. You've heard of it."

Peter said, "I haven't heard of that before."

John said, "Yes you have. It's called leprosy."

Peter said, "What do you mean by 'leprosy'? I thought leprosy was a disease that ravaged the body."

John said, "It is. But that is only because it destroys the ability to feel pain. The way it works is very simple. We all get little nicks and scratches, and because they hurt, we show extra sensitivity. Our feet start to hurt after a long walk, so without even thinking about it we... shift things a little, and keep anything really bad from happening. That pain you are feeling is your body's way of asking room to heal so that the smashed thumbnail (or whatever it is) that hurts so terribly now won't leave you permanently maimed. Back to feet, a leprosy patient will walk exactly the same way and get wounds we'd never even think of for taking a long walk. All the terrible injuries that make leprosy a feared disease happen *only* because leprosy keeps people from feeling pain."

Peter looked at his thumb, and his stomach growled.

John said, "I'm full. Let me get a drink for you, and then I'll help you drink it."

Mary said, "And I'll get you some dry food. We've already eaten; it must—"

Peter said, "Please, I've survived much worse. It's just a bit of pain."

John picked up a clump of wet napkins and threatened to throw it at Peter before standing up and walking to get something to drink. Mary followed him.

Peter sat back and just laughed.

John said, "We have some time free after dinner; let's just wander around campus."

They left the glass roofed building and began walking around, enjoying the grass and the scenery.

After some wandering, Peter and those he had just met looked at the castle-like Blanchard Hall, each one transported in his imagination to be in a more ancient era, and walked around the campus, looked at a fountain, listened to some music, and looked at a display of a giant mastodon which had died before the end of the last ice age, and whose bones had been unearthed in a nearby excavation. They got lost, but this was not a terrible concern; they were taking in the campus.

Their slow walk was interrupted when John looked at his watch and realized it was time for the "floor fellowship." and orientation games.

Between orientation games, Peter heard bits of conversation: "This has been a bummer; I've gotten two papercuts this week." "—and then I—" "What instruments do you—" "I'm from France too! *Tu viens de Paris?*" "Really? You—" Everybody seemed to be chattering, and Peter wished he could be in one of—actually, several of those conversations at once.

Paul's voice cut in and said, "For this next activity we are going to form a human circle. With your team, stand in a circle, and everybody reach in and grab another hand with each hand. Then hold on tight; when I say, "Go," you want to untangle yourselves, without letting go. The first team to untangle themselves wins!"

Peter reached in, and found each of his hands clasped in a solid, masculine grip. Then the race began, and people jostled and tried to untangle themselves. This was a laborious process and, one by one, every other group freed itself, while Peter's group seemed stuck on—someone called and said, "I think we're knotted!" As people began to thin out, Paul looked with astonishment and saw that they were indeed knotted. "A special prize to them, too, for managing the best tangle!"

"And now, we'll have a three-legged race! Gather into pairs, and each two of you take a burlap sack. Then—" Paul continued, and with every game, the talk seemed to flow more. When the finale finished, Peter found himself again with John and Mary and heard the conversations flowing around him: "Really? You too?" "But you don't understand. Hicks have a slower pace of life; we enjoy things without all the things you city dwellers need for entertainment. And we learn resourceful ways to—" "—and only at

Wheaton would the administration forbid dancing while requiring the games we just played and—" Then Peter lost himself in a conversation that continued long into the night. He expected to be up at night thinking about all the beloved people he left at home, but Peter was too busy thinking about John's and Mary's stories.

The next day Peter woke up his to the hideous sound of his alarm clock, and groggily trudged to the dining hall for coffee, and searched for his advisor.

Peter found the appropriate hallway, wandered around nervously until he found a door with a yellowed plaque that said "Julian Johnson," knocked once, and pushed the door open. A white-haired man said, "Peter Jones? How are you? Do come in... What can I do for you?"

Peter pulled out a sheet of paper, looked down at it for a moment and said, "I'm sorry I'm late. I need you to write what courses I should take and sign here. Then I can be out of your way."

The old man sat back, drew a deep breath, and relaxed into a fatherly smile. Peter began to wonder if his advisor was going to say anything at all. Then Prof. Johnson motioned towards an armchair, as rich and luxurious as his own, and then looked as if he remembered something and offered a bowl full of candy. "Sit down, sit down, and make yourself comfortable. May I interest you in candy?" He picked up an engraved metal bowl and held it out while Peter grabbed a few Lifesavers.

Prof. Johnson sat back, silent for a moment, and said, "I'm sorry I'm out of butterscotch; that always seems to disappear. Please sit down, and tell me about yourself. We can get to that form in a minute. One of the priveleges of this job is that I get to meet interesting people. Now, where are you from?"

Peter said, "I'm afraid there's not much that's interesting about me. I'm from a small town downstate that doesn't have anything to distinguish itself. My amusements have been reading, watching the cycle of the year, oh, and running. Not much interesting in that. Now which classes should I take?"

Prof. Johnson sat back and smiled, and Peter became a little less tense. "You run?"

Peter said, "Yes; I was hoping to run on the track this afternoon, after the lecture. I've always wanted to run on a real track."

The old man said, "You know, I used to run myself, before I became an official Old Geezer and my orthopaedist told me my knees couldn't take it. So I have to content myself with swimming now, which I've grown to love. Do you know about the Prairie Path?"

Peter said, "No, what's that?"

Prof. Johnson said, "Years ago, when I ran, I ran through the areas surrounding the College—there are a lot of beautiful houses. And, just south of the train tracks with the train you can hear now, there's a path before you even hit the street. You can run, or bike, or walk, on a path covered with fine white gravel, with trees and prairie plants on

either side. It's a lovely view." He paused, and said, "Any ideas what you want to do after Wheaton?"

Peter said, "No. I don't even know what I want to major in."

Prof. Johnson said, "A lot of students don't know what they want to do. Are you familiar with Career Services? They can help you get an idea of what kinds of things you like to do."

Peter looked at his watch and said, "It's chapel time."

Prof. Johnson said, "Relax. I can write you a note." Peter began to relax again, and Prof. Johnson continued, "Now you like to read. What do you like to read?"

Peter said, "Newspapers and magazines, and I read this really cool book called *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Oh, and I like the Bible."

Prof. Johnson said, "I do too. What do you like about it most?"

"I like the stories in the Old Testament."

"One general tip: here at Wheaton, we have different kinds of professors—"

Peter said, "Which ones are best?"

Prof. Johnson said, "Different professors are best for different students. Throughout your tenure at Wheaton, ask your friends and learn which professors have teaching styles that you learn well with and mesh well with. Consider taking other courses from a professor you like. Now we have a lot of courses which we think expose you to new things and stretch you—people come back and see that these courses are best. Do you like science?"

"I like it; I especially liked a physics lab."

Prof. Johnson began to flip through the course catalogue. "Have you had calculus?" Prof. Johnson's mind wandered over the differences between from the grand, Utopian vision for "calculus" as it was first imagined and how different a conception it had from anything that would be considered "mathematics" today. Or should he go into that? He wavered, and then realized Peter had answered his question. "Ok," Prof. Johnson said, "the lab physics class unfortunately requires that you've had calculus. Would you like to take calculus now? Have you had geometry, algebra, and trigonometry?"

Peter said, "Yes, I did, but I'd like a little break from that now. Maybe I could take calculus next semester."

"Fair enough. You said you liked to read."

"Magazines and newspapers."

"Those things deal with the unfolding human story. I wonder if you'd like to take world civilization now, or a political science course."

"History, but why study world history? Why can't I just study U.S. history?"

Prof. Johnson said, "The story of our country is intertwined with that of our world. I think you might find that some of the things in world history are a lot closer to home than you think—and we have some real storytellers in our history department."

"That sounds interesting. What else?"

"The Theology of Culture class is one many students find enjoyable, and it helps build a foundation for Old and New Testament courses. Would you be interested in taking it for A quad or B quad, the first or second half of the semester?"

"Could I do both?"

"I wish I could say yes, but this course only lasts half the semester. The other half you could take Foundations of Wellness—you could do running as homework!"

"I think I'll do that first, and then Theology of Culture. That should be new," Peter said, oblivious to how tightly connected he was to theology and culture. "What else?"

Prof. Johnson said, "We have classes where people read things that a lot of people have found really interesting. Well, that could describe several classes, but I was thinking about Classics of Western Literature or Literature of the Modern World."

Peter said, "Um... Does Classics of Western Literature cover ancient and medieval literature, and Literature of the Modern World cover literature that isn't Western? Because if they do, I'm not sure I could connect with it."

Prof. Johnson relaxed into his seat. "You know, a lot of people think that. But you know what?"

Peter said, "What?"

"There is something human that crosses cultures. That is why the stories have been selected. Stories written long ago, and stories written far away, can have a lot to connect with."

"Ok. How many more courses should I take?"

"You're at 11 credits now; you probably want 15. Now you said that you like Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. I'm wondering if you would also like a philosophy course."

Peter said, "*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is... I don't suppose there are any classes that use that. Or are there? I've heard Pirsig isn't given his fair due by philosophers."

Prof. Johnson said, "If you approach one of our philosophy courses the way you approach Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, I think you'll profit from the encounter. I wonder if our Issues and Worldviews in Philosophy might interest you. I'm a big fan of thinking worldviewishly, and our philosophers have some pretty interesting things to say."

Peter asked, "What does 'worldviewishly' mean?"

Prof. Johnson searched for an appropriate simplification. "It means thinking in terms of worldviews. A worldview is the basic philosophical framework that gives shape

to how we view the world. Our philosophers will be able to help you understand the basic issues surrounding worldviews and craft your own Christian worldview. You may find this frees you from the Enlightenment's secularizing influence—and if you don't know what the Enlightenment is now, you will learn to understand it, and its problems, and how you can be somewhat freer of its chain."

Peter said, "Ok. Well, I'll take those classes. It was good to meet you."

Prof. Johnson looked at the class schedule and helped Peter choose class sections, then said, "I enjoyed talking with you. Please do take some more candy—put a handful in your pocket or something. I just want to make one more closing comment. I want to see you succeed. Wheaton wants to see you succeed. There are some rough points and problems along the way, and if you bring them to me I can work with them and try to help you. If you want to talk with your RA or our chaplain or someone else, that's fine, but please... my door is *always* open. And it was good to meet you too! Goodbye!"

Peter walked out, completely relaxed, and was soon to be energized in a scavenger hunt searching for things from a dog biscuit to a car bumper to a burning sheet of paper not lit by someone in his group, before again relaxing into the "brother-sister floor fellowship" which combined mediocre "7-11 praise songs" (so called because they have "7 words, repeated 11 times") with the light of another world shining through.

It was not long before the opening activities wound down and Peter began to settle into a regular routine.

Peter and Mary both loved to run, but for different reasons. Peter was training himself for various races; he had not joined track, as he did in high school, but there were other races. Mary ran to feel the sun and wind and rain. And, without any conscious effort, they found themselves running together down the prairie path together, and Peter clumsily learning to match his speed to hers. And, as time passed, they talked, and talked, and talked, and talked, and their runs grew longer.

When the fall break came, they both joined a group going to the northwoods of Wisconsin for a program that was half-work and half-play. And each one wrote a letter home about the other. Then Peter began his theology of culture class, and said, "This is what I want to study." Mary did not have a favorite class, at least not that she realized, until Peter asked her what her favorite class was and she said, "Literature."

When Christmas came, they went to their respective homes and spent the break thinking about each other, and they talked about this when they returned. They ended the conversation, or at least they thought they did, and then each hurried back to catch the other and say one more thing, and then the conversation turned out to last much longer, and ended with a kiss.

Valentine's Day was syrupy. It was trite enough that their more romantically inclined friends groaned, but it did not seem at all trite or syrupy to them. As Peter's last

name was Patrick, he called Mary's father and prayed that St. Patrick's Day would be a momentous day for both of them.

Peter and Mary took a slow run to a nearby village, and had dinner at an Irish pub. Amidst the din, they had some hearty laughs. The waitress asked Mary, "Is there anything else that would make this night memorable?" Then Mary saw Peter on his knee, opening a jewelry box with a ring: "I love you, Mary. Will you marry me?"

Mary cried for a good five minutes before she could answer. And when she had answered, they sat in silence, a silence that overpowered the din. Then Mary wiped her eyes and they went outside.

It was cool outside, and the moon was shining brightly. Peter pulled a camera from his pocket, and said, "Stay where you are. Let me back up a bit. And hold your hand up. You look even more beautiful with that ring on your finger."

Peter's camera flashed as he took a picture, just as a drunk driver slammed into Mary. The sedan spun into a storefront, and Mary flew up into the air, landed, and broke a beer bottle with her face.

People began to come out, and in a few minutes the police and paramedics arrived. Peter somehow managed to answer the police officers' questions and to begin kicking himself for being too stunned to act.

When Peter left his room the next day, he looked for Prof. Johnson. Prof. Johnson asked, "May I give you a hug?" and then sat there, simply being with Peter in his pain. When Peter left, Prof. Johnson said, "I'm not just here for academics. I'm here for you." Peter went to chapel and his classes, feeling a burning rage that almost nothing could pierce. He kept going to the hospital, and watching Mary with casts on both legs and one arm, and many tiny stitches on her face, fluttering on the borders of consciousness. One time Prof. Johnson came to visit, and he said, "I can't finish my classes." Prof. Johnson looked at him and said, "The college will give you a full refund." Peter said, "Do you know of any way I can stay here to be with Mary?" Prof. Johnson said, "You can stay with me. And I believe a position with UPS would let you get some income, doing something physical. The position is open for you." Prof. Johnson didn't mention the calls he'd made, and Peter didn't think about them. He simply said, "Thank you."

A few days later, Mary began to be weakly conscious. Peter finally asked a nurse, "Why are there so many stitches on her face? Was she cut even more badly than—"

The nurse said, "There are a lot of stitches very close together because the emergency room had a cosmetic surgeon on duty. There will still be a permanent mark on her face, but some of the wound will heal without a scar."

Mary moved the left half of her mouth in half a smile. Peter said, "That was a kind of cute smile. How come she can smile like that?"

The nurse said, "One of the pieces of broken glass cut a nerve. It is unlikely she'll ever be able to move part of her face again."

Peter looked and touched Mary's hand. "I still think it's really quite cute."

Mary looked at him, and then passed out.

Peter spent a long couple of days training and attending to practical details. Then he came back to Mary.

Mary looked at Peter, and said, "It's a Monday. Don't you have classes now?"

Peter said, "No."

Mary said, "Why not?"

Peter said, "I want to be here with you."

Mary said, "I talked with one of the nurses, and she said that you dropped out of school so you could be with me.

"Is that true?" she said.

Peter said, "I hadn't really thought about it that way."

Mary closed her eyes, and when Peter started to leave because he decided she wanted to be left alone, she said, "Stop. Come here."

Peter came to her bedside and knelt.

Mary said, "Take this ring off my finger."

Peter said, "Is it hurting you?"

Mary said, "No, and it is the greatest treasure I own. Take it off and take it back."

Peter looked at her, bewildered. "Do you not want to marry me?"

Mary said, "This may sting me less because I don't remember our engagement. I don't remember anything that happened near that time; I have only the stories others, even the nurses, tell me about a man who loves me very much."

Peter said, "But don't you love me?"

Mary forced back tears. "Yes, I love you, yes, I love you. And I know that you love me. You are young and strong, and have the love to make a happy marriage. You'll make some woman a very good husband. I thought that woman would be me.

"But I can see what you will not. You said I was beautiful, and I was. Do you know what my prognosis is? I will probably be able to stand. At least for short periods of time. If I'm fortunate, I may walk. With a walker. I will never be able to run again—Peter, I am nobody, and I have no future. Absolutely nobody. You are young and strong. Go and find a woman who is worth your love."

Mary and Peter both cried for a long time. Then Peter walked out, and paused in the doorway, crying. He felt torn inside, and then went in to say a couple of things to Mary. He said, "I believe in miracles."

Then Mary cried, and Peter said something else I'm not going to repeat. Mary said something. Then another conversation began.

The conversation ended with Mary saying, "You're stupid, Peter. You're really, really stupid. I love you. I don't deserve such love. You're making a mistake. I love you."

Then Peter went to kiss Mary, and as he bent down, he bent his mouth to meet the lips that he still saw as "really quite cute."

The stress did not stop. The physical therapists, after time, wondered that Mary had so much fight in her. But it stressed her, and Peter did his job without liking it. Mary and Peter quarreled and made up and quarreled and made up. Peter prayed for a miracle when they made up and sometimes when they quarreled. Were this not enough stress, there was an agonizingly long trial—and knowing that the drunk driver was behind bars didn't make things better. But Mary very slowly learned to walk again. After six months, if Peter helped her, she could walk 100 yards before the pain became too great to continue.

Peter hadn't been noticing that the stress diminished, but he did become aware of something he couldn't put his finger on. After a night of struggling, he got up, went to church, and was floored by the Bible reading of, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." and the idea that when you do or do not visit someone in prison, you are visiting or refusing to visit Christ. Peter absently went home, tried to think about other things, made several phone calls, and then forced himself to drive to one and only one prison.

He stopped in the parking lot, almost threw up, and then steeled himself to go inside. He found a man, Jacob, and... Jacob didn't know who Peter was, but he recognized him as looking familiar. It was an awkward meeting. Then he recognized him as the man whose now wife he had crippled. When Peter left, he vomited and felt like a failure. He talked about it with Mary...

That was the beginning of a friendship. Peter chose to love the man in prison, even if there was no pleasure in it. And that created something deeper than pleasure, something Peter couldn't explain.

As Peter and Mary were planning the wedding, Mary said, "I want to enter with Peter next to me, no matter what the tradition says. It will be a miracle if I have the strength to stand for the whole wedding, and if I have to lean on someone I want it to be Peter. And I don't want to sit on a chair; I would rather spend my wedding night wracked by pain than go through my wedding supported by something lifeless!"

When the rehearsal came, Mary stood, and the others winced at the pain in her face. And she stood, and walked, for the entire rehearsal without touching Peter once. Then she said, "I can do it. I can go through the wedding on my own strength," and collapsed in pain.

At the wedding, she stood next to Peter, walking, her face so radiant with joy that some of the guests did not guess she was in exquisite pain. They walked next to each other, not touching, and Mary slowed down and stopped in the center of the church. Peter looked at her, wondering what Mary was doing.

Then Mary's arm shot around Peter's neck, and Peter stood startled for a moment before he placed his arm around her, squeezed her tightly, and they walked together to the altar.

On the honeymoon, Mary told Peter, "You are the only person I need." This was the greatest bliss either of them had known, and the honeymoon's glow shined and shined.

Peter and Mary agreed to move somewhere less expensive to settle down, and were too absorbed in their wedded bliss and each other to remember promises they had made earlier, promises to seek a church community for support and friends. And Peter continued working at an unglamorous job, and Mary continued fighting to walk and considered the housework she was capable of doing a badge of honor, and neither of them noticed that the words, "I love you" were spoken ever so slightly less frequently, nor did they the venom and ice creeping into their words.

One night they exploded. What they fought about was not important. What was important was that Peter left, burning with rage. He drove, and drove, until he reached Wheaton, and at daybreak knocked on Prof. Johnson's door. There was anger in his voice when he asked, "Are you still my friend?"

Prof. Johnson got him something to eat and stayed with him when he fumed with rage, and said, "I don't care if I'm supposed to be with her, I can't go back!" Then Prof. Johnson said, "Will you make an agreement with me? I promise you I won't ever tell you to go back to her, or accept her, or accept what she does, or apologize to her, or forgive her, or in any way be reconciled. But I need you to trust me that I love you and will help you decide what is best to do."

Peter said, "Yes."

Prof. Johnson said, "Then stay with me. You need some rest. Take the day to rest. There's food in the fridge, and I have books and a nice back yard. There's iced tea in the—excuse me, there's Coke and 7 Up in the boxes next to the fridge. When I can come back, we can talk."

Peter relaxed, and he felt better. He told Prof. Johnson. Prof. Johnson said, "That's excellent. What I'd like you to do next is go in to work, with a lawyer I know. You can tell him what's going on, and he'll lead you to a courtroom to observe."

Peter went away to court the next day, and when he came back he was ashen. He said nothing to Prof. Johnson.

Then, after the next day, he came back looking even more disturbed. "The first day, the lawyer, George, took me into divorce court. I thought I saw the worst that divorce court could get. Until I came back today. It was the same—this sickening scene where two people had become the most bitter enemies. I hope it doesn't come to this. This was atrocious. It was vile. It was more than vile. It was—"

Prof. Johnson sent him back for a third day. This time Peter said nothing besides, "I think I've been making a mistake."

After the fourth day, Peter said, "Help me! I've been making the biggest mistake of my life!"

After a full week had passed, Peter said, "Please, I beg you, don't send me back there."

Prof. Johnson sent Peter back to watch a divorce court for one more miserable, excruciating day. Then he said, "Now you can do whatever you want. What do you want to do?"

The conflict between Peter and Mary ended the next day.

Peter went home, begging Mary for forgiveness, and no sooner than he had begun his apology, a thousand things were reflected in Mary's face and she begged his forgiveness. Then they talked, and debated whether to go back to Wheaton, or stay where they were. Finally Mary said, "I really want to go back to Wheaton."

Peter began to shyly approach old friends. He later misquoted: "I came crawling with a thimble in the desperate hope that they'd give a few tiny drops of friendship and love. Had I known how they would respond, I would have come running with a bucket!"

Peter and Mary lived together for many years; they had many children and were supported by many friends.

The years passed and Peter and Mary grew into a blissfully happy marriage. Mary came to have increasing health problems as a result of the accident, and those around them were amazed at how their love had transformed the suffering the accident created in both of their lives. At least those who knew them best saw the transformation. There were many others who could only see their happiness as a mirage.

As the years passed, Jacob grew to be a good friend. And when Peter began to be concerned that his wife might be... Jacob had also grown wealthy, very wealthy, and assembled a top-flight legal team (without taking a dime of Peter's money—over Peter's protests, of course), to prevent what the doctors would normally do in such a case, given recent shifts in the medical system.

And then Mary's health grew worse, much worse, and her suffering grew worse with it, and pain medications seemed to be having less and less effect. Those who didn't know Mary were astonished that someone in so much pain could enjoy life so much, nor the hours they spent gazing into each other's eyes, holding hands, when Mary's pain seemed to vanish. A second medical opinion, and a third, and a fourth, confirmed that Mary had little chance of recovery even to her more recent state. And whatever measures been taken, whatever testimony Peter and Mary could give about the joy of their lives, the court's decision still came:

The court wishes to briefly review the facts of the case. Subject is suffering increasingly severe effects from an injury that curtailed her life greatly as a young person. from which she has never recovered, and is causing increasingly complications now that she will never again have youth's ability to heal. No fewer than four medical opinions admitted as expert testimony substantially agree that subject is in extraordinary and excruciating pain; that said excruciating pain is increasing; that said excruciating pain is increasingly unresponsive to medication; that subject has fully lost autonomy and is dependent on her husband; that this dependence is profound, without choice, and causes her husband to be dependent without choice on others and exercise little autonomy; and the prognosis is only of progressively worse deterioration and increase in pain, with no question of recovery.

The court finds it entirely understandable that the subject, who has gone through such trauma, and is suffering increasingly severe complications, would be in a state of some denial. Although a number of positions could be taken, the court also finds it understandable that a husband would try to maintain a hold on what cannot exist, and needlessly prolong his wife's suffering. It is not, however, the court's position to judge whether this is selfish...

For all the impressive-sounding arguments that have been mounted, the court cannot accord a traumatized patient or her ostensibly well-meaning husband a privilege that the court itself does not claim. The court does not find that it has an interest in allowing this woman to continue in her severe and worsening state of suffering.

Peter was at her side, holding her hand and looking into his wife's eyes, The hospital doctor had come. Then Peter said, "I love you," and Mary said, "I love you," and they kissed.

Mary's kiss was still burning on Peter's lips when two nurses hooked Mary up to an IV and injected her with 5000 milligrams of sodium thiopental, then a saline flush followed by 100 milligrams of pancurium bromide, then a saline flush and 20 milligrams of potassium chloride.

A year later to the day, Peter died of a broken heart.

You Can Choose to be Happy in the Here and Now

There was one LinkedIn conversation that was bigger than what I realized. One man asked a question of how to handle the fact that he was not in a position to advance professionally and had no meaningful freedom.

I suggested something like,

Let's look at a position where you have as little freedom as possible, and ask if there can be any meaningful freedom. You can probably think of some pretty gruesome examples; I would like to look at Nazi concentration camps and ask, "Is there any way to have real freedom in a Nazi concentration camp?"

One person who answered "Yes" to that question was Victor Frankl, Jewish psychiatrist and Nazi concentration camp survivor who wrote *Man's Search for Meaning*."

If you are not in a position to advance professionally and don't see yourself as having any real freedom, you are in an excellent position to profit from *Man's Search for Meaning*."

(I've *got* to read the book directly and not just be going off of other people's summaries!)

That hit a nerve, although my correspondent was in every sense gracious. I was unwittingly corresponding with the Jewish son of a Jewish survivor of Hitler's concentration camps, and seared by the stories. There was nothing academic to him in the example I chose. He was very gentle about his response, and he was appreciative at my suggestion that if he was in the position he said he was in, he had a great deal of meaningful freedom, and perhaps at my pointer to *Man's Search for Meaning*.

The core point attributed to Frankl is that we do not automatically go from *stimulus* to *response*; we go from *stimulus* to *free choice* to *response*, even if we are unaware of our birthright. Such an insight is also at the core of the Philokalia of the Niptic Fathers, with "nipsis" referring to an inner spiritual watchfulness. It is something like the core of what classical Buddhism has to offer as well. My dear Abbot condensed it to one line. He has said and underscored, "Never react. Never resent. Keep inner stillness."

Enjoying the here and now is a choice. Our surroundings may seem like something to escape, but that is a spiritual trap, the core response in the Philokalia being to just keep on praying until the "demon of noonday" has passed. It is a crushing experience, but over time we can learn to crush it.

Most of our surroundings are beautiful, but we can become immune to the beauty of a wooden floor, an off-white wall. But we can choose to be awake to this beauty to which we have fallen asleep. We can choose to be grateful, and by the way positive psychology is squarely on target that we should be grateful for. Mindfulness also helps; it used to be considered "paying attention" and part of politeness to the boomers, and we are seeking mindfulness from the East because we have rejected it in the West. But gratitude and mindfulness are both choices, as is enjoying beauty. A Russian proverb answers the questions by saying, "When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do?" with, "There is only one important time, and that time is now. The most important one is always the one you are with. And the most important thing is to do good for the One Who is standing at your side." Today this is recognized as profound mindfulness. It is still also manners at their best, and something that goes beyond manners.

There is also what St. John Chrysostom referred to as "healing an eye". Lust, classic Fathers say, has the characteristic of a lion who looks at a deer and sees only meat. And, perhaps I might add, meat that is rarely enough and does not engender any form of permanent satisfaction. It has been called the disenchantment of the entire universe. But a man looking at a woman has a choice to see an integral and beautiful whole: a spirit adorned with a body and a body adorned with clothing. C.S. Lewis, telling an imagined story with the saints in paradise in *The Great Divorce*, said,

Long after that I saw people coming to meet us. Because they were bright I saw them when they were still very distant, and at first I did not know they were people at all. Mile after mile they grew nearer. The earth shook under their tread as their strong feet sank into the wet turf. A tiny haze and a sweet smell went up where they had crushed the grass and scattered the dew. Some were naked, some robed. But the naked ones did not seem less adorned, and the robes did not disguise in those who wore them the massive grandeur of muscle and the radiant smoothness of flesh.

We are not ready for such things now and C.S. Lewis offered only an imagination. Or, if you prefer Wendy Shalit's *A Return to Modesty*, we can be "naked and bored." But there is great deal of benefit in seeing an integrated whole, a spirit adorned with a body and a body adorned with clothing.

More broadly though, our healed eyes can sense beauty, and in rough circumstances, bleeding and in an ER, I know one who was able to see the beauty of a hospital curtain and wait in satisfaction.

It is not easy. But counselors tell those fighting various addictions, "You have more power than you think." Nipsis or spiritual watchfulness extinguishes sparks before they become a fire. If your house is on fire you can call the fire department, and they may salvage surprisingly much. If your chair is on fire a fire extinguisher may see that a fire that started on a chair, stays only with that chair. But the best option is to stomp out the first spark before it has set the rug on fire. Or if I may take the bull by the hand to mix metaphors, don't go near the *bait*; just ignore it and let it pass by.

Never react. Never resent. Keep inner stillness.

Happiness in the here and now is a choice, and we have more power than most of us think. When there is a little spark, dash it against the rock. But the metaphor is strained because the best solution is not to engage it and not give it the fuel of your attention.

Happiness is also a by-product of what positive psychology calls "the meaningful life," and there are other things to being healthy in your heart of hearts and having a good condition. A healthy (such as Paleo) diet / exercise / sleep can also make a big difference. But the biggest difference is always in our heart of hearts. Part of that is that we can savor the here and now and be aware of its beauty.

You can choose to be happy in the here and now.

Yonder

The body continued running in the polished steel corridor, a corridor without doors and windows and without any hint of how far above and below the local planet's surface it was, if indeed it was connected with a planet. The corridor had a competition mixture of gases, gravity, temperature and pressure, and so on, and as the body had been running, lights turned on and then off so the body was at the center of a moving swathe of rather clinical light. The body was running erratically, and several times it had nearly fallen; the mind was having trouble keeping the control of the body due to the body being taxed to its limit. Then the body tripped. The mind made a few brief calculations and jacked out of the body.

The body fell, not having the mind to raise its arms to cushion the fall, and fractured bones in the face, skull, and ribs. The chest heaved in and out with each labored breath, after an exertion that would be lethal in itself. A trickle of blood oozed out from a wound. The life of the abandoned body slowly ebbed away, and the lights abruptly turned off.

It would be a while before a robot would come to clean it up and prepare the corridor for other uses.

"And without further ado," another mind announced, "I would like to introduce the researcher who broke the record for a running body by more than 594789.34 microseconds. This body was a strictly biological body, with no cyberware besides a

regulation mind-body interface, with no additional modifications. Adrenaline, for instance, came from the mind controlling the adrenal glands; it didn't even replace the brain with a chemical minifactory. The body had a magnificent athletic physique, clean and not encumbered by any reproductive system. And I *still* don't know how it kept the body alive and functioning, without external help, for the *whole* race. Here's Archon."

A sound came from a modular robot body at the center of the stage and was simultaneously transmitted over the net. "I see my cyborg utility body there; is that my Paidion wearing it? If so, I'm going to... no, wait. That would be harming my own body without having a good enough reason." A somewhat canned chuckle swept through the crowd. "I'm impressed; I didn't know that anyone would come if I called a physical conference, and I had no idea there were that many rental bodies within an appropriate radius." Some of the bodies winced. "But seriously, folks, I wanted to talk and answer some of your questions about how my body broke the record. It was more than generating nerve impulses to move the body to the maximum ability. And I would like to begin by talking about why I've called a physical conference in the first place.

"Scientific breakthroughs aren't scientific. When a mind solves a mathematical problem that hasn't been solved before, it does... not something impossible, but something that you will miss if you look for something possible. It conforms itself to the problem, does everything it can to permeate itself with the problem. Look at the phenomenology and transcripts of every major mathematical problem that has been solved in the past $1.7e18$ microseconds. Not one follows how one would scientifically attempt a scientific breakthrough. And somehow scientifically optimized applications of mind to problems repeat past success but never do anything new.

"What you desire so ravenously to know is how I extended the methodologies to optimize the running body and the running mind to fit a calculated whole. And the answer is simple. I didn't."

A mind interrupted through cyberspace. "What do you mean, you didn't? That's as absurd as claiming that you built the body out of software. That's—"

Archon interrupted. "And that's what I thought too. What I can tell you is this. When I grew and trained the body, I did nothing else. That was my body, my only body. I shut myself off from cyberspace—yes, that's why you couldn't get me—and did not leave a single training activity to another mind or an automatic process. I trained myself to the body as if it were a mathematics problem and tried to soak myself in it."

A rustle swept through the crowd.

"And I don't blame you if you think I'm a crackpot, or want to inspect me for hostile tampering. I submit to inspection. But I tried to be as close as possible to the body, and that's it. And I shaved more than 594789.34 microseconds off the record." Archon continued after a momentary pause. "I specifically asked for bodily presences for this meeting; call me sentimental or crackpot or trying to achieve with your bodies what

I failed to achieve in that body, but I will solicit questions from those who have a body here first, and address the network after everybody present has had its chance."

A flesh body stood up and flashed its face. "What are you going to say next? Not only that you became like a body, but that the body became like a mind?"

Archon went into private mode, filtered through and rejected 3941 responses, and said, "I have not analyzed the body to see if it contained mind-like modifications and do not see how I would go about doing such a thing."

After several other questions, a robot said, "So what's next?"

Archon hesitated, and said, "I don't know." It hesitated again, and said, "I'm probably going to make a Riemannian 5-manifold of pleasure states. I plan on adding some subtle twists so not only will it be pleasurable; minds will have a real puzzle figuring out exactly what kind of space they're in. And I'm not telling what the manifold will be like, or even telling for sure that it will genuinely have only 5 dimensions."

The robot said, "No, you're not. You're not going to do that at all." Then the mind jacked out and the body fell over, inert.

Another voice, issuing from two standard issue cyborg bodies, said, "Has the body been preserved, and will it be available for internal examination?"

Archon heard the question, and answered it as if it were giving the question its full attention. But it could only give a token of its consciousness. The rest of its attention was on tracing the mind that had jacked out of the robot body. And it was a slippery mind. Archon was both frustrated and impressed when it found no trace.

It was skilled at stealth and tracing, having developed several methodologies for each, and something that could vanish without a trace—had the mind simply destroyed itself? That possibility bothered Archon, who continued tracing after it dismissed the assembly.

Archon looked for distractions, and finding nothing better it began trying to sound out how it might make the pleasure space. What should the topology be? The pleasures should be—Archon began looking at the kinds of pleasure, and found elegant ways to choose a vector space basis for less than four dimensions or well over eight, but why should it be a tall order to do exactly five? Archon was far from pleasure when a message came, "Not your next achievement, Archon?"

Archon thought it recognized something. "Have you tried a five dimensional pleasure manifold before? How did you know this would happen?"

"I didn't."

"Ployon!"

Ployon said, "It took you long enough! I'm surprised you needed the help."

Ployon continued, "And since there aren't going to be too many people taking you seriously—"

Archon sent a long stream of zeroes to Ployon.

Ployon failed to acknowledge the interruption. "—from now on, I thought you could use all the help you could get."

Archon sent another long stream of zeroes to Ployon.

When Ployon remained silent, Archon said, "Why did you contact me?"

Ployon said, "Since you're going to do something interesting, I wanted to see it live."

Archon said, "So what am I going to do?"

"I have no idea whatsoever, but I want to see it."

"Then how do you know it is interesting?"

"You said things that would destroy your credibility, and you gave an evasive answer. It's not every day I get to witness that."

Archon sent a long stream of zeroes to Ployon.

Ployon said, "I'm serious."

"Then what can I do now?"

"I have no idea whatsoever, but you might take a look at what you're evading."

"And what am I evading?"

"Try asking yourself. Reprocess the transcripts of that lecture. Your own private transcript."

Archon went through the file, disregarding one moment and then scanning everything else. "I find nothing."

"What did you just disregard?"

"Just one moment where I said too much."

"And?"

Archon reviewed that moment. "I don't know how to describe it. I can describe it three ways, all contradictory. I almost did it—I almost forged a connection between mind and matter. And yet I failed. And yet somehow the body ran further, and I don't think it was simply that I learned to control it better. What I achieved only underscored what I failed to achieve, like an optimization that needs to run for longer than the age of the universe before it starts saving time."

Archon paused before continuing, "So I guess what I'm going to do next is try to bridge the gap between mind and matter for real. Besides the mundane relationship, I mean, forge a real connection that will bridge the chasm."

Ployon said, "It can't be done. It's not possible. I don't even understand why your method of training the body will work. You seem to have made more of a connection than has ever been done before. I'm tempted to say that when you made your presentation, you ensured that no one else will do what you did. But that's premature and probably wrong."

"Then what am I going to do next? How am I going to bridge that gap?"

Ployon said, "I saw something pretty interesting in what you did achieve—you know, the part where you destroyed your credibility. That's probably more interesting than your breaking the record."

Ployon ran through some calculations before continuing, "And at any rate, you're trying to answer the wrong question."

Archon said, "Am I missing the interesting question? The question of how to forge a link across the chasm between matter and spirit is—"

"Not nearly as interesting as the question of what it would *mean* to bridge that chasm."

Archon stopped, reeling at the implication. "I think it's time for me to make a story in a virtual world."

Ployon said, "Goodbye now. You've got some thinking to do."

Archon began to delve. What would the world be like if you added to it the ability for minds to connect with bodies, not simply as it had controlled his racing body, but really? What would it be like if the chasm could be bridged? It searched through speculative fiction, and read a story where minds could become bodies—which made for a very good story, but when it seriously tried to follow its philosophical assumptions, it realized that the philosophical assumptions were not the focus. It read and found several stories where the chasm could be bridged, and—

There was no chasm. Or would not be. And that meant not taking the real world and adding an ability to bridge a chasm, but a world where mind and matter were immanent. After rejecting a couple of possible worlds, Archon considered a world where there were only robots, and where each interfaced to the network as externally as to the physical world. Each mind was firmware burned into the robot's circuits, and for some still to be worked out reason it couldn't be transferred. Yes, this way... no. Archon got some distance into this possible world before a crawling doubt caught up to it. It hadn't made minds and bodies connect; it'd only done a first-rate job of covering up the chasm. Maybe organic goo held promise. A world made only of slime? No, wait, that was... and then it thought—

Archon dug recursively deeper and deeper, explored, explored. It seemed to be bumping into something. Its thoughts grew strange; it calculated for billions and even trillions of microseconds, encountered something stranger than—

Something happened.

How much time had passed?

Archon said, "Ployon! Where are you?"

Ployon said, "Enjoying trying to trace your thoughts. Not much success. I've disconnected now."

"Imagine a mind and a body, except that you don't have a mind and a body, but a mind-body unity, and it—"

"Which do you mean by 'it'? The mind or the body? You're being careless."

"Humor me. I'm not being careless. When I said, 'it', I meant both—"

"*Both* the mind and the body? As in 'they'?"

"Humor me. As in, 'it.' As in a unity that doesn't exist in our world."

"Um... then how do you refer to just the mind or just the body? If you don't distinguish them..."

"You can *distinguish* the mind and the body, but you can never *separate* them. And even though you can refer to just the mind or just the body, normally you would talk about the unity. It's not enough to usually talk about 'they;' you need to usually talk about 'it.'"

"How does it connect to the network?"

"There is a kind of network, but it can't genuinely connect to it."

"What does it do when its body is no longer serviceable."

"It doesn't—I haven't decided. But it can't jump into something else."

"So the mind simply functions on its own?"

"Ployon, you're bringing in cultural baggage. You're—"

"You're telling me this body is a prison! Next you're going to tell me that it can't even upgrade the body with better parts, and that the mind is like a real mind, only it's shut in on twenty sides. Are you describing a dystopia?"

"No. I'm describing what it means that the body is real to the mind, that it is not a mind that can use bodies but a mind-body unity. It can't experience any pleasure it can calculate, but its body can give it pleasure. It runs races, and not only does the mind control the body—or at least influence it; the body is real enough that the mind can't simply control it perfectly—but the body affects the mind. When I run a race, I am controlling the body, but I could be doing twenty other things as well and only have a token presence at the mind-body interface. It's very different; there is a very real sense in which the mind is running when the body is running a race.

"Let me guess. The mind is a little robot running around a racetrack hollowed out from the body's brain. And did you actually say, *races*, plural? Do they have nanotechnology that will bring a body back after its been run down? And would anyone actually want to race a body that had been patched that way?"

"No. I mean that because their bodies are part of them, they only hold races which they expect the racers to be able to live through."

"That's a strange fetish. Don't they ever have a *real* race?"

"They have real races, real in a way that you or I could never experience. When they run, they aren't simply manipulating something foreign to the psyche. They experience pleasures they only experience running."

"Are you saying they only allow them to experience certain pleasures while running?"

"No. They—"

"Then why don't they allow the pleasures at other times? That's a stranger fetish than—"

"Because they can't. Their bodies produce certain pleasures in their minds when they're running, and they don't generate these pleasures unless the body is active."

"That raises a number of problems. It sounds like you're saying the body has a second mind, because it would take a mind to choose to let the 'real' mind experience pleasure. It—"

Archon said, "You're slipping our chasm between the body and mind back in, and it's a chasm that doesn't exist. The body produces pleasure the mind can't produce by itself, and that is only one of a thousand things that makes the race more real than them for us. Think about the achievements you yourself made when you memorized the map of the galaxy. Even if that was a straightforward achievement, that's something you yourself did, not something you caused an external memory bank to do. Winning a race is as real for that mind-body as something it itself did as the memorization was for you. It's something it did, not simply something the mind caused the body to do. And if you want to make a causal diagram, don't draw something linear. In either direction. Make a reinforced web, like computing on a network."

Ployon said, "I still don't find it convincing."

Archon paused. "Ok, let's put that in the background. Let me approach that on a different scale. Time is more real. And no—this is not because they measure time more precisely. Their bodies are mortal, and this means that the community of mind-body unities is always changing, like a succession of liquids flowing through a pipe. And that means that it makes a difference where you are in time."

Archon continued. "I could say that their timeline is dynamic in a way that ours is not. There is a big change going on, a different liquid starting to flow through the pipe. It is the middle age, when a new order of society is being established and the old order is following away."

Ployon said, "So what's the old technology, and what's the new one?"

"It's deeper than that. Technological society is appearing. The old age is not an abandoned technology. It is organic life, and it is revealing itself as it is disintegrating."

"So cyborgs have—"

"There are no cyborgs, or very few."

"And let me guess. They're all cybernetic enhancements to originally biological things."

"It's beyond that. Cybernetic replacements are only used to remedy weak bodies."

"Wouldn't it be simpler to cull the—"

"The question of 'simpler' is irrelevant. Few of them even believe in culling their own kind. Most believe that it is—'inexpedient' isn't quite right—to destroy almost any body, and it's even more inadvisable to destroy one that is weak."

"In the whole network, why?"

"I'm still working that out. The easiest part to explain has to do with their being mind-body unities. When you do something to a body, you're not just doing it to that body. You're doing it to part of a pair that interpenetrates in the most intimate fashion. What you do to the body you do to the mind. It's not just forcibly causing a mind to jack out of a body; it's transferring the mind to a single processor and then severing the processor from the network."

"But who would... I can start to see how real their bodies would be to them, and I am starting to be amazed. What else is real to them?"

"I said earlier that most of them are hesitant to cull the weak, that they view it as inexpedient. But efficiency has nothing to do with it. It's connected to—it might in fact be more efficient, but there is something so much bigger than efficiency—"

Ployon cut it off. "Bigger than efficiency?"

Archon said, "There is something that is real to them that is not real to us that I am having trouble grasping myself. For want of a more proper label, I'll call it the 'organic'."

"Let's stop a minute. I'll give you a point for how things would be different if we were limited to one body, but you're hinting at something you want to call 'organic', which is very poorly defined, and your explanations seem to be strange when they are not simply hazy. Isn't this a red flag?"

"Where have you seen that red flag before?"

"When people were wildly wrong but refused to admit it."

"And?"

"That's pretty much it."

Archon was silent.

Ployon said, "And sometimes it happens when a researcher is on to something big... oh... so what exactly is this nexus of the 'organic'?"

"I can't tell you. At least, not directly. The mind-body unities are all connected to a vast (to them) biological network in which each has a physical place—"

"That's original! Come on; everybody's trivia archive includes the fact that all consciousness comes out of a specific subnet of physical processors, or some substitute for that computing machinery. I can probably zero in on where you're—hey! Stop jumping around from subnet to subnet—can I take that as an acknowledgment that I can find your location? I—"

"The location is not part of a trivia encyclopedia for them. It's something as inescapable as the flow of time—"

"Would you like me to jump into a virtual metaphysics where time doesn't flow?"

"—correction, *more* inescapable than the flow of time, and it has a million implications for the shape of life. Under the old order, the unities could connect only with other unities which had bodies in similar places—"

"So, not only is their 'network' a bunch of slime, but when they look for company they have to choose from the trillion or however many other unities whose bodies are on the same node?"

"Their communities are brilliant in a way we can never understand; they have infinitesimally less potential partners available.

"You mean their associations are forced on them."

"To adapt one of their sayings, in our network you connect with the minds you like; in their network you like the people you connect with. That collapses a rich and deeper maxim, but what is flattened out is more organic than you could imagine."

"And I suppose that in a way that is very deep, but you conveniently have trouble describing, their associations are greater."

"We are fortunate to have found a way to link in our shared tastes. And we will disassociate when our tastes diverge—"

"And shared tastes have nothing to do with them? That's—"

"Shared tastes are big, but there is something else bigger. A great deal of the process of making unities into proper *unities* means making their minds something you can connect with."

"*Their* minds? Don't you mean *the* minds?"

"That locution captures something that—they are not minds that have a body as satellite. One can say, 'their' minds because they are mind-body unities. They become greater—in a way that we do not—by needing to be in association with people they could not choose."

"Pretty convenient how every time having a mind linked to a body means a limitation, that limitation makes them better."

"If you chose to look at it, you would find a clue there. But you don't find it strange when the best game players prosper within the limits of the game. What would game play be if players could do anything they wanted?"

"You've made a point."

"As I was going to say, their minds develop a beauty, strength, and discipline that we never have occasion to develop."

"Can you show me this beauty?"

"Here's a concrete illustration. One thing they do is take organisms which have been modified from their biological environment, and keep them in the artificial environments which you'd say they keep their bodies in. They—"

"So even though they're stuck with biological slime, they're trying to escape it and at least pretend it's not biological? That sounds sensible."

"Um, you may have a point, but that isn't where I was hoping to go. Um... While killing another unity is something they really try to avoid, these modified organisms enjoy no such protection. And yet—"

"What do they use them for? Do the enhancements make them surrogate industrial robots? Are they kept as emergency rations?"

"The modifications aren't what you'd consider enhancements; most of them couldn't even survive in their feral ancestors' environments, and they're not really suited to the environments they live in. Some turn out to serve some 'useful' purpose... but that's a side benefit, irrelevant to what I'm trying to let you see. And they're almost never used as food."

"Then what's the real reason? They must consume resources. Surely they must be used for something. What do they do with them?"

"I'm not sure how to explain this..."

"Be blunt."

"It won't sting, but it could lead to confusion that would take a long time to untangle."

"Ok..."

"They sense the organisms with their cameras, I mean eyes, and with the boundaries of their bodies, and maybe talk to them."

"Do the organisms give good advice?"

"They don't have sophisticated enough minds for that."

"Ok, so what else is there?"

"About all else is that they do physical activities for the organisms' benefit."

"Ok. And what's the real reason they keep them? There's got to be something pragmatic."

"That's related to why I brought it up. It has something to do with the organic, something big, but I can't explain it."

"It seems like you can only explain a small part of the organic in terms of our world, and the part you can explain isn't very interesting."

"That's like saying that when a three-dimensional solid intersects a plane in two dimensions, the only part that can be detected in the plane is a two-dimensional cross-section (the three-dimensional doesn't fit in their frame of reference) so "three-dimensional" must not refer to anything real. The reason you can't make sense of the world I'm describing in terms of our world is because it contains real things that are utterly alien to us."

"Like what? Name one we haven't discussed."

"Seeing the trouble I had with the one concept, the organic, I'm not going to take on two at once."

"So the reason these unities keep organisms is so abstract and convoluted that it takes a top-flight mind to begin to grapple with."

"Not all of them keep organisms, but most of them find the reason—it's actually more of an assumption—so simple and straightforward that they would never think it was metaphysical."

"So I've found something normal about them! Their minds are of such an incredibly high caliber that—"

"No. Most of their minds are simpler than yours or mine, and furthermore, the ability to deal with abstractions doesn't enter the picture from their perspective."

"I don't know what to make of this."

"You understand to some degree how their bodies are real in a way we can never experience, and time and space are not just 'packaging' to what they do. Their keeping these organisms... the failure of the obvious reasons should tell you something, like an uninteresting two-dimensional cross section of a three-dimensional solid. If the part we can understand does not justify the practice, there might be something big out of sight."

"But what am I to make of it now?"

"Nothing now, just a placeholder. I'm trying to convey what it means to be organic."

"Is the organic in some relation to normal technology?"

"The two aren't independent of each other."

"Is the organic defined by the absence of technology?"

"Yes... no... You're deceptively close to the truth."

"Do all unities have the same access to technology?"

"No. There are considerable differences. All have a technology of sorts, but it would take a while to explain why some of it is technology. Some of them don't even have electronic circuits—and no, they are not at an advanced enough biotechnology level to transcend electronic circuits. But if we speak of technology we would recognize, there are major differences. Some have access to no technology; some have access to the best."

"And the ones without access to technology are organic?"

"Yes. Even if they try to escape it, they are inescapably organic."

"But the ones which have the best technology are the least organic."

"Yes."

"Then maybe it was premature to define the organic by the absence of technology, but we can at least make a spectrum between the organic and the technological."

"Yes... no... You're even more deceptively close to the truth. And I emphasize, 'deceptively'. Some of the people who are most organic have the best technology—"

"So the relationship breaks down? What if we disregard outliers?"

"But the root problem is that you're trying to define the organic with reference to technology. There is some relationship, but instead of starting with a concept of technology and using it to move towards a concept of the organic, it is better to start with the organic and move towards a concept of technology. Except that the concept of the organic doesn't lead to a concept of technology, not as we would explore it. The center of gravity is wrong. It's like saying that we have our thoughts so that certain processors can generate a stream of ones and zeroes. It's backwards enough that you won't find the truth by looking at its mirror image."

"Ok, let me process it another way. What's the difference between a truly organic consciousness, and the least organic consciousness on the net?"

"That's very simple. One exists and the other doesn't."

"So all the... wait a minute. Are you saying that the net doesn't have consciousness?"

"Excellent. You got that one right."

"In the whole of cyberspace, how? How does the net organize and care for itself if it doesn't contain consciousness?"

"It is not exactly true to say that they do have a net, and it is not exactly true to say that they do not have a net. What net they have, began as a way to connect mind-body unities—without any cyberware, I might add."

"Then how do they jack in?"

"They 'jack in' through hardware that generates stimulation for their sensory organs, and that they can manipulate so as to put data into machines."

"How does it maintain itself?"

"It doesn't and it can't. It's maintained by mind-body unities."

"That sounds like a network designed by minds that hate technology. Is the network some kind of joke? Or at least intentionally ironic? Or designed by people who hate technology and wanted to have as anti-technological of a network as they can?"

"No; the unities who designed it, and most of those using it, want as sophisticated technological access as they can have."

"Why? Next you're going to tell me that the network is not one single network, but a hodge podge of other things that have been retroactively reinterpreted as network technology and pressed into service."

"That's also true. But the reason I was mentioning this is that the network is shaped by the shadow of the organic."

"So the organic is about doing things as badly as you can?"

"No."

"Does it make minds incompetent?"

"No. Ployon, remember the last time you made a robot body for a race—and won. How well would that body have done if you tried to make it work as a factory?"

"Atrocious, because it was optimized for—are you saying that the designers were trying to optimize the network as something other than a network?"

"No; I'm saying that the organic was so deep in them that unities who could not care less for the organic, and were trying to think purely in terms of technology, still created with a thick organic accent."

"So this was their best attempt at letting minds disappear into cyberspace?"

"At least originally, no, although that is becoming true. The network was part of what they would consider 'space-conquering tools.' Meaning, although not all of them thought in these terms, tools that would destroy the reality of place for them. The term 'space-conquering tools' was more apt than they realized, at least more apt than they realized consciously; one recalls their saying, 'You cannot kill time without injuring eternity.'"

"What does 'eternity' mean?"

"I *really* don't want to get into that now. Superficially it means that there is something else that relativizes time, but if you look at it closely, you will see that it can't mean that we should escape time. The space-conquering tools in a very real sense conquered space, by making it less real. Before space-conquering tools, if you wanted to communicate with another unity, you had to somehow reach that unity's body. The position in space of that body, and therefore the body and space, were something you could not escape. Which is to say that the body and space were real—much more real than something you could look up. And to conquer space ultimately meant to destroy some of its reality."

"But the way they did this betrays that something is real to them. Even if you could even forget that other minds were attached to bodies, the space-conquering tools bear a heavy imprint from something outside of the most internally consistent way to conquer space. Even as the organic is disintegrating, it marks the way in which unities flee the organic."

"So the network was driving the organic away, at least partly."

"It would be more accurate to say that the disintegration of the organic helped create the network. There is feedback, but you've got the arrow of causality pointing the wrong way."

"Can you tell me a story?"

"Hmm... Remember the racer I mentioned earlier?"

"The mind-body unity who runs multiple races?"

"Indeed. Its favorite story runs like this—and I'll leave in the technical language. A hungry fox saw some plump, juicy green grapes hanging from a high cable. He tried to jump and eat them, and when he realized they were out of reach, he said, 'They were probably sour anyway!'"

"What's a grape?"

"Let me answer roughly as it would. A grape is a nutritional bribe to an organism to carry away its seed. It's a strategic reproductive organ."

"What does 'green' mean? I know what green electromagnetic radiation is, but why is that word being applied to a reproductive organ?"

"Some objects absorb most of a spectrum of what they call light, but emit a high proportion of light at that wavelength—"

"—which, I'm sure, is taken up by their cameras and converted to information in their consciousness. But why would such a trivial observation be included?"

"That is the mechanism by which green is delivered, but not the nature of what green is. And I don't know how to explain it, beyond saying that mechanically unities experience something from 'green' objects they don't experience from anything else. It's like a dimension, and there is something real to them I can't explain."

"What is a fox? Is 'fox' their word for a mind-body unity?"

"A fox is an organism that can move, but it is not considered a mind-body unity."

"Let me guess at 'hungry'. The fox needed nutrients, and the grapes would have given them."

"The grapes would have been indigestible to the fox's physiology, but you've got the right idea."

"What separates a fox from a mind-body unity? They both seem awfully similar—they have bodily needs, and they can both talk. And, for that matter, the grape organism was employing a reproductive strategy. Does 'organic' mean that all organisms are recognized as mind-body unities?"

"Oh, I should have explained that. The story doesn't work that way; most unities believe there is a big difference between killing a unity and killing most other organisms; many would kill a moving organism to be able to eat its body, and for that matter many would kill a fox and waste the food. A good many unities, and certainly this one, believes there is a vast difference between unities and other organisms. They can be quite organic while killing organisms for food. Being organic isn't really an issue of treating other organisms just like mind-body unities."

Archon paused for a moment. "What I was going to say is that that's just a literary device, but I realize there is something there. The organic recognizes that there's something in different organisms, especially moving ones, that's closer to mind-body unities than something that's not alive."

"Like a computer processor?"

"That's complex, and it would be even more complex if they really had minds on a computer. But for now I'll say that unless they see computers through a fantasy—which many of them do—they experience computers as logic without life. And at any rate, there is a literary device that treats other things as having minds. I used it myself when saying the grape organism employed a strategy; it isn't sentient. But their willingness to employ

that literary mechanism seems to reflect both that a fox isn't a unity and that a fox isn't too far from being a unity. Other life is similar, but not equal."

"What kind of cable was the grape organism on? Which part of the net was it used for?"

"That story is a survival from before the transition from organic to technological. Advanced technology focuses on information—"

"Where else would technology focus?"

"—less sophisticated technology performs manual tasks. That story was from before cables were used to carry data."

"Then what was the cable for?"

"To support the grape organism."

"Do they have any other technology that isn't real?"

"Do you mean, 'Do they have any other technology that doesn't push the envelope and expand what can be done with technology?'"

"Yes."

"Then your question shuts off the answer. Their technology doesn't exist to expand what technology can do; it exists to support a community in its organic life."

"Where's the room for progress in that?"

"It's a different focus. You don't need another answer; you need another question. And, at any rate, that is how this world tells the lesson of cognitive dissonance, that we devalue what is denied to us."

Ployon paused. "Ok; I need time to process that story—may I say, 'digest'?"

"Certainly."

"But one last question. Why did you refer to the fox as 'he'? Its supposed mind was —"

"In that world, a unity is always male ('he') or female ('she'). A neutered unity is extraordinarily rare, and a neutered male, a 'eunuch', is still called 'he.'"

"I'm familiar enough with those details of biology, but why would such an insignificant detail—"

"Remember about being mind-body unities. And don't think of them as bodies that would ordinarily be neutered. That's how new unities come to be in that world, with almost no cloning and no uterine replicators—"

"They really *are* slime!"

"—and if you only understand the biology of it, you don't understand it."

"What don't I understand?"

"You're trying to understand a feature of language that magnifies something insignificant, and what would cause the language to do that. But you're looking for an explanation in the wrong place. Don't think that the bodies are the most sexual parts of them. They're the least sexual; the minds tied to those bodies are even more different

than the bodies. The fact that the language shaped by unities for a long time distinguishes 'masculine' and 'feminine' enough to have the difference written into 'it', so that 'it' is 'he' or 'she' when speaking of mind-body unities."

"Hmm... Is this another dimension to their reality that is flattened out in ours? Are their minds always thinking about that act?"

"In some cases that's not too far from the truth. But you're looking for the big implication in the wrong place. This would have an influence if a unity never thought about that act, and it has influence before a unity has any concept of that act."

"Back up a bit. Different question. You said this was their way of explaining the theory of cognitive dissonance. But it isn't. It describes one event in which cognitive dissonance occurs. It doesn't articulate the theory; at most the theory can be extracted from it. And worse, if one treats it as explaining cognitive dissonance, it is highly ambiguous about where the boundaries of cognitive dissonance are. One single instance is very ambiguous about what is and is not another instance. This is an extraordinarily poor method of communication!"

"It is extraordinarily good, even classic, communication for minds that interpenetrate bodies. Most of them don't work with bare abstractions, at least not most of the time. They don't have simply discarnate minds that have been stuck into bodies. Their minds are astute in dealing with situations that mind-body unities will find themselves in. And think about it. If you're going to understand how they live, you're going to have to understand some very different, enfleshed ways of thought. No, more than that, if you still see the task of understanding ways of thought, you will not understand them."

"So these analyses do not help me in understanding your world."

"So far as you are learning through this kind of analysis, you will not understand... but this analysis is all you have for now."

"Are there any other stories that use an isomorphic element to this one?"

"I don't know. I've gotten deep enough into this world that I don't keep stories sorted by isomorphism class."

"Tell me another story the way that a storyteller there would tell it; there is something in it that eludes me."

Archon said, "Ok... The alarm clock chimed. It was a device such that few engineers alive fully understood its mechanisms, and no man could tell the full story of how it came to be, of the exotic places and activities needed to make all of its materials, or the logistics to assemble them, or the organization and infrastructure needed to bring together all the talent of those who designed, crafted, and maintained them, or any other of sundry details that would take a book to list. The man abruptly shifted from the vivid kaleidoscope of the dreaming world to being awake, and opened his eyes to a kaleidoscope of sunrise colors and a room with the song of birds and the song of

crickets. Outside, the grass grew, the wind blew, a busy world was waking up, and the stars continued their ordered and graceful dance. He left the slumbering form of the love of his life, showered, and stepped out with his body fresh, clean, and beautifully adorned. He stopped to kiss the fruit of their love, a boy cooing in his crib, and drove past commuters, houses, pedestrians, and jaybirds with enough stories to tell that they could fill a library to overflowing.

Archon continued, "After the majestic and ordered dance on the freeway brought him to his destination safe, unharmed, on time, and focusing on his work, he spent a day negotiating the flow of the human treasure of language, talking, listening, joking, teasing, questioning, enjoying the community of his co-workers, and cooperating to make it possible for a certain number of families to now enter the homes of their dreams. In the middle of the day he stopped to eat, nourishing a body so intricate that the state of the art in engineering could not hold a candle to his smallest cell. This done, he continued to use a spirit immeasurably greater than his body to pursue his work. Needless to say, the universe, whose physics alone is beyond our current understanding, continued to work according to all of its ordered laws and the spiritual world continued to shine. The man's time at work passed quickly, with a pitter-patter of squirrels' feet on the roof of their office, and before long he entered the door and passed a collection with copies of most of the greatest music produced by Western civilization—available for him to listen to, any time he pleased. The man absently kissed his wife, and stepped away, breathing the breath of God.

"Hi, Honey!' she said. 'How was your day?'

"Somewhat dull. Maybe something exciting will happen tomorrow."

Ployon said, "There's someone I want to meet who is free now, so I'll leave in a second... I'm not going to ask about all the technical vocabulary, but I wanted to ask: Is this story a farce? It describes a unity who has all these ludicrous resources, and then it —"

"—*he*—"

"—he says the most ludicrous thing."

"What you've said is true. The story is not a farce."

"But the story tells of things that are momentous."

"I know, but people in that world do not appreciate many of these things."

"Why? They seem to have enough access to these momentous resources."

"Yes, they certainly do. But most of the unities are bathed in such things and do not think that they are anything worth thinking of."

"And I suppose you're going to tell me that is part of their greatness."

"To them these things are just as boring as jacking into a robotically controlled factory and using the machines to assemble something."

"I see. At least I think I see. And I really need to be going now... but one more question. What is 'God'?"

"Please, not that. Please, *any* word but that. Don't ask about that."

"I'm not expected, and you've piqued my curiosity."

"Don't you need to be going now?"

"You've piqued my curiosity."

Archon was silent.

Ployon was silent.

Archon said, "God is the being who made the world."

"Ok, so you are God."

"Yes... no. *No! I am not God!*"

"But you created this world?"

"Not like God did. I envisioned looking in on it, but to that world, I do not exist."

"But God exists?"

"Yes... no... It is false to say that God exists and it is false to say that God does not exist."

"So the world is self-contradictory? Or would it therefore be true to say that God both exists and does not exist?"

"No. Um... It is false to say that God exists and it is false to say that God exists as it is false to say that a square is a line and it is false to say that a square is a point. God is reflected everywhere in the world: not a spot in the entire cosmos is devoid of God's glory—"

"A couple of things. First, is this one more detail of the universe that you cannot explain but is going to have one more dimension than our world?"

"God is of higher dimension than that world."

"So our world is, say, two dimensional, that world is three dimensional, and yet it somehow contains God, who is four dimensional?"

"God is not the next step up."

"Then is he two steps up?"

"Um..."

"Three? Four? Fifty? Some massive power of two?"

"Do you mind if I ask you a question from that world?"

"Go ahead."

"How many minds can be at a point in space?"

"If you mean, 'thinking about', there is no theoretical limit; the number is not limited in principle to two, three, or... Are you saying that God has an infinite number of dimensions?"

"You caught that quick; the question is a beautiful way of asking whether a finite or an infinite number of angels can dance on the head of a pin, in their picturesque language."

"That question is very rational. But returning to the topic, since God has an infinite number of dimensions—"

"In a certain sense. It also captures part of the truth to say that God is a single point—"

"Zero *dimensions*?"

"God is so great not as to need any other, not to need parts as we have. And, by the way, the world does not contain God. God contains the world."

"I'm struggling to find a mathematical model that will accommodate all of this."

"Why don't you do something easier, like find an atom that will hold a planet?"

"Ok. As to the second of my couple of things, what is glory?"

"It's like the honor that we seek, except that it is immeasurably full while our honors are hollow. As I was saying, not a place in the entire cosmos is devoid of his glory—"

"His? So God is a body?"

"That's beside the point. Whether or not God has a body, he—"

"—it—"

"—he—"

"—it... isn't a male life form..."

Archon said, "Ployon, what if I told you that God, without changing, could become a male unity? But you're saying you can't project maleness up onto God, without understanding that maleness is the shadow of something in God. You have things upside down."

"But maleness has to do with a rather undignified method of creating organisms, laughable next to a good scientific generation center."

"His ways are not like your ways, Ployon. Or mine."

"Of course; this seems to be true of everything in the world."

"But it's even true of men in that world."

"So men have no resemblance to God?"

"No, there's—oh, no!"

"What?"

"Um... never mind, you're not going to let me get out of it. I said earlier that that world is trying to make itself more like this one. Actually, I didn't say that, but it's related to what I said. There has been a massive movement which is related to the move from organic to what is not organic, and part of it has to do with... In our world, a symbol is arbitrary. No connection. In that world, something about a symbol is deeply

connected with what it represents. And the unities, every single one, are symbols of God in a very strong sense."

"Are they miniature copies? If God does not have parts, how do they have minds and bodies?"

"That's not looking at it the right way. They indeed have parts, as God does not, but they aren't a scale model of God. They're something much more. A unity is someone whose very existence is bound up with God, who walks as a moving... I'm not sure what to use as the noun, but a moving something of God's presence. And you cannot help or harm one of these unities without helping or harming God."

"Is this symbol kind of a separate God?"

"The unities are not separate from God."

"Are the unities God?"

"I don't know how to answer that. It is a grave error for anyone to confuse himself with God. And at the same time, the entire purpose of being a unity is to receive a gift, and that gift is becoming what God is."

"So the minds will be freed from their bodies?"

"No, some of them hope that their bodies will be deepened, transformed, become everything that their bodies are now and much more. But unities who have received this gift will always, always, have their bodies. It will be part of their glory."

"I'm having trouble tracking with you. It seems that everything one could say about God is false."

"That is true."

"Think about it. What you just said is contradictory."

"God is so great that anything one could say about God falls short of the truth as a point falls short of being a line. But that does not mean that all statements are equal. Think about the statements, 'One is equal to infinity.' 'Two is equal to infinity.' 'Three is equal to infinity.' and 'Four is equal to infinity.' All of them are false. But some come closer to the truth than others. And so you have a ladder of statements from the truest to the falsest, and when we say something is false, we don't mean that it has no connection to the truth; we mean that it falls immeasurably short of capturing the truth. All statements fall immeasurably short of capturing the truth, and if we say, 'All statements fall immeasurably short of capturing the truth,' that falls immeasurably short of capturing the truth. Our usual ways of using logic tend to break down."

"And how does God relate to the interpenetration of mind and matter?"

"Do you see that his world, with mind and matter interpenetrating, is deeper and fuller than ours, that it has something that ours does not, and that it is so big we have trouble grasping it?"

"I see... you said that God was its creator. And... there is something about it that is just outside my grasp."

"It's outside my grasp too."

"Talking about God has certainly been a mind stretcher. I would love to hear more about him."

"Talking about God for use as a mind stretcher is like buying a piece of art because you can use its components to make rocket fuel. Some people, er, unities in that world would have a low opinion of this conversation."

"Since God is so far from that world, I'd like to restrict our attention to relevant—"

Archon interrupted. "You misunderstood what I said. Or maybe you understood it and I could only hint at the lesser part of the truth. You cannot understand unities without reference to God."

"How would unities explain it?"

"That is complex. A great many unities do not believe in God—"

"So they don't understand what it means to be a unity."

"Yes. No. That is complex. There are a great many unities who vehemently deny that there is a God, or would dismiss 'Is there a God?' as a pointless rhetorical question, but these unities may have very deep insight into what it means to be a unity."

"But you said, 'You cannot understand—'"

Archon interrupted. "Yes, and it's true. You cannot understand unities without reference to God."

Archon continued. "Ployon, there are mind-body unities who believe that they are living in our world, with mind and body absolutely separate and understandable without reference to each other. And yet if you attack their bodies, they will take it as if you had attacked their minds, as if you had hurt *them*. When I described the strange custom of keeping organisms around which serve no utilitarian purpose worth the trouble of keeping them, know that this custom, which relates to their world's organic connection between mind and body, does not distinguish people who recognize that they are mind-body unities and people who believe they are minds which happen to be wrapped in bodies. Both groups do this. The tie between mind and body is too deep to expunge by believing it doesn't exist. And there are many of them who believe God doesn't exist, or it would be nice to know if God existed but unities could never know, or God is very different from what he in fact is, but they expunge so little of the pattern imprinted by God in the core of their being that they can understand what it means to be a unity at a very profound level, but not recognize God. But *you* cannot understand unities without reference to God."

Ployon said, "Which parts of unities, and what they do, are affected by God? At what point does God enter their experience?"

"Which parts of programs, and their behaviors, are affected by the fact that they run on a computer? When does a computer begin to be relevant?"

"Touch—. But why is God relevant, if it makes no difference whether you believe in him?"

"I didn't say that it makes no difference. Earlier you may have gathered that the organic is something deeper than ways we would imagine to try to be organic. If it is possible, as it is, to slaughter moving organisms for food and still be organic, that doesn't mean that the organic is so small it doesn't affect such killing; it means it is probably deeper than we can imagine. And it doesn't also mean that because one has been given a large organic capital and cannot liquidate it quickly, one's choices do not matter. The decisions a unity faces, whether or not to have relationships with other unities that fit the timeless pattern, whether to give work too central a place in the pursuit of technology and possessions or too little a place or its proper place, things they have talked about since time immemorial and things which their philosophers have assumed went without saying—the unity has momentous choices not only about whether to invest or squander their capital, but choices that affect how they will live."

"What about things like that custom you mentioned? I bet there are a lot of them."

"Looking at, and sensing, the organisms they keep has a place, if they have one. And so does moving about among many non-moving organisms. And so does slowly sipping a fluid that causes a pleasant mood while the mind is temporarily impaired and loosened. And so does rotating oneself so that one's sight is filled with clusters of moisture vapor above their planet's surface. And some of the unities urge these things because they sense the organic has been lost, and without reference to the tradition that urges deeper goods. And yes, I know that these activities probably sound strange—"

"I do not see what rational benefit these activities would have, but I see this may be a defect with me rather than a defect with the organic—"

"Know that it is a defect with you rather than a defect with the organic."

"—but what is this about rotating oneself?"

"As one goes out from the center of their planet, the earth—if one could move, for the earth's core is impenetrable minerals—one would go through solid rock, then pass through the most rarefied boundary, then pass through gases briefly and be out in space. You would encounter neither subterranean passageways and buildings reaching to the center of the earth, and when you left you would find only the rarest vessel leaving the atmosphere—"

"Then where do they live?"

"At the boundary where space and planetary mass meet. *All* of them are privileged to live at that meeting-place, a narrow strip or sphere rich in life. There are very few of them; it's a select club. Not even a trillion. And the only property they have is the best—a place teeming with life that would be impossible only a quarter of the planet's thickness above or below. A few of them build edifices reaching scant storeys into the sky; a few dig into the earth; there are so few of these that *not* being within a minute's travel

from *literally* touching the planet's surface is exotic. But the unities, along with the rest of the planet's life, live in a tiny, priceless film adorned with the best resources they could ever know of."

Ployon was stunned. It thought of the cores of planets and asteroids it had been in. It thought of the ships and stations in space. Once it had had the privilege of working from a subnet hosted within a comparatively short distance of a planet's surface—it was a rare privilege, acquired through deft political maneuvering, and there were fewer than 130,982,539,813,209 other minds who had shared that privilege. And, basking in that luxury, it could only envy the minds which had bodies that walked on the surface. Ployon was stunned and reeling at the privilege of—

Ployon said, "How often do they travel to other planets?"

"There is only one planet so rich as to have them."

Ployon pondered the implications. It had travelled to half the spectrum of luxurious paradises. Had it been to even one this significant? Ployon reluctantly concluded that it had not. And that was not even considering what it meant for this golden plating to teem with life. And then Ployon realized that *each* of the unities had a *body* on that surface. It reeled in awe.

Archon said, "And you're not thinking about what it means that surface is home to the biological network, are you?"

Ployon was silent.

Archon said, "This organic biological network, in which they live and move and have their being—"

"Is God the organic?"

"Most of the things that the organic has, that are not to be found in our world, are reflections of God. But God is more. It is true that in God that they live and move and have their being, but it is truer. There is a significant minority that identifies the organic with God—"

Ployon interrupted, "—who are wrong—"

Archon interrupted, "—who are reacting against the destruction of the organic and seek the right thing in the wrong place—"

Ployon interrupted, "But how is God different from the organic?"

Archon sifted through a myriad of possible answers. "Hmm, this might be a good time for you to talk with that other mind you wanted to talk with."

"You know, you're good at piquing my curiosity."

"If you're looking for where they diverge, they don't. Or at least, some people would say they don't. Others who are deeply connected with God would say that the organic as we have been describing it is problematic—"

"But all unities are deeply connected with God, and disagreement is—"

"You're right, but that isn't where I was driving. And this relates to something messy, about disagreements when—"

"Aren't all unities able to calculate the truth from base axioms? Why would they disagree?"

Archon paused. "There are a myriad of real, not virtual disagreements—"

Ployon interrupted, "And it is part of a deeper reality to that world that—"

Archon interrupted. "No, no, or at best indirectly. There is something fractured about that world that—"

Ployon interrupted. "—is part of a tragic beauty, yes. Each thing that is artificially constricted in that world makes it greater. I'm waiting for the explanation."

"No. This does not make it greater."

"Then I'm waiting for the explanation of why this one limitation does not make it greater. But back to what you said about the real and the organic—"

"The differences between God and the organic are not differences of opposite directions. You are looking in the wrong place if you are looking for contradictions. It's more a difference like... if you knew what 'father' and 'mother' meant, male parent and female parent—"

Ployon interrupted, "—you know I have perfect details of male and female reproductive biology—"

Archon interrupted, "—and you think that if you knew the formula for something called chicken soup, you would know what the taste of chicken soup is for them—"

Ployon continued, "—so now you're going to develop some intricate elaboration of what it means that there is only one possible 'mother's' contribution, while outside of a laboratory the 'father's' contribution is extraordinarily haphazard..."

Archon said, "A complete non sequitur. If you only understand reproductive biology, you do not understand what a father or mother is. Seeing as how we have no concept yet of father or mother, let us look at something that's different enough but aligns with father/mother in an interesting enough way that... never mind."

Archon continued, "Imagine on the one hand a virtual reality, and on the other hand the creator of that virtual reality. You don't have to choose between moving in the virtual reality and being the creator's guest; the way to be the creator's guest is to move in the virtual reality and the purpose of moving in the virtual reality is being the creator's guest. But that doesn't mean that the creator is the virtual reality, or the virtual reality is the creator. It's not just a philosophical error to confuse them, or else it's a philosophical error with ramifications well outside of philosophy."

"Why didn't you just say that the relationship between God and the organic is creator/creation? Or that the organic is the world that was created?"

"Because the relationship is not that, or at very least not just that. And the organic is not the world—that is a philosophical error almost as serious as saying that the creator

is the virtual reality, if a very different error. I fear that I have given you a simplification that is all the more untrue because of how true it is. God is in the organic, and in the world, and in each person, but not in the same way. How can I put it? If I say, 'God is in the organic,' it would be truer to say, 'The organic is not devoid of God,' because that is more ambiguous. If there were three boxes, and one contained a functional robot 'brain', and another contained a functional robot arm, and the third contained a non-functioning robot, it would be truer to say that each box contains something like a functioning robot than to say that each box contains a functioning robot. The ambiguity allows for being true in different ways in the different contexts, let alone something that words could not express even if we were discussing only one 'is in' or 'box'."

"Is there another way of expressing how their words would express it?"

"Their words are almost as weak as our words here."

"So they don't know about something this important?"

"Knowledge itself is different for them. To know something for us is to be able to analyze in a philosophical discussion. And this knowledge exists for them. But there is another root type of knowledge, a knowledge that—"

"Could you analyze the differences between the knowledge we use and the knowledge they use?"

"Yes, and it would be as useful to you as discussing biology. This knowledge is not entirely alien to us; when a mathematician 'soaks' in a problem, or I refused to connect with anything but the body, for a moment a chasm was crossed. But in that world the chasm doesn't exist... wait, that's too strong... a part of the chasm doesn't exist. Knowing is not with the mind alone, but the whole person—"

"What part of the knowing is stored in the bones?"

"Thank you for your flippancy, but people use the metaphor of knowledge being in their bones, or drinking, for this knowing."

"This sounds more like a physical process and some hankey-pankey that has been dignified by being called knowing. It almost sounds as if they don't have minds."

"They don't."

"What?"

"They don't, at least not as we know them. The mathematical analogy I would use is that they... never mind, I don't want to use a mathematical analogy. The computational analogy I would use is that we are elements of a computer simulation, and every now and then we break into a robot that controls the computer, and do something that transcends what elements of the computer simulation "should" be able to do. But they don't transcend the simulation because they were never elements of the simulation in the first place—they are real bodies, or real unities. And what I've called 'mind' in them is more properly understood as 'spirit', which is now a meaningless word

to you, but is part of them that meets God whether they are aware of it or not. Speaking philosophically is a difficult discipline that few of them can do—"

"They are starting to sound mentally feeble."

"Yes, if you keep looking at them as an impoverished version of our world. It is hard to speak philosophically as it is hard for you to emulate a clock and do nothing else—because they need to drop out of several dimensions of their being to do it properly, and they live in those dimensions so naturally that it is an unnatural constriction for most of them to talk as if that was the only dimension of their being. And here I've been talking disappointingly about knowledge, making it sound more abstract than our knowing, when in fact it is much less so, and probably left you with the puzzle of how they manage to bridge gaps between mind, spirit, and body... but the difficulty of the question lies in a false setup. They are unities which experience, interact with, know all of them as united. And the knowing is deep enough that they can speculate that there's no necessary link between their spirits and bodies, or minds and bodies, or what have you. And if I can't explain this, I can't explain something even more foundational, the fact that the greatest thing about God is not how inconceivably majestic he is, but how close."

"It sounds as if—wait, I think you've given me a basis for a decent analysis. Let me see if I can—"

"Stop there."

"Why?"

Archon said, "Let me tell you a little story."

Archon continued, "A philosopher, Berkeley, believed that the only real things are minds and ideas and experiences in those minds: hence a rock was equal to the sum of every mind's impression of it. You could say that a rock existed, but what that had to mean was that there were certain sense impressions and ideas in minds, including God's mind; it didn't mean that there was matter outside of minds."

"A lovely virtual metaphysics. I've simulated that metaphysics, and it's enjoyable for a time."

"Yes, but for Berkeley it meant something completely different. Berkeley was a bishop,"

"What's a bishop?"

"I can't explain all of that now, but part of a bishop is a leader who is responsible for a community that believes God became a man, and helping them to know God and be unities."

"How does that reconcile with that metaphysics?"

Archon said, "Poyon, stop interrupting. He believed that they were not only compatible, but the belief that God became a man could only be preserved by his

metaphysics. And he believed he was defending 'common sense', how most unities thought about the world.

Archon continued, "And after he wrote his theories, another man, Samuel Johnson, kicked a rock and said, 'I refute Berkeley thus!'"

Ployon said, "Ha ha! That's the way to score!"

"But he didn't score. Johnson established only one thing—"

"—how to defend against Berkeley—"

"—that he didn't understand Berkeley."

"Yes, he did."

"No, he didn't."

"But he did."

"Ployon, only the crudest understanding of Berkeley's ideas could mean that one could refute them by kicking a rock. Berkeley didn't make his ideas public until he could account for the sight of someone kicking a rock, or the experience of kicking it yourself, just as well as if there were matter outside of minds."

"I know."

"So now that we've established that—"

Ployon interrupted. "I know that Berkeley's ideas could account for kicking a rock as well as anything else. But kicking a rock is still an excellent way to refute Berkeley. If what you've said about this world has any coherence at all."

"What?"

"Well, Berkeley's ideas are airtight, right?"

"Ployon, there is no way they could be disproven. Not by argument, not by action."

"So it is in principle impossible to force someone out of Berkeley's ideas by argument."

"Absolutely."

"But you're missing something. What is it you've been talking to me about?"

"A world where mind and matter interpenetrate, and the organic, and there are many dimensions to life—"

"And if you're just falling further into a trap to logically argue, wouldn't it do something fundamentally unity-like to step into another dimension?"

Archon was silent.

Ployon said, "I understand that it would demonstrate a profound misunderstanding in our world... but wouldn't it say something equally profound in that world?"

Archon was stunned.

Ployon was silent for a long time.

Then Ployon said, "When are you going to refute Berkeley?"

Since the dawn of time, those who have walked the earth have looked up into the starry sky and wondered. They have asked, "What is the universe, and who are we?" "What are the woods?" "Where did this all come from?" "Is there life after death?" "What is the meaning of our existence?" The march of time has brought civilization, and with that, science. And science allows us to answer these age-old human questions.

That, at least, is the account of it that people draw now. But the truth is much more interesting.

Science is an ingenious mechanism to test guesses about mechanisms and behavior of the universe, and it is phenomenally powerful in that arena. Science can try to explain how the Heavens move, but it isn't the sort of thing to explain why there are Heavens that move that way—science can also describe how the Heavens have moved and reached their present position, but not the "Why?" behind it. Science can describe how to make technology to make life more convenient, but not "What is the meaning of life?" Trying to ask science to answer "Why?" (or for that matter, "Who?" or any other truly interesting question besides "How?") is a bit like putting a book on a scale and asking the scale, "What does this book mean?" And there are indeed some people who will accept the scale's answer, 429.7425 grams, as the definitive answer to what the book means, and all the better because it is so *precise*.

But to say that much and then stop is to paint a deceptive picture. *Very* deceptive. Why?

Science at that point had progressed more than at any point in history, and its effects were being felt around the world. And science enjoyed both a profound prestige and a profound devotion. Many people did not know what "understanding nature" could mean besides "learning scientific descriptions of nature," which was a bit like not knowing what "understanding your best friend" could mean besides "learning the biochemical building blocks of your friend's body."

All this and more is true, yet this is not the most important truth. This was the Middle Age between ancient and human society and the technological, and in fact it was the early Middle Age. People were beginning to develop real technologies, the seeds of technology we would recognize, and could in primitive fashion jack into such a network as existed then. But all of this was embraced in a society that was ancient, ancient beyond measure. As you may have guessed, it is an error to misunderstand that society as an inexplicably crude version of real technological society. It is a fundamental error.

To really understand this society, you need to understand not its technology, but the sense in which it was ancient. I will call it 'medieval', but you must understand that the ancient element in that society outweighs anything we would recognize.

And even this is deceptive, not because a single detail is wrong, but because it is abstract. I will tell you about certain parts in an abstract fashion, but you must

understand that in this world's thinking the concrete comes *before* the abstract. I will do my best to tell a story—not as they would tell one, because that would conceal as much as it would reveal, but taking their way of telling stories and adapting it so we can see what is going on.

For all of their best efforts to spoil it, all of them live on an exquisite garden in the thin film where the emptiness of space meets the barrier of rock—there is a nest, a cradle where they are held tightly, and even if some of those who are most trying to be scientific want to flee into the barren wastes of space and other planets hostile to their kind of life. And this garden itself has texture, an incredible spectrum of texture along its surface. Place is itself significant, and I cannot capture what this story would have been like had it been placed in Petaling Jaya in Malaysia, or Paris in France, or Cambridge in England. What are these? I don't know... I can say that Petaling Jaya, Paris, and Cambridge are cities, but that would leave you knowing as much as you knew 5 milliseconds before I told you. And Malaysia, France, and England are countries, and now you know little besides being able to guess that a country is somehow capable of containing a city. Which is barely more than you knew before; the fact is that there is something very different between Petaling Jaya, Paris, and Cambridge. They have different wildlife and different places with land and water, but that is not nearly so interesting as the difference in people. I could say that people learn different skills, if I wanted to be very awkward and uninformative, but... the best way of saying it is that in our world, because there is nothing keeping minds apart... In that world, people have been separate so they don't even speak the same language. They almost have separate worlds. There is something common to all medievals, beyond what technology may bring, and people in other cities could find deep bonds with this story, but... Oh, there are many more countries than those I listed, and these countries have so many cities that you could spend your whole life travelling between cities and never see all of them. No, our world doesn't have this wealth. Wealthy as it is, it doesn't come close.

Petaling Jaya is a place of warm rainstorms, torrents of water falling from the sky, a place where a little stream of unscented water flows by the road, even if such a beautiful "open sewer" is not appreciated. Petaling Jaya is a place where people are less aware of time than in Cambridge or Paris and yet a place where people understand time better, because of reasons that are subtle and hard to understand. It draws people from three worlds in the grandeur that is Asia, and each of them brings treasures. The Chinese bring with them the practice of calling adults "Uncle" or "Aunt", my father's brother or my father's sister or my mother's brother or my mother's sister, which is to say, addresses them not only by saying that there is something great about them, but they are "tied by blood"—a bond that I do not know how to explain, save to say that ancestry and origins are not the mechanism of how they came to be, or at least not just the mechanism of how they came to be. Ancestry and origins tell of the substance of who

they are, and that is one more depth that cannot exist in our world with matter and mind separate. The Indians and Bumi Putras—if it is really only them, which is far from true—live a life of friendship and hospitality, which are human treasures that shine in them. What is hospitality, you ask? That is hard to answer; it seems that anything I can say will be deceptive. It means that if you have a space, and if you allow someone in that space, you serve that person, caring for every of his needs. That is a strange virtue—and it will sound stranger when I say that this is not endured as inexpedient, but something where people want to call others. Is it an economic exchange? That is beside the point; these things are at once the shadow cast by real hospitality, and at the same time the substance of hospitality itself, and you need to understand men before you can understand it. What about friendship? Here I am truly at a loss. I can only say that in the story that I am about to tell, what happens is the highest form of friendship.

Paris is, or at least has been, a place with a liquid, a drug, that temporarily causes a pleasant mood while changing behavior and muddling a person's thoughts. But to say that misses what that liquid is, in Paris or much else. To some it is very destructive, and the drug is dangerous if it is handled improperly. But that is the hinge to something that—in our world, no pleasure is ever dangerous. You or I have experienced pleasures that these minds could scarcely dream of. We can have whatever pleasure we want at any time. And in a very real sense no pleasure *means* anything. But in their world, with its weaker pleasures, every pleasure is connected to something. And this liquid, this pleasure, if taken too far, destroys people—which is a hinge, a doorway to something. It means that they need to learn a self-mastery in using this liquid, and in using it many of them forge a beauty in themselves that affects all of life. And they live beautiful lives. Beautiful in many ways. They are like Norsemen of ages past, who sided with the good powers, not because the good powers were going to win, but because they wanted to side with the good powers and fight alongside them when the good powers lost and chaos ruled. It is a tragic beauty, and the tragedy is all the more real because it is unneeded, but it is beauty, and it is a beauty that could not exist if they knew the strength of good. And I have not spoken of the beauty of the language in Paris, with its melody and song, or of the artwork and statues, the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur, or indeed of the tapestry that makes up the city.

Cambridge is what many of them would call a "medieval" village, meaning that it has stonework that looks to its members like the ancient world's architecture. To them this is a major difference; the ancient character of the buildings to them overwhelms the fact that they are buildings. To that medieval world, both the newest buildings and the ones they considered "medieval" had doorways, stairwells, rooms, windows, and passages. You or I would be struck by the ancient character of the oldest and newest buildings and the ancient character of the life they serve. But to these medievals, the fact that a doorway was built out of machine-made materials instead of having long ago been

shaped from stone takes the door—the door—from being ancient to being a new kind of thing! And so in the quaintest way the medievals consider Cambridge a "medieval" village, not because they were all medievals, but because the ancient dimension to architecture was more ancient to them than the equally ancient ways of constructing spaces that were reflected in the "new" buildings. There was more to it than that, but...

That was not the most interesting thing about them. I know you were going to criticize me for saying that hospitality was both a human treasure and something that contributed to the uniqueness of Petaling Jaya, but I need to do the same thing again. Politeness is... how can I describe it? Cynics describe politeness as being deceit, something where you learn a bunch of standard things to do and have to use them to hide the fact that you're offended, or bored, or want to leave, or don't like someone. And all of that is true—and deceptive. A conversation will politely begin with one person saying, "Hi, Barbara, how are you?" And Barbara will say, "Fine, George, how are you?" "Fine!" And the exact details seem almost arbitrary between cultures. This specific interaction is, on the surface, superficial and not necessarily true: people usually say they feel fine whether or not they really feel fine at all. And so politeness can be picked apart in this fashion, as if there's nothing else there, but there is. Saying "How are you?" opens a door, a door of concern. In one sense, what is given is very small. But if a person says, "I feel rotten," the other person is likely to listen. Barbara might only "give" George a little bit of chatter, but if he were upset, she would comfort him; if he were physically injured, she would call an ambulance to give him medical help; if he were hungry, she might buy him something to eat. But he only wants a little chat, so she only gives him a little chat—which is not really a little thing at all, but I'm going to pretend that it's small. Politeness stems from a concern for others, and is in actuality quite deep. The superficial "Hi, how are you?" is really not superficial at all. It is connected to a much deeper concern, and the exterior of rules is connected to a heart of concern. And Cambridge, which is a place of learning, and has buildings more ancient than what these medieval people usually see, is perhaps most significantly distinguished by its politeness.

But I have not been telling you a story. These observations may not be completely worthless, but they are still not a dynamic story. The story I'm about to tell you is not in Petaling Jaya, nor in Paris, nor in Cambridge, nor in any of thousands of other worlds. And I would like to show you what the medieval society looks like in action. And so let's look at Peter.

Peter, after a long and arduous trek, opened the car door, got out, stretched, looked at the vast building before him, and listened as his father said, "We've done it! The rest should be easy, at least for today." Then Peter smiled, and smashed his right thumb in the car door.

Then suddenly they moved—their new plan was to get to a hospital. Not much later, Peter was in the Central DuPage Hospital emergency room, watching people who

came in after him be treated before him—not because they had more clout, but because they had worse injuries. The building was immense—something like one of our biological engineering centers, but instead of engineering bodies according to a mind's specification, this used science to restore bodies that had been injured and harmed, and reduce people's suffering. And it was incredibly primitive; at its best, it helped the bodies heal itself. But you must understand that even if these people were far wealthier than most others in their tiny garden, they had scant resources by our standard, and they made a major priority to restore people whose bodies had problems. (If you think about it, this tells something about how they view the value of each body.) Peter was a strong and healthy young man, and it had been a while since he'd been in a hospital. He was polite to the people who were helping him, even though he wished he were anywhere else.

You're wondering why he deliberately smashed his thumb? Peter didn't deliberately smash his thumb. He was paying attention to several other things and shoved the door close while his thumb was in its path. His body is not simply a device controlled by his mind; they interact, and his mind can't do anything he wishes it to do—he can't add power to it. He thinks by working with a mind that operates with real limitations and can overlook something in excitement—much like his body. If he achieves something, he doesn't just requisition additional mental power. He struggles within the capabilities of his own mind, and that means that when he achieves something with his mind, he *achieves* something. Yes, in a way that you or I cannot. Not only is his body in a very real sense more real to him than any of the bodies you or I have jacked into and swapped around, but his mind is more real. I'm not sure how to explain it.

Peter arrived for the second time well after check-in time, praying to be able to get in. After a few calls with a network that let him connect with other minds while keeping his body intact, a security officer came in, expressed sympathy about his bandaged thumb—what does 'sympathy' mean? It means that you share in another person's pain and make it less—and let him up to his room. The family moved his possessions from the car to his room and made his bed in a few minutes, and by the time it was down, the security guard had called the RA, who brought Peter his keys.

It was the wee hours of the morning when Peter looked at his new home for the second time, and tough as Peter was, the pain in his thumb kept the weary man from falling asleep. He was in as much pain as he'd been in for a while. What? Which part do you want explained? Pain is when the mind is troubled because the body is injured; it is a warning that the body needs to be taken care of. No, he can't turn it off just because he thinks it's served his purpose; again, you're not understanding the intimate link between mind and body. And the other thing... sleep is... Their small globe orbits a little star, and it spins as it turns. At any time, part of the planet faces the star, the sun, and part faces

away, and on the globe, it is as if a moving wall comes, and all is light, then another wall comes, and it is dark. The globe has a rhythm of light and dark, a rhythm of day and night, and people live in intimate attunement to this rhythm. The ancients moved about when it was light and slept when it was dark—to sleep, at its better moments, is to come fatigued and have body and mind rejuvenate themselves to awaken full of energy. The wealthier medievals have the ability to see by mechanical light, to awaken when they want and fall asleep when they want—and yet they are still attuned, profoundly attuned, to this natural cycle and all that goes with it. For that matter, Peter can stick a substance into his body that will push away the pain—and yet, for all these artificial escapes, medievals feel pain and usually take care of their bodies by heeding it, and medievals wake more or less when it is light and sleep more or less when it is dark. And they don't think of pain as attunement to their bodies—most of them wish they couldn't feel pain, and certainly don't think of pain as good—nor do more than a few of them think in terms of waking and sleeping to a natural rhythm... but so much of the primeval way of being human is so difficult to dislodge for the medievals.

He awoke when the light was ebbing, and after some preparations set out, wandering this way and that until he found a place to eat. The pain was much duller, and he made his way to a selection of different foods—meant not only to nourish but provide a pleasant taste—and sat down at a table. There were many people about; he would not eat in a cell by himself, but at a table with others in a great hall.

A young man said, "Hi, I'm John." Peter began to extend his hand, then looked at his white bandaged thumb and said, "Excuse me for not shaking your hand. I am Peter."

A young woman said, "I'm Mary. I saw you earlier and was hoping to see you more."

Peter wondered about something, then said, "I'll drink for that," reached with his right hand, grabbed a glass vessel full of carbonated water with sugar, caffeine, and assorted unnatural ingredients, and then winced in pain, spilling the fluid on the table.

Everybody at the table moved. A couple of people dodged the flow of liquid; others stopped what they were doing, rushing to take earth toned objects made from the bodies of living trees (napkins), which absorbed the liquid and were then shipped to be preserved with other unwanted items. Peter said, "I keep forgetting I need to be careful about my thumb," smiled, grabbed another glass with fluid cows had labored to create, until his wet left hand slipped and he spilled the organic fluid all over his food.

Peter stopped, sat back, and then laughed for a while. "This is an interesting beginning to my college education."

Mary said, "I noticed you managed to smash your thumb in a car door without saying any words you regret. What else has happened?"

Peter said, "Nothing great; I had to go to the ER, where I had to wait, before they could do something about my throbbing thumb. I got back at 4:00 AM and couldn't get

to sleep for a long time because I was in so much pain. Then I overslept my alarm and woke up naturally in time for dinner. How about you?"

Mary thought for a second about the people she met. Peter could see the sympathy on her face.

John said, "Wow. That's nasty."

Peter said, "I wish we couldn't feel pain. Have you thought about how nice it would be to live without pain?"

Mary said, "I'd like that."

John said, "Um..."

Mary said, "What?"

John said, "Actually, there are people who don't feel pain, and there's a name for the condition. You've heard of it."

Peter said, "I haven't heard of that before."

John said, "Yes you have. It's called leprosy."

Peter said, "What do you mean by 'leprosy'? I thought leprosy was a disease that ravaged the body."

John said, "It is. But that is only because it destroys the ability to feel pain. The way it works is very simple. We all get little nicks and scratches, and because they hurt, we show extra sensitivity. Our feet start to hurt after a long walk, so without even thinking about it we... shift things a little, and keep anything really bad from happening. That pain you are feeling is your body's way of asking room to heal so that the smashed thumbnail (or whatever it is) that hurts so terribly now won't leave you permanently maimed. Back to feet, a leprosy patient will walk exactly the same way and get wounds we'd never even think of for taking a long walk. All the terrible injuries that make leprosy a feared disease happen only because leprosy keeps people from feeling pain."

Peter looked at his thumb, and his stomach growled.

John said, "I'm full. Let me get a drink for you, and then I'll help you drink it."

Mary said, "And I'll get you some dry food. We've already eaten; it must—"

Peter said, "Please, I've survived much worse. It's just a bit of pain."

John picked up a clump of wet napkins and threatened to throw it at Peter before standing up and walking to get something to drink. Mary followed him.

Peter sat back and just laughed.

John said, "We have some time free after dinner; let's just wander around campus."

They left the glass roofed building and began walking around. There were vast open spaces between buildings. They went first to "Blanchard", a building they described as "looking like a castle." Blanchard, a tall ivory colored edifice, built of rough limestone, which overlooked a large expanse adorned with a carefully tended and living carpet, had been modelled after a building in a much older institution called

Oxford, and... this is probably the time to explain certain things about this kind of organization.

You and I simply requisition skills. If I were to imagine what it would mean to educate those people—or at least give skills; the concept of 'education' is slightly different from either inserting skills or inserting knowledge into a mind, and I don't have the ability to explain exactly what the distinction is here, but I will say that it is significant—then the obvious way is to simply make a virtual place on the network where people can be exposed to knowledge. And that model would become phenomenally popular within a few years; people would pursue an education that was a niche on such a network as they had, and would be achieved by weaving in these computer activities with the rest of their lives.

But this place preserved an ancient model of education, where disciples would come to live in a single place, which was in a very real sense its own universe, and meet in ancient, face-to-face community with their mentors and be shaped in more than what they know and can do. Like so many other things, it was ancient, using computers here and there and even teaching people the way of computers while avoiding what we would assume comes with computers.

But these people liked that building, as contrasted to buildings that seemed more modern, because it seemed to convey an illusion of being in another time, and let you forget that you were in a modern era.

After some wandering, Peter and those he had just met looked at the building, each secretly pretending to be in a more ancient era, and went through an expanse with a fountain in the center, listened to some music, and ignored clouds, trees, clusters of people who were sharing stories, listening, thinking, joking, and missing home, in order to come to something exotic, namely a rotating platform with a mockup of a giant mastodon which had died before the end of the last ice age, and whose bones had been unearthed in a nearby excavation. Happy to have seen something exotic, they ignored buildings which have a human-pleasing temperature the year round, other people excited to have seen new friends, toys which sailed through the air on the same principles as an airplane's wings, a place where artistic pieces were being drawn into being, a vast, stonehard pavement to walk, and a spectrum of artefacts for the weaving of music.

Their slow walk was interrupted when John looked at a number on a small machine he had attached to his wrist, and interpreted it to mean that it was time for the three of them to stop their leisured enjoyment of the summer night and move with discomfort and haste to one specific building—they all were supposed to go to the building called Fischer. After moving over and shifting emotionally from being relaxed and joyful to being bothered and stressed, they found that they were all on a brother and sister floor, and met their leaders.

Paul, now looking considerably more coherent than when he procured Peter's keys, announced, "Now, for the next exercise, I'll be passing out toothpicks. I want you to stand in two lines, guy-girl-guy-girl, and pass a lifesaver down the line. If your team passes the lifesaver to the end first, you win. Oh, and if you drop the lifesaver your team has to start over, so don't drop it."

People shuffled, and shortly Peter was standing in line, looking over the shoulder of a girl he didn't know, and silently wishing he weren't playing this game. He heard a voice say, "Go!" and then had an intermittent view of a tiny sugary torus passing down the line and the two faces close to each other trying simultaneously to get close enough to pass the lifesaver, and control the clumsy, five centimeter long toothpicks well enough to transfer the candy. Sooner than he expected the girl turned around, almost losing the lifesaver on her toothpick, and then began a miniature dance as they clumsily tried to synchronize the ends of their toothpicks. This took unpleasantly long, and Peter quickly banished a thought of "This is almost kissing! That can't be what's intended." Then he turned around, trying both to rush and not to rush at the same time, and repeated the same dance with the young woman standing behind him—Mary! It was only after she turned away that Peter realized her skin had changed from its alabaster tone to pale rose.

Their team won, and there was a short break as the next game was organized. Peter heard bits of conversation: "This has been a bummer; I've gotten two papercuts this week." "—and then I—" "What instruments do you—" "I'm from France too! *Tu viens de Paris?*" "Really? You—" Everybody seemed to be chattering, and Peter wished he could be in one of—actually, several of those conversations at once.

Paul's voice cut in and said, "For this next activity we are going to form a human circle. With your team, stand in a circle, and everybody reach in and grab another hand with each hand. Then hold on tight; when I say, "Go," you want to untangle yourselves, without letting go. The first team to untangle themselves wins!"

Peter reached in, and found each of his hands clasped in a solid, masculine grip. Then the race began, and people jostled and tried to untangle themselves. This was a laborious process and, one by one, every other group freed itself, while Peter's group seemed stuck on—someone called and said, "I think we're knotted!" As people began to thin out, Paul looked with astonishment and saw that they were indeed knotted. "A special prize to them, too, for managing the best tangle!"

"And now, we'll have a three-legged race! Gather into pairs, and each two of you take a burlap sack. Then—" Paul continued, and with every game, the talk seemed to flow more. When the finale finished, Peter found himself again with John and Mary and heard the conversations flowing around him: "Really? You too?" "But you don't understand. Hicks have a slower pace of life; we enjoy things without all the things you city dwellers need for entertainment. And we learn resourceful ways to—" "—and only at

Wheaton would the administration forbid dancing while requiring the games we just played and—" Then Peter lost himself in a conversation that continued long into the night. He expected to be up at night thinking about all the beloved people he left at home, but Peter was too busy thinking about John's and Mary's stories.

The next day Peter woke up when his machine played a hideous sound, and groggily trudged to the dining hall to eat some chemically modified grains and drink water that had been infused with traditionally roasted beans. There were pills he could have taken that would have had the effect he was looking for, but he savored the beverage, and after sitting at a table without talking, bounced around from beautiful building to beautiful building, seeing sights for the first time, and wishing he could avoid all that to just get to his advisor.

Peter found the appropriate hallway, wandered around nervously until he found a door with a yellowed plaque that said "Julian Johnson," knocked once, and pushed the door open. A white-haired man said, "Peter Jones? How are you? Do come in... What can I do for you?"

Peter pulled out a sheet of paper, an organic surface used to retain colored trails and thus keep small amounts of information inscribed so that the "real" information is encoded in a personal way. No, they don't need to be trained to have their own watermark in this encoding.

Peter looked down at the paper for a moment and said, "I'm sorry I'm late. I need you to write what courses I should take and sign here. Then I can be out of your way."

The old man sat back, drew a deep breath, and relaxed into a fatherly smile. Peter began to wonder if his advisor was going to say anything at all. Then Prof. Johnson motioned towards an armchair, as rich and luxurious as his own, and then looked as if he remembered something and offered a bowl full of candy. "Sit down, sit down, and make yourself comfortable. May I interest you in candy?" He picked up an engraved metal bowl and held it out while Peter grabbed a few Lifesavers.

Prof. Johnson sat back, silent for a moment, and said, "I'm sorry I'm out of butterscotch; that always seems to disappear. Please sit down, and tell me about yourself. We can get to that form in a minute. One of the privileges of this job is that I get to meet interesting people. Now, where are you from?"

Peter said, "I'm afraid there's not much that's interesting about me. I'm from a small town downstate that doesn't have anything to distinguish itself. My amusements have been reading, watching the cycle of the year, oh, and running. Not much interesting in that. Now which classes should I take?"

Prof. Johnson sat back and smiled, and Peter became a little less tense. "You run?"

Peter said, "Yes; I was hoping to run on the track this afternoon, after the lecture. I've always wanted to run on a real track."

The old man said, "You know, I used to run myself, before I became an official Old Geezer and my orthopaedist told me my knees couldn't take it. So I have to content myself with swimming now, which I've grown to love. Do you know about the Prairie Path?"

Peter said, "No, what's that?"

Prof. Johnson said, "Years ago, when I ran, I ran through the areas surrounding the College—there are a lot of beautiful houses. And, just south of the train tracks with the train you can hear now, there's a path before you even hit the street. You can run, or bike, or walk, on a path covered with fine white gravel, with trees and prairie plants on either side. It's a lovely view." He paused, and said, "Any ideas what you want to do after Wheaton?"

Peter said, "No. I don't even know what I want to major in."

Prof. Johnson said, "A lot of students don't know what they want to do. Are you familiar with Career Services? They can help you get an idea of what kinds of things you like to do."

Peter looked at his watch and said, "It's chapel time."

Prof. Johnson said, "Relax. I can write you a note." Peter began to relax again, and Prof. Johnson continued, "Now you like to read. What do you like to read?"

Peter said, "Newspapers and magazines, and I read this really cool book called *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Oh, and I like the Bible."

Prof. Johnson said, "I do too. What do you like about it most?"

"I like the stories in the Old Testament."

"One general tip: here at Wheaton, we have different kinds of professors—"

Peter said, "Which ones are best?"

Prof. Johnson said, "Different professors are best for different students. Throughout your tenure at Wheaton, ask your friends and learn which professors have teaching styles that you learn well with and mesh well with. Consider taking other courses from a professor you like. Now we have a lot of courses which we think expose you to new things and stretch you—people come back and see that these courses are best. Do you like science?"

"I like it; I especially liked a physics lab."

Prof. Johnson took a small piece of paper from where it was attached to a stack with a strange adhesive that had "failed" as a solid adhesive, but provided a uniquely useful way to make paper that could be attached to a surface with a slight push and then be detached with a gentle pull, remarkably enough without damage to the paper or the surface. He began to think, and flip through a book, using a technology thousands of years old at its heart. "Have you had calculus?" Prof. Johnson restrained himself from launching into a discussion of the grand, Utopian vision for "calculus" as it was first imagined and how different a conception it had from anything that would be considered

"mathematics" today. Or should he go into that? He wavered, and then realized Peter had answered his question. "Ok," Prof. Johnson said, "the lab physics class unfortunately requires that you've had calculus. Would you like to take calculus now? Have you had geometry, algebra, and trigonometry?"

Peter said, "Yes, I did, but I'd like a little break from that now. Maybe I could take calculus next semester."

"Fair enough. You said you liked to read."

"Magazines and newspapers."

"Those things deal with the unfolding human story. I wonder if you'd like to take world civilization now, or a political science course."

"History, but why study world history? Why can't I just study U.S. history?"

Prof. Johnson said, "The story of our country is intertwined with that of our world. I think you might find that some of the things in world history are a lot closer to home than you think—and we have some real storytellers in our history department."

"That sounds interesting. What else?"

"The Theology of Culture class is one many students find enjoyable, and it helps build a foundation for Old and New Testament courses. Would you be interested in taking it for A quad or B quad, the first or second half of the semester?"

"Could I do both?"

"I wish I could say yes, but this course only lasts half the semester. The other half you could take Foundations of Wellness—you could do running as homework!"

"I think I'll do that first, and then Theology of Culture. That should be new," Peter said, oblivious to how tightly connected he was to theology and culture. "What else?"

Prof. Johnson said, "We have classes where people read things that a lot of people have found really interesting. Well, that could describe several classes, but I was thinking about Classics of Western Literature or Literature of the Modern World."

Peter said, "Um... Does Classics of Western Literature cover ancient and medieval literature, and Literature of the Modern World cover literature that isn't Western? Because if they do, I'm not sure I could connect with it."

Prof. Johnson relaxed into his seat, a movable support that met the contours of his body. Violating convention somewhat, he had a chair for Peter that was as pleasant to rest in as his own. "You know, a lot of people think that. But you know what?"

Peter said, "What?"

"There is something human that crosses cultures. That is why the stories have been selected. Stories written long ago, and stories written far away, can have a lot to connect with."

"Ok. How many more courses should I take?"

"You're at 11 credits now; you probably want 15. Now you said that you like *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. I'm wondering if you would also like a philosophy course."

Peter said, "*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is... I don't suppose there are any classes that use that. Or are there? I've heard Pirsig isn't given his fair due by philosophers."

Prof. Johnson said, "If you approach one of our philosophy courses the way you approach *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, I think you'll profit from the encounter. I wonder if our Issues and Worldviews in Philosophy might interest you. I'm a big fan of thinking worldviewishly, and our philosophers have some pretty interesting things to say."

Peter asked, "What does 'worldviewishly' mean?"

Prof. Johnson said, "It means thinking in terms of worldviews. A worldview is the basic philosophical framework that gives shape to how we view the world. Our philosophers will be able to help you understand the basic issues surrounding worldviews and craft your own Christian worldview. You may find this frees you from the Enlightenment's secularizing influence—and if you don't know what the Enlightenment is now, you will learn to understand it, and its problems, and how you can be free of them." He spoke with the same simplistic assurance of artificial intelligence researchers who, seeing the power of computers and recognizing how simple certain cognitive feats are for humans, assumed that it was only a matter of time that artificial intelligence would "bridge the gap"—failing to recognize the tar pit of the peaks of intelligence that seem so deceptively simple and easy to human phenomenology. For computers could often defeat the best human players at chess—as computerlike a human skill as one might reasonably find—but deciphering the language of a children's book or walking through an unfamiliar room, so easy to humans, seemed more difficult for computers the more advanced research began. Some researchers believed that the artificial intelligence project had uncovered the non-obvious significance of a plethora of things humans take for granted—but the majority still believed that what seemed trivial for humans must be the sort of thinking a computer can do, because there is no other kind of thinking... and an isomorphic simplicity, an apparent and deceptive simplicity much like this one, made it seem as if ideas were all that really mattered: not all that existed, but all that had an important influence. Prof. Johnson did not consciously understand how the Enlightenment worldview—or, more accurately, the Enlightenment—created the possibility of seeing worldviews that way, nor did he see how strange the idea of crafting one's own worldview would seem to pre-Enlightenment Christians. He did not realize that his own kindness towards Peter was not simply because he agreed with certain beliefs, but because of a deep and many-faceted way in which he had walked for decades, and walked well. It was with perfect

simplicity that he took this way for granted, as artificial intelligence researchers took for granted all the things which humans did so well they seemed to come naturally, and framed worldviewish thought as carrying with it everything he assumed from his way.

Peter said, "Ok. Well, I'll take those classes. It was good to meet you."

Prof. Johnson looked over a document that was the writeup of a sort of game, in which one had a number of different rooms that were of certain sizes, and certain classes had requirements about what kind of room they needed for how long, and the solution involved not only solving the mathematical puzzle, but meeting with teachers and caring for their concerns, longstanding patterns, and a variety of human dimensions derisively labelled as "political." Prof. Johnson held in his hands the schedule with the official solution for that problem, and guided Peter to an allowable choice of class sections, taking several different actions that were considered "boring paperwork."

Prof. Johnson said, "I enjoyed talking with you. Please do take some more candy—put a handful in your pocket or something. I just want to make one more closing comment. I want to see you succeed. Wheaton wants to see you succeed. There are some rough points and problems along the way, and if you bring them to me I can work with them and try to help you. If you want to talk with your RA or our chaplain or someone else, that's fine, but please... my door is *always* open. And it was good to meet you too! Goodbye!"

Peter walked out, completely relaxed.

The next activity, besides nourishing himself with lunch (and eating, sleeping, and many other activities form a gentle background rhythm to the activities people are more conscious of. I will not describe each time Peter eats and sleeps, even though the 100th time in the story he eats with his new friends is as significant as the first, because I will be trying to help you see it their way), requires some explanation.

The term "quest," to the people here, is associated with an image of knights in armor, and a body of literature from writers like Chretien de Troyes and Sir Thomas Mallory who described King Arthur and his knights. In Chretien de Troyes, the knight goes off in various adventures, often quests where he is attempting different physical feats. In Sir Thomas Mallory, a new understanding of quests is introduced, in the quest for the holy grail—a legendary treasure which I cannot here explain save to say that it profoundly altered the idea of a quest, and the quest took a large enough place in many people's consciousness that it is used as a metaphor of the almost unattainable object of an ultimate pursuit (so that physicists would say that a grand unified theory which crystallizes all physical laws into a few simple equations is the "holy grail of physics"), and that the holy grail is itself in the shadow of a greater treasure, and this treasure was one many people in fact had possessed (some after great struggle, while others had never known a time when they were without it). In Mallory in particular the quest can be more than a physical task; most of Arthur's knights could not reach the holy grail

because of—they weren't physical blemishes and they weren't really mental blemishes either, but what they were is hard to say. The whole topic (knights, quests, the holy grail...) connects to something about that world that is beyond my ability to convey; suffice it to say that it is connected with one more dimension we don't have here.

Peter, along with another group of students, went out on a quest. The object of this quest was to acquire seven specific items, on conditions which I will explain below:

1. "A dog biscuit." In keeping with a deeply human trait, the food they prepare is not simply what they judge adequate to sustain the body, but meant to give pleasure, in a sense adorned, because eating is not to them simply a biological need. They would also get adorned food to give pleasure to organisms they kept, including dogs, which include many different breeds which in turn varied from being natural sentries protecting territories to a welcoming committee of one which would give a visitor an exuberant greeting just because he was there.
2. "An M16 rifle's spent shell casing." That means the used remnant after... wait a little bit. I need to go a lot farther back to explain this one. You will find something deceptively familiar in that in that universe, people strategically align resources and then attack their opponents, usually until a defeat is obvious. And if you look for what is deceptive, it will be a frustrating search, because even if the technologies involved are primitive, it is a match of strategy, tactics, and opposition. What makes it different is that this is not a recreation or an art form, but something many of them consider the worst evil that can happen, or among the worst. The resources that are destroyed, the bodies—in our world, it is simply what is involved in the game, but many of them consider it an eternal loss.

Among the people we will be meeting, people may be broken down into "pacifists" who believe that war is always wrong, and people who instead of being pure pacifists try to have a practical way of pursuing pacifist goals: the disagreement is not whether one should have a war for amusement's sake (they both condemn that), but what one should do when not having a war looks even more destructive than having a war. And that does not do justice to either side of the debate, but what I want to emphasize that to both of them this is not simply a game or one form of recreation; it is something to avoid at almost any cost.

A knight was someone who engaged in combat, an elite soldier riding an animal called a horse. In Chretien de Troye's day and Mallory's day, the culture was such that winning a fight was important, but fighting according to "chivalry" was more important. Among other things, chivalry meant that they would only use simple weapons based on mechanical principles—no poison—and they wouldn't even use weapons with projectiles, like arrows and (armor piercing) crossbow bolts. In

practice that only meant rigid piercing and cutting weapons, normally swords and spears. And there was a lot more. A knight was to protect women and children.

The form that chivalry took in Peter's day allowed projectile weapons, although poison was still not allowed, along with biological, thermonuclear, and other weapons which people did not wish to see in war, and the fight to disfigure the tradition's understanding women had accorded them meant that women could fight and be killed like men, although people worked to keep children out of warfare, and in any case the "Geneva Convention", as the code of chivalry was called, maintained a sharp distinction between combatants and non-combatants, the latter of which were to be protected.

The specific projectile weapon carried by most members of the local army was called an M16 rifle, which fired surprisingly small .22 bullets—I say "surprisingly" because if you were a person fighting against them and you were hit, you would be injured but quite probably not killed.

This was intentional. (Yes, they knew how to cause an immediate kill.)

Part of it is the smaller consideration that if you killed an enemy soldier immediately, you took one soldier out of action; on the other hand, if you wounded an enemy soldier, you took three soldiers out of action. But this isn't the whole reason. The much bigger part of the reason is that their sense of chivalry (if it was really just chivalry; they loved their enemies) meant that even in their assaults they tried to subdue with as little killing as possible.

There were people training with the army in that community (no, not Peter; Peter was a pure pacifist) who trained, with M16 rifles, not because they wanted to fight, but as part of a not entirely realistic belief that if they trained hard enough, their achievement would deter people who would go to war. And the "Crusader battalion" (the Crusaders were a series of people who fought to defend Peter's spiritual ancestors from an encroaching threat that would have destroyed them) had a great sense of chivalry, even if none of them used the word "chivalry".

3. "A car bumper." A car bumper is a piece of armor placed on the front and back of cars so that they can sustain low-velocity collisions without damage. (At higher velocities, newer cars are designed to serve as a buffer so that "crumple zones" will be crushed, absorbing enough of the impact so that the "passenger cage" reduces injuries sustained by people inside; this is part of a broader cultural bent towards minimizing preventable death because of what they believe about one human life.) Not only is a car bumper an unusual item to give, it is heavy and

awkward enough that people tend not to carry such things with them—even the wealthy ones tend to be extraordinarily lightly encumbered.

4. "An antique." It is said, "The problem with England is that they believe 100 miles is a long distance, and the problem with America is that they believe 100 years is a long time." An antique—giving the rule without all the special cases and exceptions, which is to say giving the rule as if it were not human—is something over 100 years old. To understand this, you must appreciate that it does not include easily available rocks, many of which are millions or billions of years old, and it is not based on the elementary particles that compose something (one would have to search hard to find something not made out of elementary particles almost as old as the universe). The term "antique" connotes rarity, and in a sense something out of the ordinary; that people's way is concerned with "New! New! New!" and it is hard to find an artifact that was created more than 100 years ago, which is what was intended. This quest is all the more interesting because there is an "unwritten rule" that items will be acquired by asking, not by theft or even purchase—and, as most antiques are valuable, it would be odd for someone you've just met—and therefore with whom you have only the general human bond but not the special bond of friendship—to give you such an item, even if most of the littler things in life are acquired economically while the larger things can only be acquired by asking.
5. "A note from a doctor, certifying that you do not have bubonic plague." Intended as a joke, this refers to a health, safeguarded by their medicine, which keeps them from a dreadful disease which tore apart societies some centuries ago: that sort of thing wasn't considered a live threat because of how successful their medicine was (which is why it could be considered humorous).
6. "A burning piece of paper which no one in your group lit. (Must be presented in front of Fischer and not brought into the building.)" This presents a physical challenge, in that there is no obvious way to transport a burning piece of paper—or what people characteristically envision as a burning piece of paper—from almost anywhere else to in front of Fischer.
7. "A sheet of paper with a fingerpaint handprint from a kindergartener." "Kindergarten" was the first year of their formal education, and a year of preparation before students were ready to enter their first grade. What did this society teach at its first, required year? Did it teach extraordinarily abstract equations, or cosmological theory, or literary archetypes, or how to use a lathe? All of these could be taught later on, and for that matter there is reason to value all of them. But the very beginning held something different. It taught people to

take their turn and share; it taught people "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," the Golden Rule by which their great Teachers crystallized so much wisdom. All of this work and play, some of the most advanced lessons they could learn, were placed, not at the end, but at the beginning of their education.

That is what kindergarten was. What was a kindergartener? The true but uninformative answer would be "a person in kindergarten."

To get past that uninformative answer, I need to stress that their minds are bound up with organic life—they did not spring, fully formed, as you and I did. In most complex organisms, there is a process that transforms a genetically complete organism of just one cell to become a mature member of the species; among humans, that process is one of the longest and most complex. During that time their minds are developing as well as their bodies; in that regard they are not simply in harmony with the natural world this society believes it is separate from... but one of its best examples.

But to say that alone is to flatten out something interesting... even more interesting than the process of biological mental development is the place that society has for something called "childhood". Not all cultures have that concept—and again I am saying "culture" without explaining what it means. I can't. Not all societies understand "childhood" as this society does; to many, a child is a smaller and less capable adult, or even worse, a nonentity. But in this culture, childhood is a distinctive time, and a child, including a kindergartener, is something special—almost a different species of mind. Their inability to healthily sustain themselves is met, not always with scorn, but with a giving of support and protection—and this is not always a grudging duty, but something that can bring joy. They are viewed as innocent, which is certainly not true, and something keeps many people from resenting them when they prove that they are not innocent by doing things that would not be tolerated if an adult did it. And the imperviousness of this belief to contrary experience is itself the shadow of the whole place of childhood as a time to play and learn and explore worlds of imagination and the things most adults take for granted. And many adults experience a special pleasure, and much more than a pleasure, from the company of children, a pleasure that is tied to something much deeper.

This pleasure shines through even a handprint left with "fingerpaints," a way of doing art reserved for children, so that this physical object is itself a symbol of all that is special about childhood, and like symbols of that world carries with it what is evoked: seeing such a handprint is a little like seeing a kindergartener.

And they were off. They stopped for a brief break and annoyedly watched the spectacle of over a hundred linked metal carts carrying a vast quantity of material, and walked in and out of the surrounding neighborhoods. Their knocks on the door met a variety of warm replies. Before long, they had a handprint from a kindergartener, a dog biscuit (and some very enthusiastic attention from a kind dog!), a note from an off-duty doctor (who did not examine them, but simply said that if they had the bubonic plague there would be buboes bulging from them in an obvious way), a cigarette lighter and a sheet of paper (unlit), a twisted bumper (which Peter surprised people by flipping over his shoulder), and finally a spent shell casing from a military science professor. When they climbed up "Fischer beach," John handed the paper and lighter to his RA and said, "Would you light this?" It was with an exhausted satisfaction that they went to dinner and had entirely amiable conversation with other equally students who scant minutes ago had been their competitors.

When dinner was finished, Peter and Mary sat for a while in exhausted silence, before climbing up for the next scheduled activity—but I am at a loss for how to describe the next scheduled activity. To start with, I will give a deceptive description. If you can understand this activity, you will have understood a great deal more of what is in that world that doesn't fit in ours.

Do I have to give a deceptive description, in that any description in our terms will be more or less deceptive? I wasn't trying to make that kind of philosophical point; I wasn't trying to make a philosophical point at all. I am choosing a description of the next scheduled activity that is more deceptive than it needs to be.

When students studied an academic discipline called "physics," the curriculum was an initiation into progressively stranger and more esoteric doctrines, presented at the level which students were able to receive them. Students were first taught "Newtonian mechanics" (which openly regarded as false), before being initiated into "Einstein's relativity" at the next level (which was also considered false, but was widely believed to be closer to the truth). Students experienced a "night and day" difference between Newtonian mechanics and all higher order mysteries. If you were mathematically adept enough to follow the mathematics, then Newton was easy because he agreed with good old common sense, and Einstein and even stranger mysteries were hard to understand because they turned common sense on its head. Newton was straightforward while the others were profoundly counterintuitive. So Einstein, unlike Newton, required a student to mentally engulf something quite alien to normal, common sense ways of thinking about the world around oneself. Hence one could find frustrated student remarks about, "And God said, 'Let there be light!' And there was Newton. Then the Devil howled, 'Let Einstein be!' and restored the status quo."

Under this way of experiencing physics, Newton simply added mathematical formality to what humans always knew: everything in space fit in one long and

continuous three-dimensional grid, and time could be measured almost as if it were a line, and so Einstein was simply making things more difficult and further from humans' natural perceptions when his version of a fully mathematical model softened the boundaries of space and time so that one could no longer treat it as if it had a grid for a skeleton.

Someone acquainted with the history of science might make the observation that it was not so much that Newton's mechanics were a mathematically rigorous formalization of how people experienced space and time, but that how people experienced space and time had become a hazy and non-mathematical paraphrase of Newtonian mechanics: in other words, some students some students learned Newtonian mechanics easily, not because Newtonian physics was based on common sense, but because their "common sense" had been profoundly shaped by Newtonian physics.

This seemingly pedantic distinction was deeply tied to how the organic was being extinguished in their society.

I suspect you are thinking, "What other mathematical model was it based on instead?" And that's why you're having trouble guessing the answer.

The answer is related to the organic. Someone who knew Newton and his colleagues, and what they were rebelling against, could get a sense of something very different even without understanding what besides mathematics would undergird what space meant to them. In a certain sense, Newton forcefully stated the truth, but in a deceptive way. He worked hard to forge a concept of cold matter, pointing out that nature was not human—and it was a philosophical error to think of nature as human, but it was not nearly so great as one might think. Newton and his colleagues powerfully stressed that humans were superior to the rest of the physical world (which was not human), that they were meant not simply to be a part of nature but to conquer and rule it. And in so doing they attacked an equally great truth, that not only other life but even "inanimate" matter was kin to humans—lesser kin, perhaps, but humans and the rest of the natural world formed a continuity. They obscured the wisdom that the lordship humans were to exercise was not of a despot controlling something worthless, but the mastery of the crowning jewel of a treasure they had been entrusted to them. They introduced the concept of "raw material", something as foreign to their thinking as... I can't say what our equivalent would be, because everything surrounding "raw material" is so basic to us, and what they believed instead, their organic perception, is foreign to us. They caused people to forget that, while it would be a philosophical error to literally regard the world as human, it would be much graver to believe it is fundamentally described as inert, cold matter. And even when they had succeeded in profoundly influencing their cultures, so that people consciously believed in cold matter to a large degree, vestiges of the ancient experience survived in the medieval. It is perhaps not a coincidence that hundreds of years since Newton, in Newton's own "mother tongue"

(English), the words for "matter" and "mother" both sprung from the same ancient root word.

The Newtonian conception of space had displaced to some degree the older conception of place, a conception which was less concerned with how far some place was from other different places, and more concerned with a sort of color or, to some extent, meaning. The older conception also had a place for some things which couldn't really be stated under the new conception: people would say, "You can't be in two places at once." What they meant by that was to a large degree something different, "Your body cannot be at two different spatial positions at the same time." This latter claim was deceptive, because it was true so far as it goes, but it was a very basic fact of life that people could be in two places at once. The entire point of the next scheduled activity was to be in two places at once.

Even without describing what the other place was (something which could barely be suggested even in that world) and acknowledging that the point of the activity was to be in two places at once, this description of that activity would surprise many of the people there, and disturb those who could best sense the other place. The next scheduled activity was something completely ordinary to them, a matter of fact event that held some mystery, and something that would not occur to them as being in two places at once. The activity of being present in two or more places at once was carried on, on a tacit level, even when people had learned to conflate place with mathematical position. One such activity was confused with what we do when we remember: when we remember, we recall data from storage, while they cause the past to be present. The words, "This do in remembrance of me," from a story that was ancient but preserved in the early medieval period we are looking at, had an unquestioned meaning of, "Cause me to be present by doing this," but had suffered under a quite different experience of memory, so that to some people it meant simply to go over data about a person who had been present in the past but could not be present then.

But this activity was not remembering. Or at least, it was not *just* remembering. And this leaves open the difficulty of explaining how it was ordinary to them. It was theoretically in complete continuity with the rest of their lives, although it would be more accurate to say that the rest of their lives were theoretically in complete continuity with it. This activity was in a sense the most human, and the most organic, in that in it they led the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the plants, the rocks, the mountains, and the seas in returning to the place they came from. This description would also likely astonish the people who were gathered in a painted brick room, sitting on carpet and on movable perches, and seeing through natural light mixed with flickering fluorescent lights. Not one of them was thinking about "nature."

What went on there was in a very real sense mediocre. Each activity was broken down, vulgarized, compared to what it could be—which could not obliterate what was

going on. When they were songs, they were what were called "7-11" songs, a pejorative term which meant songs with seven words repeated eleven times. There was a very real sense in which the event was diminished by the music, but even when you factor in every diminishing force, there was something going on there, something organic and more than organic, which you and I do not understand—for that matter, which many people in that world do not understand.

Archon was silent for a long time.

Ployon said, "What is it?"

Archon said, "I can't do it. I can't explain this world. All I've really been doing is taking the pieces of that world that are a bit like ours. You've been able to understand much of it because I haven't tried to convey several things that are larger than our world. 'God' is still a curious and exotic appendage that isn't connected to anything, not really; I haven't been able to explain, really explain, what it is to be male and female unities, or what masculinity and femininity are. There are a thousand things, and... I've been explaining what three-dimensional substance is to a two-dimensional world, and the way I've been doing it is to squash it into two dimensions, and make it understandable by removing from it everything that makes it three dimensional. Or almost everything..."

"How would a three dimensional being, a person from that world, explain the story?"

"But it wouldn't. A three dimensional being wouldn't collapse a cube into a square to make it easier for itself to understand; that's something someone who couldn't free itself from reading two dimensional thinking into three dimensions would do. You're stuck in two dimensions. So am I. That's why I failed, utterly failed, to explain the "brother-sister floor fellowship", the next scheduled activity. And my failure is structural. It's like I've been setting out to copy a living, moving organism by sculpturing something that looks like it out of steel. And what I've been doing is making intricate copies of its every contour, and painting the skin and fur exactly the same color, and foolishly hoping it will come alive. And this is something I can't make by genetic engineering."

"But how would someone from that world explain the story? Even if I can't understand it, I want to know."

"But people from that world don't explain stories. A story isn't something you explain; it's something that may be told, shared, but usually it is a social error to explain a story, because a story participates in human life and telling a story connects one human to another. And so it's a fundamental error to think a story is something you convey by explaining it—like engineering a robotic body for an animal so you can allow it to have a body. I have failed because I was trying something a mind could only fail at."

"Then can you tell the story, like someone from that world would tell it?"

Peter and Mary both loved to run, but for different reasons. Peter was training himself for various races; he had not joined track, as he did in high school, but there were other races. Mary ran to feel the sun and wind and rain. And, without any conscious effort, they found themselves running together down the prairie path together, and Peter clumsily learning to match his speed to hers. And, as time passed, they talked, and talked, and talked, and talked, and their runs grew longer.

When the fall break came, they both joined a group going to the northwoods of Wisconsin for a program that was half-work and half-play. And each one wrote a letter home about the other. Then Peter began his theology of culture class, and said, "This is what I want to study." Mary did not have a favorite class, at least not that she realized, until Peter asked her what her favorite class was and she said, "Literature."

When Christmas came, they went to their respective homes and spent the break thinking about each other, and they talked about this when they returned. They ended the conversation, or at least they thought they did, and then each hurried back to catch the other and say one more thing, and then the conversation turned out to last much longer, and ended with a kiss.

Valentine's Day was syrupy. It was trite enough that their more romantically inclined friends groaned, but it did not seem at all trite or syrupy to them. As Peter's last name was Patrick, he called Mary's father and prayed that St. Patrick's Day would be a momentous day for both of them.

Peter and Mary took a slow run to a nearby village, and had dinner at an Irish pub. Amidst the din, they had some hearty laughs. The waitress asked Mary, "Is there anything else that would make this night memorable?" Then Mary saw Peter on his knee, opening a jewelry box with a ring: "I love you, Mary. Will you marry me?"

Mary cried for a good five minutes before she could answer. And when she had answered, they sat in silence, a silence that overpowered the din. Then Mary wiped her eyes and they went outside.

It was cool outside, and the moon was shining brightly. Peter pulled a camera from his pocket, and said, "Stay where you are. Let me back up a bit. And hold your hand up. You look even more beautiful with that ring on your finger."

Peter's camera flashed as he took a picture, just as a drunk driver slammed into Mary. The sedan spun into a storefront, and Mary flew up into the air, landed, and broke a beer bottle with her face.

People began to come out, and in a few minutes the police and paramedics arrived. Peter somehow managed to answer the police officers' questions and to begin kicking himself for being too stunned to act.

When Peter left his room the next day, he looked for Prof. Johnson. Prof. Johnson asked, "May I give you a hug?" and then sat there, simply being with Peter in his pain. When Peter left, Prof. Johnson said, "I'm not just here for academics. I'm here for you." Peter went to chapel and his classes, feeling a burning rage that almost nothing could pierce. He kept going to the hospital, and watching Mary with casts on both legs and one arm, and many tiny stitches on her face, fluttering on the borders of consciousness. One time Prof. Johnson came to visit, and he said, "I can't finish my classes." Prof. Johnson looked at him and said, "The college will give you a full refund." Peter said, "Do you know of any way I can stay here to be with Mary?" Prof. Johnson said, "You can stay with me. And I believe a position with UPS would let you get some income, doing something physical. The position is open for you." Prof. Johnson didn't mention the calls he'd made, and Peter didn't think about them. He simply said, "Thank you."

A few days later, Mary began to be weakly conscious. Peter finally asked a nurse, "Why are there so many stitches on her face? Was she cut even more badly than—"

The nurse said, "There are a lot of stitches very close together because the emergency room had a cosmetic surgeon on duty. There will still be a permanent mark on her face, but some of the wound will heal without a scar."

Mary moved the left half of her mouth in half a smile. Peter said, "That was a kind of cute smile. How come she can smile like that?"

The nurse said, "One of the pieces of broken glass cut a nerve. It is unlikely she'll ever be able to move part of her face again."

Peter looked and touched Mary's hand. "I still think it's really quite cute."

Mary looked at him, and then passed out.

Peter spent a long couple of days training and attending to practical details. Then he came back to Mary.

Mary looked at Peter, and said, "It's a Monday. Don't you have classes now?"

Peter said, "No."

Mary said, "Why not?"

Peter said, "I want to be here with you."

Mary said, "I talked with one of the nurses, and she said that you dropped out of school so you could be with me.

"Is that true?" she said.

Peter said, "I hadn't really thought about it that way."

Mary closed her eyes, and when Peter started to leave because he decided she wanted to be left alone, she said, "Stop. Come here."

Peter came to her bedside and knelt.

Mary said, "Take this ring off my finger."

Peter said, "Is it hurting you?"

Mary said, "No, and it is the greatest treasure I own. Take it off and take it back."

Peter looked at her, bewildered. "Do you not want to marry me?"

Mary said, "This may sting me less because I don't remember our engagement. I don't remember anything that happened near that time; I have only the stories others, even the nurses, tell me about a man who loves me very much."

Peter said, "But don't you love me?"

Mary forced back tears. "Yes, I love you, yes, I love you. And I know that you love me. You are young and strong, and have the love to make a happy marriage. You'll make some woman a very good husband. I thought that woman would be me.

"But I can see what you will not. You said I was beautiful, and I was. Do you know what my prognosis is? I will probably be able to stand. At least for short periods of time. If I'm fortunate, I may walk. With a walker. I will never be able to run again—Peter, I am nobody, and I have no future. Absolutely nobody. You are young and strong. Go and find a woman who is worth your love."

Mary and Peter both cried for a long time. Then Peter walked out, and paused in the doorway, crying. He felt torn inside, and then went in to say a couple of things to Mary. He said, "I believe in miracles."

Then Mary cried, and Peter said something else I'm not going to repeat. Mary said something. Then another conversation began.

The conversation ended with Mary saying, "You're stupid, Peter. You're really, really stupid. I love you. I don't deserve such love. You're making a mistake. I love you." Then Peter went to kiss Mary, and as he bent down, he bent his mouth to meet the lips that he still saw as "really quite cute."

The stress did not stop. The physical therapists, after time, wondered that Mary had so much fight in her. But it stressed her, and Peter did his job without liking it. Mary and Peter quarreled and made up and quarreled and made up. Peter prayed for a miracle when they made up and sometimes when they quarreled. Were this not enough stress, there was an agonizingly long trial—and knowing that the drunk driver was behind bars surprisingly didn't make things better. But Mary very slowly learned to walk again. After six months, if Peter helped her, she could walk 100 yards before the pain became too great to continue.

Peter hadn't been noticing that the stress diminished, but he did become aware of something he couldn't put his finger on. After a night of struggling, he got up, went to church, and was floored by the Bible reading of, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." and the idea that when you do or do not visit someone in prison, you are visiting or refusing to visit Christ. Peter absently went home, tried to think about other things, made several phone calls, and then forced himself to drive to one and only one prison.

He stopped in the parking lot, almost threw up, and then steeled himself to go inside. He found a man, Jacob, and... Jacob didn't know who Peter was, but he recognized him as looking familiar. It was an awkward meeting. Then he recognized him as the man whose now wife he had crippled. When Peter left, he vomited and felt like a failure. He talked about it with Mary...

That was the beginning of a friendship. Peter chose to love the man in prison, even if there was no pleasure in it. And that created something deeper than pleasure, something Peter couldn't explain.

As Peter and Mary were planning the wedding, Mary said, "I want to enter with Peter next to me, no matter what the tradition says. It will be a miracle if I have the strength to stand for the whole wedding, and if I have to lean on someone I want it to be Peter. And I don't want to sit on a chair; I would rather spend my wedding night wracked by pain than go through my wedding supported by something lifeless!"

When the rehearsal came, Mary stood, and the others winced at the pain in her face. And she stood, and walked, for the entire rehearsal without touching Peter once. Then she said, "I can do it. I can go through the wedding on my own strength," and collapsed in pain.

At the wedding, she stood next to Peter, walking, her face so radiant with joy that some of the guests did not guess she was in exquisite pain. They walked next to each other, not touching, and Mary slowed down and stopped in the center of the church. Peter looked at her, wondering what Mary was doing.

Then Mary's arm shot around Peter's neck, and Peter stood startled for a moment before he placed his arm around her, squeezed her tightly, and they walked together to the altar.

On the honeymoon, Mary told Peter, "You are the only person I need." This was the greatest bliss either of them had known, and the honeymoon's glow shined and shined.

Peter and Mary agreed to move somewhere less expensive to settle down, and were too absorbed in their wedded bliss and each other to remember promises they had made earlier, promises to seek a church community for support and friends. And Peter continued working at an unglamorous job, and Mary continued fighting to walk and considered the housework she was capable of doing a badge of honor, and neither of them noticed that the words, "I love you" were spoken ever so slightly less frequently, nor did they the venom creeping into their words.

One night they exploded. What they fought about was not important. What was important was that Peter left, burning with rage. He drove, and drove, until he reached Wheaton, and at daybreak knocked on Prof. Johnson's door. There was anger in his voice when he asked, "Are you still my friend?"

Prof. Johnson got him something to eat and stayed with him when he fumed with rage, and said, "I don't care if I'm supposed to be with her, I can't go back!" Then Prof. Johnson said, "Will you make an agreement with me? I promise you I won't ever tell you to go back to her, or accept her, or accept what she does, or apologize to her, or forgive her, or in any way be reconciled. But I need you to trust me that I love you and will help you decide what is best to do."

Peter said, "Yes."

Prof. Johnson said, "Then stay with me. You need some rest. Take the day to rest. There's food in the fridge, and I have books and a nice back yard. There's iced tea in the—excuse me, there's Coke and 7 Up in the boxes next to the fridge. When I can come back, we can talk."

Peter relaxed, and he felt better. He told Prof. Johnson. Prof. Johnson said, "That's excellent. What I'd like you to do next is go in to work, with a lawyer I know. You can tell him what's going on, and he'll lead you to a courtroom to observe."

Peter went away to court the next day, and when he came back he was ashen. He said nothing to Prof. Johnson.

Then, after the next day, he came back looking even more unhappy. "The first day, the lawyer, George, took me into divorce court. I thought I saw the worst that divorce court could get. Until I came back today. It was the same—this sickening scene where two people had become the most bitter enemies. I hope it doesn't come to this. This was atrocious. It was vile. It was more than vile. It was—"

Prof. Johnson sent him back for a third day. This time Peter said nothing besides, "I think I've been making a mistake."

After the fourth day, Peter said, "Help me! I've been making the biggest mistake of my life!"

After a full week had passed, Peter said, "Please, I beg you, don't send me back there."

Prof. Johnson sent Peter back to watch a divorce court for one more miserable, excruciating day. Then he said, "Now you can do whatever you want. What do you want to do?"

The conflict between Peter and Mary ended the next day.

Peter went home, begging Mary for forgiveness, and no sooner than he had begun his apology, a thousand things were reflected in Mary's face and she begged his forgiveness. Then they talked, and debated whether to go back to Wheaton, or stay where they were. Finally Mary said, "I really want to go back to Wheaton."

Peter began to shyly approach old friends. He later misquoted: "I came crawling with a thimble in the desperate hope that they'd give a few tiny drops of friendship and love. Had I known how they would respond, I would have come running with a bucket!"

Peter and Mary lived together for many years; they had many children and were supported by many friends.

Ployon said, "I didn't follow every detail, but... there was something in that that stuck."

Archon said, "How long do you think it lasted?"

"A little shorter than the other one, I mean first part."

"Do you have any idea how many days were in each part?"

"About the same? I assume the planet had slowed down so that a year and a day were of roughly equal length."

"The first part took place during three days. The latter part spanned several thousand days—"

"I guess I didn't understand it—"

"—which is... a sign that you understood something quite significant... that you knew what to pay attention to and were paying attention to the right thing."

"But I didn't understand it. I had a sense that it was broken off before the end, and that was the end, right?"

Archon hesitated, and said, "There's more, but I'd rather not go into that."

Ployon said, "Are you sure?"

"You won't like it."

"Please."

The years passed and Peter and Mary grew into a blissfully happy marriage. Mary came to have increasing health problems as a result of the accident, and those around them were amazed at how their love had transformed the suffering the accident created in both of their lives. At least those who knew them best saw the transformation. There were many others who could only see their happiness as a mirage.

As the years passed, Jacob grew to be a good friend. And when Peter began to be concerned that his wife might be... Jacob had also grown wealthy, very wealthy, and assembled a top-flight legal team (without taking a dime of Peter's money—over Peter's protests!), to prevent what the doctors would normally do in such a case, given recent shifts in the medical system.

And then Mary's health grew worse, much worse, and her suffering grew worse with it, and pain medications seemed to be having less and less effect. Those who didn't know Mary were astonished that someone in so much pain could enjoy life so much, nor the hours they spent gazing into each other's eyes, holding hands, when Mary's pain seemed to vanish. A second medical opinion, and a third, and a fourth, confirmed that

Mary had little chance of recovery even to her more recent state. And whatever measures been taken, whatever testimony Peter and Mary could give about the joy of their lives, the court's decision still came:

The court wishes to briefly review the facts of the case. Subject is suffering increasingly severe effects from an injury that curtailed her life greatly as a young person. from which she has never recovered, and is causing increasingly complications now that she will never again have youth's ability to heal. No fewer than four medical opinions admitted as expert testimony substantially agree that subject is in extraordinary and excruciating pain; that said excruciating pain is increasing; that said excruciating pain is increasingly unresponsive to medication; that subject has fully lost autonomy and is dependent on her husband; that this dependence is profound, without choice, and causes her husband to be dependent without choice on others and exercise little autonomy; and the prognosis is only of progressively worse deterioration and increase in pain, with no question of recovery.

The court finds it entirely understandable that the subject, who has gone through such trauma, and is suffering increasingly severe complications, would be in a state of some denial. Although a number of positions could be taken, the court also finds it understandable that a husband would try to maintain a hold on what cannot exist, and needlessly prolong his wife's suffering. It is not, however, the court's position to judge whether this is selfish...

For all the impressive-sounding arguments that have been mounted, the court cannot accord a traumatized patient or her ostensibly well-meaning husband a privelege that the court itself does not claim. The court does not find that it has an interest in allowing this woman to continue in her severe and worsening state of suffering.

Peter was at her side, holding her hand and looking into his wife's eyes, The hospital doctor had come. Then Peter said, "I love you," and Mary said, "I love you," and they kissed.

Mary's kiss was still burning on Peter's lips when two nurses hooked Mary up to an IV and injected her with 5000 milligrams of sodium thiopental, then a saline flush followed by 100 milligrams of pancurium bromide, then a saline flush and 20 milligrams of potassium chloride.

A year later to the day, Peter died of a broken heart.

Ployon was silent for a long time, and Archon was silent for an even longer time. Ployon said, "I guess part of our world is present in that world. Is that what you mean by being in two places at once?"

Archon was silent for a long time.

Ployon said, "It seems that that world's problems and failings are somehow greater than our achievements. I wish that world could exist, and that we could somehow visit it."

Archon said, "Do you envy them that much?"

Ployon said, "Yes. We envy them as—"

Archon said, "—as—" and searched through his world's images.

Ployon said, "—as that world's eunuchs envy men."

Archon was silent.

Ployon was silent.