Contents

3  The Editor / in light, just quiet, please
4  Albert R. Trosky / Albert G. Huegli, R.I.P.
5  Samuel L. Chess / the player king: the myth of Charlton Heston
10  J.T. Ledbetter / fox at mary's grave (verse)
11  Del Doughty / what comes after: my father's illness, my recovery
16  Gary Fincke / flies
19  Michael Kramer / blood (verse)
23  Michael G. Cartwright / review essay: "shall we gather at the river? " introducing the incomplete angler
28  Dorothy Bass / from the chapel: the peace of the Lord
30  Robert Benne / the nation: abortion: moral and legal reflections
32  Celeste Duder / ambition (verse)
33  Charles Vandersee / letters from Dogwood: apparent parents
37  Thomas C. Willadsen / letters from the front: in praise of changing back
39  book reviews / Lee on Simon (Heart); Hass on Griffith (Evangelical Women)
42  notes on poets, reviewers
43  William Aiken / solstice, then & now (verse)

Departmental Editors
Beth Sneller
Student Assistant Editor
Joshua Messner
Student Aide
Beth Ulrich
Student Office Manager
Thomas Kennedy
Book Review Editor
David Morgan
Art Editor
John Ruff
Poetry Editor
Ralph Klapis
Copy

Advisory Board
James Albers
James V. Bachman
Richard Baepler
James Caristi
Christine H. Lehmann
Alfred Meyer
Arlin G. Meyer
Frederick A. Niedner, Jr.
Mel Piehl
Mark Schwehn

Front cover: Thomas Hart Benton, "Prodigal Son,"
1939, lithograph, Brauer Museum of Art, Gift of Josephine and Byron Ferguson, Photograph by Ruth Crnkovich.

Back cover: "The Ten Commandments" (Korean film poster), undated, Brauer Museum of Art, Gift of Steven Kaatz, Photograph by Ruth Crnkovich.

THE CRESSET is published seven times during the academic year, September through June, by the Valparaiso University Press as a forum for ideas and informed opinion. The views expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the preponderance of opinion at Valparaiso University. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Editor and accompanied by return postage. Letters to the Editor for publication are subject to editing for brevity. The Book Review Index and the American Humanities Index list Cresset reviews. Periodicals postage is paid at Valparaiso, Indiana. Regular Subscription rates: one year -- $8.50; two years--$14.75; Student subscription rates: one year -- $4; single copy -- $1.00. Entire contents copyrighted 1998 by the Valparaiso University Press, Valparaiso, Indiana 46383, without whose written permission reproduction in whole or in part for any purpose whatsoever is expressly forbidden.

Postmaster send address changes to The Cresset, #10 Huegli Hall, Valparaiso University, 651 S. College Ave., Valparaiso, IN 46383
quiet, please

You'd have thought that maybe a theological tangle would have been what finally drove me out of church, but no, it was just sheer noise. So much conversation was going on around us, that though Buxtehude was struggling nobly in the background, we got up and left the church. We felt ashamed of being old and out of touch, and (not for the last time, I am sure) unable to cope with the collapse of public space under the onslaught of private behavior. Though it has become commonplace to be confronted in public with behavior and speech that used to be reserved for private spaces, I had hoped that Sunday worship services might be a last, public space. Apparently not.

In a recent New Yorker article, Jonathan Franzen remarks that complaints about the erosion of privacy are misplaced. For it is public space that we have forgotten how to use, and therefore seem about to lose altogether. It would be merely curmudgeonly to blame its loss on the young. After all, children have always had to be taught what not to do in public, as anyone who has ever tried to civilize a young child knows quite well. Examples abound, but I forbear.

No, it seems to be adults who have come to believe that unless you can behave anywhere as you would in private, your behavior is not authentic. Being true to your feelings means that you need only consider what you want to do or say at the moment, consulting for permission only your own emotional climate. In fact, you can create or modify this climate at will, since by putting on headphones, you have everyone's permission to act like a zombie in any conceivable situation. You enter a "zone," which means that, although you are physically in a space shared with others, you need not consider them to any extent. Though I have not seen a person with headphones in church yet, it will happen.

I certainly have seen it in the classroom, where students will come into the room and behave absolutely as though they were in their residence hall rooms until the teacher announces that "class" is beginning, whereupon those who have had heads down on desks will sit up, and one or two will finish the last few bites of breakfast (yes, plastic bowls of cereal make breakfast something you need not finish before going out into the world). It is at this point that those with headphones will remove them, and somewhat reluctantly enter the space they have been sitting in for several minutes. I have not yet seen someone answer a phone during class.

The implications of this way of construing public space for what we used to call public worship are enormous, and generally not auspicious. Display of private emotional life is authorized for everywhere, and the expression of personal emotion is, to an extent, considered the sign of authentic experience. Simply to be present in worship is not enough; one must experience and express the heightening of personal emotion as a validation that one is, in fact, getting it. Any restraint on "what I really am" is discouraged; rather, since the theological truth is that God sees us as we truly are, we should be in worship our truest (read, most private) selves.

The trouble with this principle when it is applied to public worship is that it takes very little "expression of my truest self" to constitute a huge intrusion on the true self of another. Authentic personal emotion jointly experienced by a large group of people is rare, and usually means, I suspect, authentic emotion experienced by a few and imposed on (and possibly pretended by) the many. Formal worship has its dangers too, but among them is not the intrusive, steamrollering...
blackmail of being forced to experience someone else’s emotional life. Sentimental piety in worship demands that my experience become ours; formal worship allows the construction of a shared experience, not mine or yours or his, but ours. That is what the public in public worship means.

But, like everything else, being public requires practice. It needs to be taught, because, though we may have natural tendencies to be social beings, we only learn to occupy public spaces with instruction. Most of us who sense this have lost confidence in our position, and feel that, if we were to attempt to be teachers of civil behavior, we would be ridiculed at the least. How long has it been since you’ve seen a little old lady instruct some misbehaving person in public?

But one does begin to hear murmurs about recovering a notion of public space, of communally sanctioned behavior. Perhaps we have reached the so-called “tipping point,” and it will become easier to do the teaching we elders need to do occasionally. I’ve made a start: no more breakfast in our classroom space.

I’m reluctant to go back to church though. Some situations are just too hard to take on.

Peace,

GME

Albert G. Huegli: Requiescat In Pacem

From the standpoint of public image, President Albert G. Huegli (1913-1998) had the misfortune to follow O.P. Kretzmann. Compared to O.P.’s earth-transcending metaphors and his ability to convey emotions and commitment in his speaking voice, Al Huegli’s monotonic speaking style and carefully-built logic and documentation were doomed to suffer by comparison, except for the most careful hearer or reader. But there are a variety of gifts, even in university presidents, and Dr. Huegli had gifts much needed by Valparaiso University in the late 60’s and most of the 70’s. Though he taught political science for a period of time, Dr. Huegli was an experienced university administrator when he came to Valparaiso from Concordia-River Forest in 1961. He was a model of professional management, holding his administrative team to a high standard of professional development and conduct. His patience and his professional approach to problems enabled him to guide the university through the tumultuous college climate of the Vietnam War, Kent State, and student and faculty demands for greater participation that confronted him within a year of his taking office. Though much of the current new campus took shape in his administration, the broadly-based internal governance system that still sets Valparaiso University apart was also constructed in his administration. Perhaps his greatest administrative legacy was the firm financial footing on which he placed the University.

It was his success as an administrator that ended up obscuring President Huegli’s career as scholar-teacher. I am not sure that Al Huegli would want to be known more as an administrator than an academic. He was very proud of having taught in the Department of Political Science at Northwestern University early in his career. He taught as President, an on his retirement taught a course on religion and politics. He went to meetings on the subject of church and state, and was very proud of his volume, Church and State Under God. He always wanted to bring out a successor volume that would incorporate his experience guiding the University through government regulations and representing colleges before government bodies, with the political, theological and philosophical literature he knew so well. In retirement he was still teacher and scholar. He was passionate about church-related higher education and the church and its institutions he served his entire adult life. Those of us at Valparaiso University are thankful for the faithful service of Albert Huegli. Those of us who knew him as teacher feel doubly grateful.

Albert R. Trost, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
The Player King:  
the myth of Charlton Heston

Samuel L. Chell

Cecil B. De Mille once said he chose Charlton Heston for the role of Moses based on the actor’s striking resemblance to Michelangelo’s sculpture. In fact, the actor himself has created his entire career through similar, conscious comparisons with great men whose heroism ultimately produced mythic status. No less an authority than Heston himself acknowledges the “startling” likeness between “one of the greatest statues in the world, certainly the finest representation of the prophet,” and himself (Arena, 126). Moreover, the role-playing continues. His assured performance last year as the Player King in Kenneth Branagh’s Hamlet is a version in miniature of his cinematic and life story. In his off-screen no less than his on-screen persona Heston remains the image of the wise and courageous patriarch who would awaken the consciousness of us all.

It is this fatherly figure that the National Rifle Association is counting on to make its case with the American people and to help boost its sagging membership—currently at 2.8 million members. Prior to Heston’s appointment as president at the 1998 annual meeting of the NRA, embattled fundraiser, Wayne R. LaPierre, stated: “It sure never hurts to have Moses on your side.” In the wake of school massacres and the public’s growing disenchantment with guns, the organization is clearly seeking an authoritative and persuasive moral voice that can deliver it from its present malaise. For Heston guns represent not simply American civil liberties but Western cultural values, without which civilization will inevitably crumble. Who could be a better choice to release the beleaguered NRA faithful from their present captivity to unsympathetic legislators and lead them back to the promise of the old frontier?

Yet it would be a mistake to expect any miracles from this latest spokesperson, regardless of his cinematic successes or the precedents set by other actors-turned-statesmen. Despite taking aim at gangsta rappers, homosexuals, feminists, and Bill Clinton, Heston seems strangely ineffective at making his message register with cultural reactionaries, let alone the public. Even on screen, Heston’s portrayal of patriarchal power may be less convincing to us than that of a genuine star such as John Wayne or even a lesser light such as Ronald Reagan. The latter two manage to erase all suspicions of an actor playing a “role,” whereas Heston reminds us all too frequently of his each new challenge as an actor. The identification between person and persona suffers from a visible fissure, a faultline that prevents us from suspending disbelief when in his presence. He has chosen his role, whereas we need to believe the reverse of our greatest stars in the cinematic as well as political arenas. They are the chosen ones.

The quintessential screen hero presents a number of puzzles for thoughtful viewers. Self-appointment to grandeur may be the place to start.

In his autobiography Heston acknowledges the personal, internal limitations that prevent him from attaining star status. However, in his recent public legacy to his grandson, To Be a Man: Letters to my Grandson (1997), he presents a self-portraiture scarcely less mythical and archetypal in its patriarchal proportions than Michelangelo’s Moses. It is as if the numerous roles he has played throughout his life have finally coalesced into one grand, fatherly role representing both a culmination and closure to the personal narrative the creation of which obviously consumes him.

In the autobiography, the actor reveals that the single most traumatic experience of his life was his parents’ divorce. At the age of ten, he was separated not only from his father—Russell Carter—but from the forest, hunting, and his father’s boots, which to this day are a “symbol of male stability” to the actor (Arena, 24). Thereafter taking his mother’s surname, Heston in his life and career can be seen as engaged in a quest for the absent father. That the divorce carried equal parts of
pain and humiliation for him, Heston makes clear when he confesses he did not tell his wife about the “dark and terrible secret” of his real father until the night of their marriage (Arena, 34). To this experience of uprooting, it is not hard to trace the aftermath of the adult person. Even Heston is quick to acknowledge that whereas many actors are able to play themselves, his unhappiness as a teenage boy caused him to retreat into “pretend games” while establishing his need later in life to play someone other than himself (Arena, 34-35).

When the Northwestern University-trained actor attempts to present his version of acting theory, notably removed from Stanislavsky or Method School acting, he betrays the insecurities of his personal past: “Many actors insist that they must find the inside of the man first, and work outward. . . . I wouldn’t know where to reach for the inside if I had no outside to begin with” (Arena, 106). Celebrityship is also a “role” to Heston, one he has learned to play well though never completely understood. In fact, he senses that he is not a “really satisfactory movie star” whom the public pays to see. Instead, with striking acumen he expresses gratitude that the public goes to his films to see not him but one of his many roles (Arena, 311).

Heston acknowledges that he has played more great men in more remote places and periods—ranging from 3000 B.C. to 2500 A.D.—than any other actor. It is from these diverse and eminent personae that the actor creates his own. Unlike a star such as John Wayne, whose character appears to be the natural extension of a constant, unified screen self (put another way, John Wayne was always played to perfection by Marion Morrison), Heston and the viewer alike are challenged to find threads of consistency among the prophets, generals, artists, warriors, and statesmen who comprise his galaxy of screen characters. As far as the actor is concerned, they are not simply powerful patriarchs but dark, driven men whose obsessive desires would fly against the political correctness codes of the present day. Moreover, they all possess what the actor regards as the key to the character of Michelangelo: an unshakable will to succeed in their chosen missions in the face of formidable odds (Arena, 339).

Clearly, Heston’s off-screen life is based on this reading of his cinematic roles. It is left to the viewer to decide whether the reading does, in fact, accurately represent the text. Although Ronald Reagan’s life and career invite similar scrutiny, Heston presents a singular challenge. He seems far more self-consciously aware of his attempt to join the two fundamentally-opposed realms of reel and real life. Whereas Reagan’s presidency frequently suggested a non-problematic transcription of his Hollywood scripts to world politics, Heston’s personal odyssey is less associated with scripts and storylines than with the characters he has played. His remains a search for the elusive father, a quest for self-discovery in the roles he has assumed.

As the circus boss in The Greatest Show on Earth (1952), for example, the young Heston is cast as no less than the father figure who brings order to the potentially chaotic world for which he is responsible. A wise and altruistic ruler, he not only manages the show but steals it because of the admiration and confidence he inspires within his employees and the spectator alike. Vindicated in his casting of Heston for the circus spectacle, De Mille without hesitation selected him for the lead in his largest, last production, The Ten Commandments (1956).

Despite the sprawling size of the epic, the cinematic effects, the numerous cameo roles and sheer excess of spectacle, The Ten Commandments remains vital in the minds of many viewers because of Heston’s performance as Moses, the role with which he is permanently identified. Even with its defects and anachronisms, the film holds our attention primarily because it cannot overwhelm Heston’s Moses, no mere Michelangelo icon but a surprisingly flesh-and-blood character who projects emotions ranging from reverential humility to stoic perseverance to righteous outrage. In an ingenious touch, Heston’s is the voice of God in the burning bush scene, thus suggesting a close affinity between earthly and divine patriarchs. The effect is to enhance the heroic stature of Moses, implying a character who does not simply follow a higher authority but who draws his strength from an authoritative, almost self-begotten father.

The trace of any biological father is all but absent in Ben-Hur (1959), the lavish production for which Heston won an Oscar for best actor. Sharing his character’s name with the film’s title,
Heston is always at the center of the narrative, obsessively searching for his mother and sister while self-creating an image of fatherhood. Once again his model and inspiration are from a higher source. As a prisoner of the Romans early in the film, Judah Ben-Hur recovers from dehydration when Jesus, defying a centurion’s orders, offers him water. The fortitude and strength he gains from this encounter are confirmed much later when, recognizing a cross-bearing prisoner as the one who saved his life, Ben-Hur tries to give him water. The final two scenes, of Ben-Hur’s mother and sister miraculously cured of leprosy followed by a shot of the crucifixion, serve to connect Heston’s character once again with the qualities of the ideal patriarch-king, capable of penetrating the riddle of existence and restoring order to his people.

In his next film epic, *El Cid* (1961), it is again the heroic, saintly qualities of the warrior-king that, as Heston makes clear, led him to take on the role of Roderigo Diaz de Bivar (*Arena*, 239). Like Moses and Ben-Hur, El Cid is on a divine mission, carrying a cross (and the film) on behalf of a besieged people, in this case the Spanish Christians who are being persecuted by marauding Moors. Two subsequent heroic epics—*The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965) and *Khartoum* (1966)—remain favorites of the actor if not of the critics. According to Heston, the significance of Michelangelo and the nineteenth-century British naval hero, General Charles Gordon, lies in their will to succeed in the face of overwhelming obstacles. They are great men because they draw on common resources: the acceptance of a formidable task and the determination to see it through to the end. Curiously, Heston excludes both Orson Welles and Ronald Reagan from the ranks of great actors (*Arena*, 159, 527). Both have deserted their screen roles and acceded to the temptation to exert power in other areas of influence. Heston, on the other hand, has mirrored his characters’ circumstances by dutifully and perseveringly accepting his heroic roles. Although asked on several occasions to run for Senate, he declined because he “couldn’t bear the idea of never acting again” (*Arena*, 433). When asked to run for public office, Heston claims his response was: “I’ve already been President of the United States three times” (*Arena*, 433).

Ironically, Heston seems to see acting as simultaneously insulating him from public life while forcing him into the limelight. On the one hand, his dedication to his craft prevents him from seeking high political office, but on the other hand he professes distaste for the attention given movie stars. This aversion may help explain the remoteness he chooses to emphasize even in his most recognizable character roles. It certainly accounts for his attachment to the title role in *Will Penny* (1968). Heston describes *Will Penny* as one of the two best scripts submitted to him and insists, “the film itself remains my best satisfaction” (*Arena*, 391). The protagonist not only carries the name but embodies the quality of will with which the actor associates great men such as Michelangelo. Moreover, he is a supremely solitary survivor, a loner who avoids the complications of both public and romantic life.

Although *Will Penny* has over the years gained in stature, no film in which Heston appears enjoys a higher reputation among serious students of cinema than *Touch of Evil* (1958). Orson Welles shrewdly cast Heston as the Mexican lawman, Ramon Miguel “Mike” Vargas, in this very dark film noir. A modern-day Moses existing in a fallen, totally corrupt world, Vargas asks, “Who’s the boss—the cop or the law?” Largely because of the typecasting of Heston and filmgoers’ confidence in the latter’s ability to preserve justice, Welles as the cop is able to explore this question—cinematically and thematically—to an unprecedented extent in a supposedly commercial Hollywood vehicle. The cop eventually succumbs to law, but not before he has indulged himself in every conceivable perversion—matched only by Welles’ playful experiments as actor and director. Borrowing a page from De Mille, who frequently used the Bible as a license for bringing otherwise unacceptable sex and violence to the screen, Welles uses Heston’s established persona to provide his film’s “moral center,” the better to serve as a foil to, and warrant for, the director’s cinematic imagination.

More than Heston, who professes to be little more than an actor proud of executing his roles in a craftsmanlike manner, Welles was quick to sense the iconographic possibilities of the Heston persona itself. His chiseled features and somewhat remote, Rushmore-like aspect, along with the cumulative impact of his portfolio of exceptional screen characters, make him a uniquely American
symbol, a totem suggesting equal parts of individual enterprise and manifest destiny. As Pauline Kael has observed, even an "atypical" Heston film such as Planet of the Apes (1968) works largely because the main character is undeniably minted from American metal: "All this wouldn't be so forceful and funny if it weren't for the use of Charlton Heston in the role. With his perfect, lean-hipped, powerful body, Heston is a godlike hero; built for strength, he's an archetype of what makes Americans win. He doesn't play a nice guy; he's harsh and hostile, self-centered and hot-tempered. Yet we don't hate him because he's so magnetically strong; he represents American power—and he has the profile of an eagle" (Kael, 37).

As a prototypal American hero, Heston's persona is that of the self-created man, a father figure without a biological father, a solitary but dutiful patriarch whose priorities spare him the torturous self-obsessions of a John Wayne or Clint Eastwood. The latter two are uncompromising individualists who expose the process and costs of their quests for the masculine; Heston's version of male identity, on the other hand, is off-the-rack and ready-made. Draped on characters such as Long John Silver or even Shakespeare's Player King, it's a persona that is capable of instantly conveying the essence of the part, provoking the viewer's attention and respect. Dropped into the campy plots of B-pictures such as Planet of the Apes and Soylent Green (1973), it can be especially effective, helping to explain Heston's current cult status with college students who have never seen the cinematic Moses or Ben Hur. The meaning of the Heston persona is never greater than the sum of the parts: rather, it is the sum of the parts.

If this collective persona has served the actor well on screen, it has proven equally serviceable in providing direction and guidance to his off-screen activities. The public roles he has chosen—including president of the American Film Institute as well as of the Screen Actors Guild, co-chair of a Presidential Task Force on the NEA and NEH, spokesperson for and subsequently president of the National Rifle Association—are barely disguised extensions of the responsible regal image with which viewers of his films are most likely to associate him. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, in their influential book on archetypes of the masculine, single out the primacy of "king energy," which is first in importance since it underlies and includes the rest of the archetypes (49). The earthly king embodies this ordering force when he codifies laws or, more accurately, "receives them from the king energy itself and then passes them on to his nation" (54). This transmission is characterized by the authors as the same timeless event as that depicted in the biblical story of Moses receiving the Torah from Yahweh (56).

Heston clearly views himself as having accepted a similar commission in his public life, denouncing today's misguided worshippers of the golden calf, whether inferior lawgivers such as the Aaronites of political correctness and Jezebels of NOW or the producers of "cop-killer" rap lyrics. Moreover, he understands that the execution of the role requires more than merely receiving and delivering laws. The heroic king's duty is to embody in his own person and actions the moral order that he proposes. In the absence of strong fathers, first the family and eventually society succumb to disorder and chaos—unless the king can fill the void, manifesting fertility and bestowing his blessing. Hence, America's best-known hunter king is no mere gun hobbyist but, like his character in The Omega Man (1972), a formidable proponent of a society that can remain viable only through continued, guaranteed access to its firearms. The "candid" photo that graces the cover of his autobiography—not of Moses carrying his staff but of a weathered-looking, rifle-bearing Heston supposedly exercising his rights to the land—seems curiously as artificial and anachronistic as any of his movie roles.

As for the blessing that it is the father-king's duty to bestow, Heston has gone beyond the call of duty in his recent "sermon" to his grandson, To Be a Man. Although he identifies the end of the threat of a Soviet nuclear attack as the greatest inheritance of the youngest generation, he also is careful to locate America's strength not in its government or society but its families: "Excuse me Mrs. Clinton but you're dead wrong: it doesn't take a village to raise a child" (20). Not surprisingly for the product of a broken home and absent father, Heston proclaims the unified family unit rather than a diverse, multicultural society as the key to preserving "one nation under God" (Man, 106).
On the one hand, being a man involves taking up arms like the heroes of the American Revolution and, more recently, facing down evil Russians in the cold war. The combination of arms and of great men who follow the Ten Commandments virtually assures victory in the human sphere and God’s blessings in the divine (Man, 84, 123). On the other hand, the actor recognizes that skill with weapons is secondary to mastery of the English language, “a tool that can truly take you to the stars” (Man, 75). Singling out for praise Shakespeare and the King James Bible, the sources of many of his scripts, Heston saves his italics for underscoring the power of language: “The most valuable skill you can have is to know how to read and speak and write the English language. . . well. Very well” (Man, 75).

Although the comment undeniably betrays its author’s linguistic chauvinism and conservative politics, it also reveals the vital role of rhetoric in the myth of Charlton Heston. Even as slight a work as To Be a Man can be viewed as a microcosm of Heston’s career if not a touchstone to the man himself. The ideas are frayed and cliché—bromides borrowed from a black vs. white, good vs. evil Manichean movie kingdom. But the combination of reductive thought along with assured if not eloquent discourse produces a persuasive, frequently compelling literary persona, as potentially effective as that created by the actor on screen.

Only upon closer examination does the self-created Heston myth suffer, especially when held up against those with which it begs comparison. In fact, the harder he tries, the more apparent it becomes that the Player King is only a player king. He cannot convince us that he possesses the rugged individualism of a John Wayne, the physical power and grace of a Douglas or Lancaster, the tortured loneliness of a Cooper or Eastwood, the aloof yet touching conscience of a Gregory Peck.

Certainly Heston does not deserve censure for manipulating his own image. Richard Dyer has said that all stars are engaged in the business of making themselves into commodities. Moreover, in our so-called post-modern condition of threatened selfhood, the star affirms the notion of the individual, creating a “necessary fiction for the reproduction of the kind of society we live in” (10). But we are most able to accept the fiction when our stars—especially our male stars—are defined above all as people for whom having uncomplicated fun is paramount, and this is implicitly carried over into their reported attitude to their work. But equally work isn’t important, it’s just something you do . . .” (7).

For Charlton Heston it’s not the fun but playing the role that is paramount. Unfortunately for the creation of the Heston myth, it shows.

works cited


Moore, Robert and Douglas Gillette. King Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes
FOX AT MARY’S GRAVE

When birds are quiet and the woods grow dim
I go into the woods to follow him,
My breath small puffs of cloud there in the dark
Following the echo of his bark
Carried on the sharp winter breeze,
Dying among the moon-rinsed trees.
And when he comes at evening from his cave
To circle once, and wait at Mary’s grave,
I stop to listen, as if her voice were calling
In the sough of trees and leaves falling,
As shadows lengthen across the russet hills
Leaving last light that suddenly fills
Fields, barns, and the little pond with gold.

Before everything is locked in winter cold
And windows steam, closing me within
The cold and empty rooms where I begin
To shake the sheets over couch and chair
Like sails that catch and fill and hold the air
Then slowly settle over things she said
Were special to her from the day we wed,
I bank the fire and drink the tea and do
The many things my neighbors tell me to;
But when the moonlight moves across the wall
And lingers on my bed, the rise and fall
Of winter winds at windows and at doors
Lulls me into sleep as moonlight pours
Upon my dreams where I watch the fox alone
Moving in dappled light from bark and stone
With Mary at his side into the trees,
Fading in the snowflakes on the breeze
That touches branch and flower as they go,
Shadows in the starlight on the snow.

J. T. Ledbetter
What Comes After:
my father’s illness, my recovery

Del Doughty

one

My dad went nuts on a spring afternoon in 1983. I was 17 years old, a high school junior. Earlier that winter he had suffered a heart attack complicated by a stroke and now he was recovering. The heart attack got all the attention, but it was the stroke that did the real damage. The heart attack had nearly killed him, but it was nothing that some surgery and a little more discipline in the diet wouldn’t cure. The stroke destroyed the better part of his eyesight. My dad had been an accountant, and an accountant who cannot see is an accountant who does not work, and a man who cannot work is a man who must learn to become a new man. And so at the relatively young age of 55 my father found himself parked in his recliner for what seemed like the duration of his life. There were days I overheard him wishing the heart attack had been stronger.

two

My high school was on double session. Mornings I woke up early and trundled off to the large, windowless brick building on the other side of town. By noon I was home again. Before my dad got sick (that’s how we described it in the family) I would fritter away the time until dinner by fishing, playing basketball, listening to music with friends. Occasionally I worked a shift pushing a dust mop down at the local hospital. After my dad I got sick I found myself pushing the dust mop down those hollow corridors more and more often. With my father laid up (he was in the big hospital downtown) and my mother at his bedside morning until night, things fell apart at home. There was no use being there. Phones were disconnected and lights shut off not so much because there wasn’t any money but because nobody had time or mind enough to pay the bills. The same applied to grocery shopping, and this disturbed me somewhat more; every now and then I would happen to walk past the refrigerator just as it finished one of its cycles, and its chortles and sighs seemed to mock the rumblings of my empty stomach. I could live a few days without cable TV or the telephone, but without food, without my precious afternoon and evening snacks? Somehow my father’s illness was affecting my body. At least at the hospital I could count on the cafeteria and my employee discount.

All of this not to say that I pitied myself—now, looking back on those days, I sometimes do—but then, no. I carried on as best I could in a sort of stoic numbness. I did what I had to do and kept my mouth shut. And I, like my mother and my sisters, managed to get through the winter by developing the same sort of emotional calluses one sees in former hostages or old soldiers reluctant to talk about their war days.

three

Shortly after my father returned home from the hospital my mother went to work selling real estate full-time. Instead of coming home to my mother’s lunch after school, I came home to fix lunch for my father, a pathetic old man who could no longer find the jar of peanut butter without help.

“Come straight home from school,” said my mother. “See that he gets something to eat for lunch. And see that he’s okay. If you need to go out don’t be gone too long.”

I did as I was told. At first it was awful. I’d come home to find my dad slouching in a recliner, listening to the noon report on TV. His shirt—untucked—never matched his pants and his hair—once immaculately pomaded—ran dry and ragged over his ears and the back of his collar. Too, he had grown gaunt: his shirtsleeves swallowed his arms, his pants hung limp from his hips. It was hard to look at him. In one sense the man I’d known as my father had died of a heart attack. All my
life he’d been bigger than me, menacing, a scowling tyrant at the dinner table, a drill sergeant whose bark never failed to inject some hustle into my bones. He yelled at me for pointing my finger at him and threatened to smack me a good one if I so much as took the wrong tone with him. Born in Pittsburgh during the Depression, he was a Pittsburgh guy, steely and frugal as a girder, tough as an anvil. Once, about a year before his stroke, he went out for pizza one evening and happened to catch me drinking with my friends downtown. No sooner did I see him coming at me than I sobered; all the way home he rained knuckles and elbows across my head with his right hand while holding onto the steering wheel with his left. Inasmuch as his car had a standard transmission, I found this feat to be very impressive (even then, as I was getting smacked).

Harder yet was talking to him. Not that we’d ever been chatty with each other before. Governed, as they were, by my fear of the man, our exchanges were quite spare. At the dinner table, for example:

May I be excused?
Don’t interrupt. Where are your manners?
May I be excused, please?
Did you eat all your corn?
I don’t like corn.
Eat it.

A little later, as I passed through the den while he was watching television:
Did you do your homework?
I didn’t have any tonight.
Get back here. Take out the garbage. And this Saturday morning I’m going to need you to help me plant a couple of shrubs in the front yard.

Now it was even worse. Coming in from school, for instance:
Hi, son. How was school today?
Okay.
That’s good.
What do you want for lunch?
Oh, whatever we have. A bologna sandwich, I guess. So school was okay?
Yeah.

Sometimes we talked about how the Pirates or the Reds were doing, but even then we avoided each other.

Pirates win last night?
No, they lost 5-4.
What a bunch of bums. They’ve got no pitching.
They need to get Stargell back in the lineup. They miss his bat.

After a month or so things improved a little. We developed a routine. I would come home, dump my books on the couch, mumble a hello, and trudge off to the kitchen to slap together a couple of sandwiches. Then, after bringing my father his plate and a fresh glass of iced tea, I would turn up the volume on the television set. Instead of talking we watched re-runs of All in the Family at twelve thirty, followed by the soap line-up at one o’clock: The Young and the Restless, As the World Turns, and General Hospital—the order of the day for the sick and housebound. Oprah came on at four. By that time, exhausted after three hours of blackmail and lust and narrow escapes and little else (especially in the way of homework), I would go set the kitchen table and, if possible, start cooking dinner. My mother usually got home around five.

The day that my dad went nuts followed the routine of any other day that spring. Nothing in the world—not the weather, which was balmy and bright, nothing I’d read or seen on TV, which was anything but balmy and bright—led me to believe the day would be any different. It happened just after lunch. I was standing at the kitchen counter, leaning my forearms on the Formica, alternately gazing into my algebra book and at The Young and the Restless. My, dad, sitting just a few feet to my right in his recliner, very casually asked: “Hey, where’s Mom?”
I cocked an eyebrow at him. What an odd question that was. “At work,” I said.

“When’s she gonna be home?”

“Five.”

He checked his watch, he tapped it, and then, not more than two minutes later, he asked again: “Where’s Mom?”

“At work.” Had he just not heard me before?

“When’s she gonna be home?”

“Five o’clock.”

A few minutes later: “Hey, where’s Mom? When’s she gonna be home?”

And every few minutes beyond that. After about the fourth time I felt like crying. I felt like running away. Each time he asked it was as though he’d never asked before. It was as though the vinyl grooves in his mind had tripped up the needle and the song kept skipping back a few measures. All afternoon he asked me these same questions, and all afternoon I answered, not knowing what else to do. Mental confusion is contagious. By three o’clock my own sanity was wrecked. Finally, not knowing what else to do, I screamed at him: “Why do you keep asking me that? She’s at work, she’ll be home at five o’clock!”

“All right!” he snapped back, as though angry at being embarrassed. And then, in a quivering, more vulnerable tone: “I can’t remember anything.”

He began to cry. Looking at him hooked up to tubes and wires in the hospital two months earlier didn’t seem half so bad compared to this. I stayed at the counter, biting my lip and gazing into my book. I think we both preferred that I pretended not to notice his tears.

Shortly after five o’clock we heard the car pull into the driveway—I rushed outside and fell on my mother before she could even shut the driver-side door.

“What’s wrong?” she asked. “Is your dad okay?”

Before I could give a sensible answer my dad came tapping his cane down the sidewalk.

“Bucky? Bucky?” she called out to him. “Are you okay? What’s going on here?”

“I don’t know,” my dad said.

“What’s Delbert so upset about? What’s going on?” she asked him.

“I don’t know anything. I can’t remember a f—ing thing,” he said.

“Bucky!”

It was the first time I’d ever heard my dad use that word—judging from my mother’s immediate silence she was as surprised as I was, at least momentarily. Then she gave it right back to him in bigger doses. They got into one of the worst fights I’d ever seen them have, and what happened after that I don’t much remember. It was the worst day of my life up until then. Just as I was coming of age my dad was coming apart. Although he recovered from his bout of insanity (or whatever it was) literally the next day, the healing was slow and laborious. I slid right back into the comfort of emotional winter.

four

Some years passed. I went to college; I moved out of the house—and like so many of my fellow X-ers, I moved back home for a spell or two while trying to figure out how to do whatever it was I wanted to do. In my dad’s time it was simple: you took the job they offered you, baker, banker, or peddler. If you were lucky you went to college, but even then you took what was available and stuck to it. Me, I pondered law school, grad school, management. There seemed no shortage of opportunity, only a want of will and direction. That and a good hard kick in the seat of my jeans—in short all the things I was waiting for my father to give me. Deep down, I wanted to be a writer. Problem was what I didn’t know about writing and about life you couldn’t fit into just one book. So I drifted between dumb jobs, I drank too much and slept too late. I moved in and out of the spare bedroom. Although he didn’t understand me or my career choice, my dad seemed okay with all my wandering—which I couldn’t understand. Why wasn’t he coming down on me?

Of all the stories about fathers and sons—and there are plenty of them—it’s the story of
Stephen Dedalus that resonated most deeply with me during these years. The Prodigal and his waiting father, Telemachus and Odysseus, Oedipus and Laius, Hamlet and Hamlet Senior, Huck and his Pap: Their stories all made for lovely literature but I couldn’t relate to the gentle, patient old man gazing off to the horizon day after day for the silhouette of his son to appear, and even more foreign was the notion of the son setting out across a sea of uncertainty to find his father. But Stephen I could understand. The way Joyce tells the old myth, it’s the father, and not the son, who experiences the fall. And it’s the son who feels the sting. Indifferent Stephen, the young artist filing his nails behind the curtains while the show goes on, this Stephen essentially says to his father, Look, let’s just forget about it, okay? You do your thing, I’ll do mine, and we’ll try to avoid each other.

In the time that I had been away I changed—college does that to a person—and I marveled at how sophisticated I had become. In fact, I was so busy observing my own coming of age that I hadn’t noticed the changes in my father. One evening during the last summer I lived in my parents’ house I brought home one of the girls I was dating. After dinner with my folks I took her to a movie. “Your dad’s a sweetie,” she said as we were backing the car out of the driveway. “He’s so funny.”

It was the first thing she’d said to me after we’d excused ourselves and said good-bye, and I remember being completely surprised. “My dad?” I glanced at her face to see if she was kidding.

“Yes, don’t you think so?”

I shrugged. I had never thought of him as sweet or funny.

“Whenver I call he always jokes around. He seems so easygoing.”

My date that evening wasn’t the first person to tell me that—others had used similar language before to describe his bearing. Funny. Easygoing. Laid back. But for some reason this was the first time I’d ever listened to them. Yes, now I thought about it, he did have an easygoing side—but when had that happened? When did he get so cool? My dad now was not the man I’d grown up fearing. That man had gone away, had snuck off under the cover of illness, and had left a kinder if simpler man in his place. So this new man didn’t know how to father the same way the old man did—so what? What was that to me? So what if I never got my filial kick in the pants that was my birthright? It’s not like there weren’t a lot of other willing parties to do the kicking. Besides, perhaps I would kick myself and be so much the better for it.

five

Kierkegaard remarks that not all sickness is unto the death. Only the sickness called despair kills us. Kierkegaard was smarter than I am and right about a lot of things, but I would say there are days when despair, having done its best work, goes home empty-handed. There are days when despair despair. And on this day after, we—despair’s victims—for want of anything else, get out of bed and drag ourselves to the kitchen for the morning routine just as we always have. Hamlet was wrong—whether you suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or take arms against a sea of troubles has less to do with the nobility of your character than what you do once the crisis and its moments of decision have passed. It’s not victory or defeat that determines who we are, but what comes after.

About the seventh year of my father’s sickness he got well enough to take a part-time job as a bagboy at the local Winn-Dixie. Now, instead of a necktie he wore a nametag to work. Instead of a suit, the requisite black pants, white shirt, and standard-issue red vest. The whole uniform looked too big for him. Once, while running to the grocery store for this or that little thing, I chanced upon him out in the remote corners of the parking lot gathering stray carts. He looked every bit the blind man then, walking not by the light of his eyes but by the guesswork of his ears, and not so much walking as stuttering across the hot, sun-cracked asphalt. He didn’t see me, of course, and after hesitating a moment I resisted a fleeting, initial impulse to call out to him and offer my help. In no time at all I could have corralled every cart from all corners of that lot. But maybe he prefers to do it himself, I reasoned, and besides that he might get into trouble if he’s seen chatting with me.

But when I saw him ten minutes later at the check-out line he smiled, glad to see me, and even
took me to say hello to his boss.

Two weeks later my mom called the family together for a small celebration in honor of my dad being named Winn-Dixie’s “Employee of the Month” for July. There were hot dogs on the grill, beans, and corn-on-the-cob. Sitting at the head of the table in shirt sleeves was my dad, clearly humbled by all the fuss and yet in a way looking quite proud. My mother quietly told each of us kids how happy he was to be bringing home a check again, even a small one. And during the course of the evening he talked about life at the store, about the old ladies with their coupons, the mouthy young cashiers, the good boss and the bad boss, about his small-time grocery store misadventures with his friend and fellow bag-boy, Tim. To hear my dad talk about his job again was to think that bagging is all he had ever done and wanted to do, that accounting meant nothing to him. Together he and Tim were like a Quixote and a Sancho—or perhaps more like a pair of Sanchos. Tim was in his early twenties, like me. Tim was also semi-retarded, having been struck by lightning as a boy. My dad told us all about the plate in his head and how Tim wasn’t so much retarded as he was merely “slow.” But I just thought “whatever” and wondered whether I had ever even seen the guy. He had blond hair, according to my dad, and was a little on the chunky side. I tried but I still couldn’t place him. Perhaps it was because no matter how chummy the tone in my dad’s voice when he spoke about him I couldn’t imagine being friends with anyone my age.

August: the hottest part of summer was nearing its peak. In Florida the afternoon storms are as famous for their transience as for their intensity. They come, they harass and savage, and they go, like muggers on a wilding spree. Especially the storms that come later in the afternoon. These are the ones that make the atheists wonder if there is in fact a Job; they are like the vengeance of an outlaw coming back to town to shoot the sheriff who dared to jail him, all the worse for the slow, deliberate pace of the return.

I found myself in the middle of just such a storm one afternoon while on the way home from work. It got bad just as I was about halfway there. The last ten minutes of the drive took twenty and seemed like thirty. At last I pulled into the driveway, and after sitting in my car with the windows rolled up for a good ten minutes (I had no air conditioning, I felt like I would suffocate), I decided to make a run for the front door rather than sweat it out in the car until it let up a bit. It was no more than a ten-yard dash, but I got soaked through, absolutely beaten up by the storm. No sooner had I swung a leg out of the car than a flash of lighting opened my pores and pulled my hair on end. I thought I was dead.

Safe inside, the first thing I heard was the telephone. Who would call during a thunderstorm? Nonetheless I answered, breathless. It was my mom.

“Your father,” she said, sounding panic. “Go and get your father. He’s walking home in this storm!” I didn’t stop to think—I ran. Back through the rain, back in the car, back on the road. I peered into the sheets of water, checking every phone booth, tree trunk, doorway—any place a man might take shelter. Nothing. I drove up one side of the street then down the other. Was it possible I’d missed him? What if my dad had tried taking a shortcut? Maybe he was lost. The image of my father, wet and wandering—or worse, hit by lightning and laid out in the gutter, his eyes black, his lips purple, the smell of sulfur and singed flesh hovering above him—passed before my eyes. It was enough to make me feel like crying. Finally.

A few moments later I found him at Winn-Dixie, standing behind the big window in front of the store. Next to him was a young, chunky blond-haired man who I assumed was Tim. They were standing together watching the storm. I pulled right in front of them and waved, but their eyes were turned skyward, searching the striae of gray clouds for patches of blue or pale yellow that would inevitably come and let them know that soon it would be safe for them return home. I waved and waited for them to see me and then finally honked the horn. My dad dropped his gaze and blinked, then his face brightened with recognition. He smiled. I was glad to see that he was all right.
It was ninety degrees, at least, in the house when we walked in after being gone for Thanksgiving weekend. I knew at once that the heating unit was broken, its gauge stuck at a low temperature that insisted the house needed more steam.

I thought of the white-bearded fat man in overalls who had claimed to fix it the day before we left. He'd shocked himself while he showed me there wasn't enough current running to keep a fly from buzzing. "How the hell that happen?" he asked, as if I had installed a joy buzzer inside our electric furnace.

"Is that Santa Claus?" my youngest son, three months into kindergarten, asked after the electrician had slammed the door of his truck and driven away.

"Santa Claus shouldn't be fixing furnaces," I said, but Aaron, so close to Christmas, didn't smile.

Rather than call on a Sunday night, I shut the whole thing off. Better to be cold than have the thing explode, I reasoned, and it was only 40 degrees outside, the house insulated enough to hold the heat until morning.

"When do you think it stuck?" my wife asked.

It was 1982, our first winter in a new house, but I said "last night" at once, "maybe only this morning," and though neither of us had proof, Liz agreed, because even two days of such relentless heat seemed impossible without the disaster of explosion.

The pressure needle was swiveled far into the red zone of danger. If our house were an airplane, a warning system would have screamed "pull up!" For half an hour we watched the needle fall back and waited for the house to adjust. The newspapers, Thursday through Sunday, were bunched by the mail slot, and a few minutes later, when Liz reached Saturday's paper, she read aloud the first two sentences of a story about a five year-old boy electrocuted in his bathtub, stopping when Aaron stepped into the room.

He looked at the picture and wanted to know what had happened. "Something went wrong with his electricity," Liz offered.

"Our electric is wrong, too," Aaron said.

"Yes it is, but in a different way," Liz answered.

"I don't want a bath."

"Tomorrow's soon enough."

"Not then either."

"The next day, then. We'll see."

I took the paper to read for myself, discovered the boy had died because a lamp fell into the water while his parents watched television downstairs. "There were lights on in the bathroom," the mother remarked to the reporter, "so maybe it was for heat."

Upstairs, when Aaron called us to his bed, the house was still a sauna. "It's going to stay hot like this, isn't it?" he said.

"It'll cool down eventually."

"How long is that?"
"You'll be asleep."
"I can't sleep when it's this hot."
"We could run a fan in here for a while."
"No."
"You're not in a bathtub. You don't have to worry."
"I'm all sweaty. I'm just as wet as when I take a bath."
"That's not the same," I said, and he settled for an open window, assured that it was cold enough that no bugs would fly through the unscreened opening.

In the morning, before school, Aaron showed me a fly which was so sluggish in the cooling house that I caught it with my hands and dropped it into a jar. "It probably got revived in all that heat and then winter came right back."
"Was it dead?"
"Not quite, I guess."
"It's easy for flies to come back to life. They don't have as much stuff to fix."
"That's probably true," I said, and then, sick of qualifiers, and before Aaron could ask another question, I said "Yes."

An hour later, my own college classes not yet in session, a new repairman showed up. He was thin and agile, but just as willing to tell me everything was taken care of after a few minutes of tinkering. "I took that there spring mechanism out," he said. "You can't trust them things."
"Why have it?"
"They get jammed on you, you got a problem. They lose their fizz, you got a problem. I take it out, you just don't get quite so accurate a fix on things."
"So you didn't repair anything," I observed.
He looked angry for a second. "It's fixed, all right. It won't stick no more. You don't have to worry none when you leave the house. It's just not so sensitive."
"Like a car heater?"
He brightened. "Yessiree, that's the way it is now. Like a car heater, and those don't let you down now, do they?"

Finished by noon, Aaron came home from a morning of school-sponsored counseling. The dead boy's desk, he advised us for the first time, was right in front of his.
"Were you ever so cold you thought you were freezing?" he asked, interrupting the news I had the habit of watching during lunch.
"The blizzard of '77," I said at once. "Near Buffalo, where we lived when you were born. I was teaching high school then, and they dismissed school early, but some students couldn't get home. Teachers had a choice of leaving or staying overnight in the gym with 400 kids. I picked walking home."
"How far?"
"A mile. Halfway there the road turned west, and the wind was so strong I turned and walked backwards in the middle of the street because I didn't think anybody was still driving a car. All I did was shove my heels toward home and tell myself to keep moving."
"You were born three months later," Liz said.
"So if you had frozen, I would never have seen you?"
"That's right."
"Oh."
"We should talk about something else," Liz said.
"How do you freeze?"
Liz signaled with her lips, but I didn't want to be evasive. "You get so tired you go to sleep."
"Then just stay awake."
"Even the fly doesn't just stay awake. Look at him. He stopped moving again."

Sighing, Liz lifted Aaron and held him so high he could look down at the jar sitting on the television. "Sometimes things work out," she said. "There was a dog found after that big blizzard was
Gary Fincke's latest book of poetry, *The Technology of Paradise*, was published last summer by Avisson Press, and new work is forthcoming in *Paris Review* and *Southern Review*.

Aaron looked at her as if she had switched to speaking Farsi. On television there was a story about a museum tour of artifacts from Pompeii, including a dog preserved in volcanic ash. “That dog didn’t come back to life,” Aaron said.

“No, it didn’t,” I agreed.

“So it’s better to be too cold.”

“Maybe so.”

“But you have to get hot again.”

“Yes.”

Lowered once more, he shook the jar, but the fly lay there as if temperature no longer mattered.

“Flies don’t live that long,” I said. “This one got an extra day or two already because of our furnace.” Aaron handed me the jar. “Now what?” I said, but I took it over to a kitchen window, one with storm windows, so I could open the inside pane, and I dumped the fly in between the panes and reclosed it. “There,” I said, “when the sun hits it tomorrow, it will warm up again, and maybe it will be buzzing like crazy by lunchtime.”

“And then what?”

“We’ll have given it a longer life than any fly it ever knew.”
Blood

Michael Kramer

Τὸ δέμα ἀνώτου ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν
Let His blood be on us and on our children.
Matthew 27: 25b

I

I do not know the geography, but
I know the human friendship that causes men
to enjoy engines and drink together.
“Kramer” is not Gael, not Briton, I am German,
American. I do not fathom these troubles, but
the eyes of Philip Allen looked from my newspaper
and commanded my looking back. Damian Trainor,
his friend, seemed to look toward another photo
where friends carried a casket, his own, in a funeral Protestant
and Catholic attended.

My coffee cooled as I read,
and I still understand barely how terrorist Protestants
sought violence from Catholics by spraying bullets
in that bar, the Railway Bar, in Poyntzpass, Northern Ireland.

II

Bernadette Canavan, owner of the Railway Bar:

I will see those two boys before me for all the rest
of my days. March 3, and they sat on the old church bench—
mahogany, it is. Damian drank a soft drink; he drove
the tow truck, you know, and Philip joined him for talk.
Perhaps about the wedding—Philip was getting married—
poor, poor girl—and Damian was to be best man.
We weren’t crowded—only five others and the girl,
come to fetch her father. The masked men
burst in, guns at ready. One bullet in his brain
killed Damian. They pulled Philip off the bench. Four bullets
through him to the floor. They shot Protestants
in a Catholic bar! Only Damian was what they wanted.
Volunteer Force gunmen—a “neighborly tradition,” Tom Canavan
calls it; the kids played ball together. Neither school’s
enough to field a team. Banbridge men, they say.
One of them worked road crew here, they say.
They knew us well enough to miss the sheep trucks
and the barriers at the railroad back to Banbridge. But they didn't know enough to know we've had no troubles here. Father Hackett said we "must scare hard men of violence." I think that's true. That Protestant Trimble said the terrorists are "killing off the hope we are trying to engender."

We've held both funerals. Sean Trainor’s garage is open now. We've lost two sons. Sean himself said, "This must end. There has to be an end. . . ."

III

Sister Bernard guested in my class. She spoke about the Irish Troubles. "I was just a girl. My sister had a sickness, and my mother kept awake to nurse and cool her fever. We had blankets at the windows. The English had cleared their prisons to fill the Black and Tan; that night they patrolled to keep the curfew—they feared we'd harbor IRA rebels in our town. Still we needed light to nurse my sister. They pounded on the door. My father answered and explained about his sick child. The Black and Tan blustered and pushed on through. The officer ordered a search—we'd not harbor rebels from the hills. I see it now," Sister breathed. "My father stood and blocked the door. ‘Wake my babe,’ he said, ‘and I'll kill you where you stand.’ He was resolute. The Black and Tan glowered, but they left." My students listened, rapt.

IV

In a poet's speech, I find this story.

The workers rode home one January night in 1976. The bus was cool after hot work, and the company kept the light talk going toward home and hearth when gunmen stopped the bus. Along the road one masked man lined up the workers and barked, "Any Catholics among you, step out here." Only one Catholic rode that bus; the Protestants joined to save him, his neighbor pressing his hand to reassure they'd not betray his faith or party. He, not to betray his faith, stepped forth. Pushed away, he saw his Protestant mates gunned down by men of the Provisional IRA.

V

Around that feast the governor would release whatever prisoner the mob wished. He held one
called Jesus Bar Abbas prisoner. When the crowd had formed, Pilate asked, “Do you wish Jesus Bar Abbas released, or Jesus called Messiah?”

The priests and elders convinced the crowd to release Bar Abbas and execute Jesus.

The governor replied, “Which of these would you have us release to you?”

“Bar Abbas,” they said.

Then Pilate asked them, “What should I do with Jesus called Messiah?”

They all said, “Crucify Him.”

“But what has He done wrong?” he said.

Louder they said, “Crucify Him!”

Seeing he was getting nowhere and the uproar was increasing, Pilate took water and, washing his hands, said to the crowd, “I am guiltless of this man’s blood. The burden is yours.”

In answer the people said, “Let His blood be on us and on our children.”

VI

Prison police found David Keys hanged in his cell on Sunday. He had been strangled first.

“. . . not guilty to any of them murders,” he said.

Police had arrested four Banbridge men, including Keys, members of the Loyalist volunteer Force, in the Poyntzpass murders.

An LVF cellmate in H block six of Maze prison likely prevented an interrogation from leading the police to other killers.

Protestant nationalist leader Peter Robinson demanded inquiry into Maze prison as no longer under the authorities’ control.

Judas, going away, hanged himself.

VII

I do not know the geography, but I know the contours of the human heart.

Philip Allen, Protestant, cement truck driver, and Damian Trainor, Catholic, tow truck driver, both lie buried, shot by terrorist gunmen of the Loyalist Volunteer Force. These sons have died—result of an answered prayer? “His blood on us and on our children”?
I close my paper, get up
to warm my coffee, and sit down. θεέ μου,
θεέ μου, ιερεί ημῶς ἐγκατέλιπες; —My God,
why have You abandoned us?

We act
in imitation of our Christ—from the cross then
Jesus said, 'Forgive them, Father,
for they don't know what they're doing.'

I do not know the geography, but
I know the twisted contours of the human heart.

I do not know the geography, but
I do know the heart of a compassionate God.

Shall We Gather at the River? 
introducing the incomplete angler

a review essay

Michael G. Cartwright


I can still remember standing on the riverbank as a six-year old boy watching my first baptism. What an amazing moment that was. To this day, whenever I hear the tune of the old Baptist hymn “Shall We Gather at the River” I feel myself moved more deeply than I can begin to say. What it might mean for a Muslim or Jain to “gather at the River” in the same sense that Christians like me have done and continue to do I would hardly know. For that matter, I am not sure how someone other than a Jew or a Christian might make sense of the complex metaphor of the Rock from which life-giving water flows (cf. I Corinthians 10:3 and Exodus 17:6), and even then the Jew and the Christian might find different significance in the same text. What I do know is that these two biblical references barely touch the rich, complex, and highly unpredictable ways that these images sound and resound in Jewish and Christian traditions. This is part of what makes interreligious dialogue so fascinating as well as frustrating. Even when we share some of the same images, they are often configured in strikingly different ways, a fact that would-be theologians of world religions sometimes forget.

one

Metaphors of rocks, rivers and “bridges” have come to be more frequently encountered in the growing if somewhat fractious literature of the theology of world religions since Raimundo Pannikar’s essay “The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges” in The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religion (1987). Pannikar argued that the three sacred rivers can be understood as “figures of the history of Christianity’s relation to other religions.” The River Jordan stands for exclusivism—the traditional belief that Christianity is the only true religion. The Tiber, with all of its Roman associations of unidirectional authority, symbolizes the myth of Christendom: all rivers and religions must in the end lead to Christianity. According to Pannikar’s non-doctrinal mystical spirituality, neither of these approaches adequately recognizes or respects the “otherness” of the other religions (41-42).

In contrast, Pannikar invokes the Ganges River, which is formed by many sources and disperses in a variety of outlets, as the image for a pluralistic approach to the theology of world religions. In sum, Pannikar argues in his flatfooted invocation of the metaphor, the Ganges reminds us that Christianity is one of several valid religions. While Pannikar’s metaphor of the three rivers is suggestive, it hardly does justice to the particularities of the Roman Catholic and Jewish traditions. Thus, the Christian tradition’s identification of God as trine would be taken as an attempt to keep dialogue out of the Ganges and exclusively in currents of the Jordan and Tiber instead of being an instance of the reconciliation of unity and diversity.

In the same volume as Pannikar’s contribution, Paul Knitter employed the river metaphor in a strikingly different way when he identified a fourth river—“The Theological Rubicon”—in the
course of exploring several possible bridges between Christianity and the religions of the world. According to Knitter, to cross "the theological Rubicon" means "to recognize clearly, unambiguously, the possibility that other religions exercise a role in salvation history that is not only valuable and salvific but perhaps equal to that of Christianity... it is to admit that if other religions must be fulfilled in Christianity, Christianity must, just as well, find fulfillment in them" (42). In this instance, Knitter's insistence on the transformative possibilities of interreligious dialogue takes seriously the effects of dialogue for theological convictions, but once again it does so at the expense of the particularity or substance of any one set of religious convictions.

More recently, Diana Eck's book *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (1993) has employed yet another version of the river metaphor in discussing her journey from the Gallatin River of Montana to the Ganges River of India. Eck's evocative meditations on the significance of her encounters with other religions for her own Christian faith portray religious traditions as "flowing and changing" rivers as opposed to the "rigid" conception of stones passed from generation to generation. "All of us contribute to the river of our traditions. We do not know how we will change the river or be changed as we experience its currents" (2). In some sense, for Eck it is the experience of interreligious dialogue with other people that constitutes us in this time before the great convergence of all traditions. In that sense, Eck's work, like that of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, trades on the notion that "God transcends our idea of God" (186), and that in some sense we can know that God apart from the constraints of human traditions, liturgies, and forms of life.

For Eck, then, the questions that arise from the encounter of religions issue less from the cumulative effect of any given tradition that is in view than from the personal experience of the dialogue of traditions. As she prefers to say, it is a matter of "the encounter of worlds:"

The meeting of Banaras and Bozeman, East and West, can be duplicated in a hundred keys and a hundred languages. The encounter of worlds and worldviews is the shared experience of our times. We see it in the great movements of modern history, in colonialism and the rejection of colonialism, in the late twentieth-century politics of identity—ethnic, racial, and religious. We experience it in our own personal versions of this encounter... What do we make of this encounter with a different world, a different worldview? How will we think about the heterogeneity of our immediate world and our wider world? This is our question, the human question, at the end of the twentieth century. (10-11)

As Eck sees it, this is a question of "being honest" with ourselves about who and what we have encountered in the heterogenous "worlds" and "worldviews" that surround us. Not to engage this "human question" is on Eck's grounds to be false to the very contexts of exchange, dialogue, and encounter that now constitute our lives.

While Eck's desire to be "honest" about her dialogue with other religious traditions is as commendable as her refusal to compartmentalize truth, honesty is by no means the only criterion for deploying a theology of world religions, and it may not even be the best standard for thinking through the complexity of interreligious dialogue. As George Lindbeck has successfully argued, it is also important to attend to the grammar of religious doctrines and practices, and this Eck does not do. It is no accident that Eck's project has no room for what it would mean to discuss the "trinitarian constitution of the self," for theological proposals like those of Ron Anderson proceed from the assumption that we are constituted in large part by religious practices, whereas Eck works from the assumption that Christianity, like the human self, is always in the process of becoming. For Eck, we stand in the river, but it appears that the flow of the river is as much affected by our presence in it as we are by the living currents that surround us.

Although it does not occur to the average student, Eck's juxtaposition of stones and rivers as metaphors for dialogue between religious traditions is overstated. Her usage suggests an "all or nothing" conception—rigidity versus fluidity—of human agency without giving adequate attention to the ways in which religious traditions constitute the self in such ways that would make one's participation in another tradition tantamount to a fundamental change in one's identity. At its worst, this conception of dialogue can actually devalue the theological profundity of conversion and di-
minish the necessity of Christian missions. The contemporary popularity of Eck’s book in undergraduate classrooms in and beyond the US is a reminder that wordplays about rocks and rivers can have significant effects when joined to the educational process apart from any significant attempt to engage the validity of theological truth claims as such.

two

The trick, it would seem, is to use such metaphors carefully without forgetting that there are limits to each metaphor and there may be possibilities that move in other directions than those most visible to us at any given moment. Theologian Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Senior Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at New College, University of Edinburgh, is one theologian who understands the possibilities and limits of using metaphors to explore the tricky terrain of theology for world religions as his essay “Does the Trinity Belong in a Theology of Religions?” (41-71) makes clear. It is not often that one can say that a single essay merits the purchase of an entire book, but I am convinced that such expense is warranted in the case of The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion, edited by Vanhoozer himself. This collection, which includes essays by a group of ten (British, American and French) theologians, originated in the Fifth Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference (1993). Arguably several other essays in this collection are also worthy of note, but in my judgment Vanhoozer’s is the one essay that clearly breaks new ground. That it does so has everything to do with the careful wordplays signalled by his subtitle “On Angling in the Rubicon and the Identity of God.” Vanhoozer’s use of the complex metaphor of “Angling” provides a good case in point. In arguing against pluralists (Hick, Pannikar, and Knitter), he adopts Izaak Walton’s description of the Compleat Angler as “an alternative paradigm for engaging the Other” (46).

For those readers who are unfamiliar with this minor classic, Vanhoozer provides a brief summary of its contents. The first few chapters of The Complete Angler consist of a dialogue between a fisherman, a hunter, and a falconer in which the three discuss the relative merits of their favorite sports. As Vanhoozer readily acknowledges, Walton’s little book also reflected the religious allegiance of the author and his intellectual companions, the Great Tew, who advocated religious moderation (46). In fact, as Vanhoozer is careful to note, the Angler is a not-so-subtle metaphor in Walton’s work for the Anglican via media. “The Angler has commitments, but he is willing to be tolerant of others and to argue his case with humility and humor as well as conviction... Angling—with its overtones of ‘trying for,’ and ‘gaining a perspective on’—stands for the contemplative attitude of one who stands on the shores of the theological Rubicon and sits on the banks of the Ganges” (47).

As Vanhoozer well knows, this is a very tricky orientation to embody without contradicting oneself; to his credit, Vanhoozer does not pull back from the logical implications of this approach. Unlike Izaak Walton—and Diana Eck for that matter—Vanhoozer recognizes both the incompleteness of his metaphor and the limits of any given set of metaphors; therefore, he does not make the mistake of overdetermining his theological version of the Angler. In fact, he embraces the incompleteness of his paradigmatic imagery with his language of “the incomplete angler.” He contends that, theologically speaking, for Christians “[t]rue pluralism... is possible only on trinitarian grounds. This follows from the fact that one’s ethics and epistemology are rooted in ontology. The Trinity, then, far from hindering conversation is the transcendental condition of interfaith dialogue with the Other. Without the Trinity, theological dialogue lacks the necessary specificity (i.e., Logos, Christ) and the necessary spirit (i.e., love, Spirit) to prosper” (68). In sum, Vanhoozer recognizes that his version of Walton’s Angler does face something of a dialogical dilemma—he or she “must be open to differences while at the same time minding distinctives,” and even then interreligious dialogue must be grounded in the practice—not merely the rhetoric—of Christian love.

three

Even so, questions remain for Vanhoozer’s “Incomplete Angler” who is represented as standing “knee-deep” in the waters of the Rubicon asking questions, questions about the nature and the scope
of God’s love for the Other as well as questions about the consequences of providing a narratival identification of the triune God for how we understand the Spirit, and even questions about the “relative adequacy” of the identity descriptions of other religions. Does the Muslim pray to the same God as the Christian? The identity question cannot be begged, but we may not be able to answer it either, Vanhoozer candidly admits.

In my judgment, Kevin Vanhoozer’s essay accomplishes two significant objectives, even if it raises issues that the author could not address without extending his essay into a booklength study. First, Vanhoozer succeeds in persuading the reader that the problem of religious pluralism is best re-located from soteriology to theology proper. While this aspect of his article is fairly technical, it unfolds from answering the question “Are the other religions concerned with the same reality as the Christian faith?” with the recognition that this cannot be known apart from actually engaging in the substance of such dialogue—including theological truth claims.

Second, Vanhoozer outlines a specifically Trinitarian theology of religions that owes much of its punch to the work of a cadre of theologians—Gavin D’Costa, Kenneth Surin, Rowan Williams and John Milbank—who were contributors to the volume *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (1990). With these writers, Vanhoozer wants to move beyond the inadequacies of John Hick’s conception of “the pluralistic hypothesis” to explore what it means to recognize the doctrine of the Trinity as “the transcendental condition for interreligious dialogue.”

Vanhoozer’s deft deployment of the Angler metaphor does not lead him to prescind from making toughminded theological judgments. He contends, for example, that the pluralism of Hick, Pannikar, *et al.* is guilty of “semantic Sabellianism” insofar as it “claims that the names and predications for God are only modes of speaking about the same God….” Nor does his use of the Angler keep him from casting out in the deep waters to explore the possibilities that some currents might be worth fishing again. For example, he raises the question of whether it might be “time to reclaim the Reformed emphasis on the inseparability of Word and Spirit, and in particular the doctrine of the testimony of the spirit, for the theology of religions.”

Vanhoozer’s careful deployment of the Angler metaphor is admirable and restrained. There is no attempt to champion Anglican comprehension here. What the reader encounters, instead, is a frank acknowledgement that in the doctrine of the Trinity we find an identification of God that is “at once exclusivistic and pluralistic. And because this god who is three-in-one has covenanted with what is other than himself—the creature—the identity of God is also inclusivistic” (70-71). Such nuanced argument is disciplined as well as honest. More to the point, it invites further exploration between those who, like himself, are practitioners of Christianity and who seek to engage in interreligious dialogue.

Thus, the last paragraph of Vanhoozer’s essay is likely to bite the reader who presumes—with Eck *et al.*—that rivers and rocks have nothing in common:

The Angler must be careful not to become engulfed in deep waters. But a River of life, identified in John 7:38-39 with the Spirit, runs through the City of God (Rev. 22:1). If this Spirit is universally available, it is not because all religions drink from the same great river. It is rather because the Spirit has sprung, under the conditions of history, from a Rock (I Cor. 10:4). Life in the Spirit, ‘rivers of living water,’ shall flow from the hearts of those who believe in Jesus.

As this passage makes clear, when contextualized within the richness of the biblical tradition, rocks and rivers often have much more to do with one another than it might seem when presented by practitioners of interreligious dialogue who are importing philosophical traditions—without acknowledging that they are doing so—into their proposals for a theology of world religions. By contrast, Vanhoozer—like Walton’s Angler—is much more candid about what (theologically and philosophically speaking) he is trying to do. Indirectly, Vanhoozer’s essay also reminds us that metaphors should not be taken to be unidirectional. They can be double-voiced, as well as multivalent, and they are frequently much more incomplete than Pannikar, Knitter and Eck appear to take into account. This latter fact appears to be forgotten (or ignored?) by those advocates of the pluralistic hypothesis who prefer to make such metaphors instrumental to their own ideology, as if the
contrast between the fluidity of rivers with the apparent rigidity of rocks is the only way the metaphors can be deployed. Such monolithic uses of metaphors can be a clue to the presence of an unacknowledged ideology.

Mark Heim has effectively unmasked this ideological structure in his recent book *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (1995). Heim shows that the pluralistic hypothesis of Hick et al. fails to take into account the real possibility that there are multiple ends of religions. As such, Hick’s approach, ironically, turns out to reflect some of the very cultural assumptions that it pretends to have transcended. By contrast, Heim argues that if all religions are not converging toward the same end (e.g. salvation) then we must speak of *salvations*, at which point interreligious dialogue becomes a much trickier matter. In fact, it may be that in order to truly engage the plurality of arguments, we have to simply acknowledge that at some levels it is not possible to transcend one’s own tradition while engaging in authentic dialogue. To do so is not to be resigned to the impossibility of dialogue; rather it is to confess that the very ways we have been transformed when we have gathered at the River in some sense conditions our dialogue with others. At the same time, we can also learn to live within the limits of epistemological modesty of what we can say about other religions, for it is also the case that here and now we “see through a glass darkly.”

Not everyone will find Heim’s “more pluralistic hypothesis” to be a convincing alternative, any more than will all readers decide to adopt the model of the “incomplete angler” that Vanhoozer professes, but it appears to this reader that the arguments of Heim and Vanhoozer do converge with one another in mutually supportive ways. Whether or how Vanhoozer’s analysis might be extended to explore the implications of these learnings for missiology and evangelism as well as Christian ethics are open questions worth pursuing, but these are projects for the future. In the meantime, we can be thankful that Vanhoozer has taken the time to go angling in the waters of the theological Rubicon, and to help all of us better understand just how challenging it can be to engage the Other and God in the midst of the theological conflictedness of our own traditions.

---

Subscribe to *The Cresset* for only $8.50 per year for seven issues.
Emeritus faculty of Lutheran institutions can have their own subscription for $4.00.
Students get the same rate.
Generous aunts, parents and children can give five gift subscriptions for a paltry $25.00. Call our office for details at 219-464-6809, fax at 219-464-5511 or email Gail.Eifrig@valpo.edu
the peace of the Lord

Dorothy C. Bass

A reading from the Gospel of John, the 14th chapter. Jesus is speaking to his disciples on the night in which he will be betrayed:

I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid...

I've been asked to talk with you about how my faith has changed. It's an intriguing question, one that's made me think hard these past few days. You might want to try answering it too, for yourself, even if you don't do so from this spot where I'm standing.

As I've been thinking, this passage from John's gospel has persistently presented itself to me as the one I need to ponder. Maybe that's because I can so easily, and so grandly, imagine the homily I'd like to deliver. It would tell the story of how I came to trust Christ completely, as Christ led me to follow this gracious command, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." I would say that I used to fret about the work I couldn't do well enough, and that I used to fear for the safety of the people I love, far beyond what is reasonable. That I used to let my heart get so troubled about little things that I often got irritable with the people I love, not to mention the people I didn't particularly care for. That I even used to stew, with real agitation, about things like, well, like what to wear when I have to give the homily in morning prayer. And of course I would tell this story with such serenity that you would be inspired, and you would resolve not to let your heart be troubled either, and not to be afraid. And then, relying on Christ, you would stop worrying about that paper, and just go ahead calmly and happily to get it done. And you would say "be quiet" to that little voice at the back of your head, the one that troubles you about not being good enough for this class or that friend, and it would be quiet. And that nagging doubt about God? You could get that to stop bothering you too. Then you would be serene, just like me.

But that's not really my story. This command not to let my heart be troubled is a hard one for me.

As so often happens in scripture, however, this command is tied to a promise. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." This is the same peace that we wish each other right here in this place, almost every time we gather, and especially on Sunday morning and Wednesday night. "The peace of the Lord be with you."

A few weeks ago I was at a wonderful, festive Eucharist service, the kind where the passing of the peace stretches on for a long time, while everyone leaves their seat to hug the people just across...
the aisle or clear across the room. Coming at me, arms open wide, was Gertrude Lundholm. I wish you could see Gertrude... she is very short, with curly hair and big blue eyes. When we dedicated new playground equipment this summer, she was the first one down the slide—a great honor granted her because she is so beloved in the community. Gertrude is 85 years old. Her health is fragile. She knows that the time remaining to her is short, and especially the time when she can go down slides. It’s possible that this was her last visit to this playground, which is many miles from her home. Anyway, here comes Gertrude towards me, to pass the peace. I lean down to meet her hug. And this is what I hear: “May God disturb you!” Then she gives me a grin and turns around to find another person to hug, and perhaps to unsettle.

The next day I asked Gertrude what she meant. She said that in her opinion many Christians seem to think that the peace of God is just about their own internal peace of mind, as if being a Christian is kind of like being on a kind of tranquilizer. But God intends to stir us up, she said, to make us notice new things, to keep us from being complacent.

I think Gertrude is onto something. Christ’s peace is sure and steady; I know Gertrude herself would agree with this. But most of the time it’s not sure and steady like a comfortable bed or an eerily even temperament. It’s sure and steady more like a rock that you stand on as you cross a rushing stream, or like the assurance that comes when you are so caught up in helping someone that you forget to worry about yourself.

Martin Luther called faith “a lively, reckless confidence in the grace of God.” Gertrude thought that we Christians like the part about confidence so much that we often overlook the part about being lively and reckless.

The peace Christ gives is not the kind the world gives. It’s not even the kind the world talks about, in all those self-help spirituality books about getting centered. Jesus was on his way to the cross when he promised peace to the disciples, and soon they would be on their way to their own crosses as well.

But the peace Christ gives is peace. Not a peace that just lies there, though sometimes we do need to lie down, and when we do Christ lies with us. Christ’s peace is also an active peace. Peace like the peace that dawns when warring parties lay down their arms, or when people from groups linked historically by anger and fear begin to trust one another, or when friends filled with resentment begin to seek mutual forgiveness. It is an active peace, spreading out from Jesus to the disciples to us, into the world.

I can’t give a homily saying that God has led me fully into this kind of peace either. But to this I can testify: the times of my greatest peace, even in terms of a sort of internal serenity, come when I am involved in conspiring with God to make active peace among people. That’s when my heart forgets to be troubled, because it is so caught up in the love of God.

I trust that my faith is still changing, which is just a symptom that God is changing me. This is a mystery. But for now, I’ll just hope that when I’m an old lady, God willing, I’ll still be disturbed by God. And really at peace. Not as the world gives, but in Christ.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

Dorothy C. Bass,
Director of the
Valparaiso Project on
the
Education and
Formation of People
in Faith, gave this
homily at VU’s
Chapel of the
Resurrection in
September.
Robert Benne, a professor of religion and ethics at Roanoke College, writes regularly for The Cresset on national affairs.

abortion: moral and legal reflections

Robert Benne

Last week two events that mattered to me happened on the same day. President Clinton again vetoed the “partial-birth abortion” legislation brought to him by a large majority of the Senate. But the Senate fell several votes short of overriding the President’s veto and that procedure still remains legal, in spite of the American Medical Association’s formal pronouncement that it is unnecessary.

On the very evening of that veto we attended the annual fundraiser of the Crisis Pregnancy Center of the Roanoke Valley. That event is one of the largest fundraisers in the Valley but is rarely covered by any of the media. It’s not an “in” event with the Valley elite, who much prefer the “chef’s delight” fundraiser sponsored by Planned Parenthood. Nevertheless, it elicits much loyalty from the huge evangelical and fundamentalist communities here. Some mainstream Protestants and a larger number of Catholics also lend their support. I support the organization enthusiastically because of the wisdom implicit in the injunction offered by many parties in the controversy over abortion: “If you discourage women from having abortions, you’d better be willing to support them when they decide ‘for life.”’

So I found myself both pained and exhilarated on the same day on this controverted issue. At an earlier time in my life I wouldn’t have had such contrary feelings. Nor would I have been as reluctant to write about the subject as I am now; I was pretty sure that the expansion of abortion rights was a good thing. Like many others of my generation, the Supreme Court decision in 1973 seemed to be an important step forward for women and men alike. It allowed safe and legal abortions for those who carefully considered such a momentous decision. The Lutheran church to which I belonged (The Lutheran Church in America) endorsed the decision, which lent even more credence to my initial opinion.

But like my church, I began to feel queasy about the whole matter. I can remember seeing page after page of advertisements in the Yellow Pages of the Chicago telephone directory for abortion services. The floodgates seemed to open wide and many, many developing lives were ended. About the same time, a principled movement to limit abortion rights emerged to challenge the changes effected by the Roe vs. Wade decision. What many people thought would be an end to the matter was only the beginning. My church reconsidered its almost unqualified support. And I began a journey to “the other side.”

That journey was accelerated by some intense personal experiences. In the spring of 1977 my wife, Joanna, told me that she thought she was pregnant. We were both forty and already had three children, the youngest, already nine years old. We had lived our 18 years of married life on one salary and were getting tired of running out of money ten days before the month ended. Joanna was planning to enter the work force again to supplement the modest salary of a seminary professor. We were psychologically settled into the expectation that our childbearing days were over. Moreover, we had a sabbatical coming up, which we planned to take in Cambridge, England. Going there with three kids seemed enough of a challenge without an infant on our hands.

So the suspicion of another pregnancy came as a real downer. (Indeed, the Sondheim song “Send in the Clowns” will always have somber connotations for me that go beyond the...
text and music itself.) But we needed to make sure. So Joanna went to the Pregnancy Testing Center that was located in our church. I was on the church council and had been led to believe that the center simply provided accurate testing and did not encourage its clients in any specific direction. But when Joanna got a positive test the staff of the center handed her a list of abortion providers. They were shocked when she told them she didn't want the list. But we were equally shocked that such a blithe endorsement of abortion was going on in our church!

After we were certain about the pregnancy I felt trapped. I simply wasn't prepared to raise a fourth child! My mind flitted to that list of providers. Wouldn't that solve things quickly? I was saved from actually entertaining that idea by the steadfastness of my wife, who is the real hero of the story. She resolutely, firmly, and deliberately accepted the invitation to be a mother again, though she was just as settled as I in the notion that we were done with bearing children. I often hope and pray that I wouldn't have seriously contemplated an abortion, that I would have finally been as strongly for the new life as was my wife. But I'll never know for sure.

But I am so grateful for the steadfast Christian hospitality of my wife, who was willing to accept the most vulnerable of strangers. She carried me along. And we are delighted to have a 20-year-old son who is now in his third year of college.

Her steadfast commitment to new life has led me over the years to listen with careful attention to the arguments of the “pro-life” movement, which I believe are slowly winning the day both morally and legally. They certainly won the day with me.

Here are some of them. First, human life certainly does begin at conception. It may not be fully developed, but neither are babies. The fetus, if allowed to develop, will indeed become a baby and then a person. Everything is there from the beginning. It just needs to be protected and nurtured. The unborn child’s claims to life increase as it develops and become near inviolable at viability, which is increasingly pushed back to earlier and earlier stages. While abortion at the very early stages of pregnancy may not be murder, it certainly is killing. But even if the fetus’ claim to life is not absolute at the early stages of pregnancy, it is profoundly serious.

Second, such weighty respect for developing life is not dependant on the wishes or desires of the mother or the father or both. That life has intrinsic value of its own that must be recognized and respected; its value is objective rather than subjective. While it is definitely true that “every child should be wanted,” the child’s life should not depend on whether it is wanted or not. My second son works for a private mental health agency that deals with profoundly handicapped persons. Many of them are not “wanted” by anyone else. Yet, we have enough moral fiber as a society to bestow worth and care upon them whether or not they are wanted. They are persons created in the image of God and neither their handicaps—nor the fact that they are not “wanted”—can efface that.

Third, we ought to recognize that objective worth by encouraging women to bring their babies to term, by supporting them at birthing time and by offering the possibility of adoption of the child to the hundreds of thousands of persons wanting to adopt babies. Crisis Pregnancy Centers around the country try to do just that. That’s why I find them so compelling.

Fourth, freedom alone does not a moral decision make. Freedom is necessary for a moral decision, but it is not sufficient. The claims of other lives have to be taken into account. The American assumption that a choice freely made is therefore a moral choice rests on faulty ethical thinking. The point is to make the right, the good, or the virtuous choice. And that includes due consideration of other moral claims upon the onself.

Finally, even the Roe vs. Wade decision recognizes that the state can have a compelling obligation to protect developing life as it nears birth. Our freedoms can justly be limited to prevent harm to others, even to life that is not yet born. Courts are increasingly recognizing that harm to the unborn by outside parties is harm to a person.

Now, with all that said, I know there are good reasons for allowing a measure of moral and legal freedom for balancing competing claims in the early months of pregnancy, as our
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Social Statement argues. But Christians also ought to presume strongly for life, again as that statement argues, and for the reasons I have stated above. I can only believe and hope that abortion should be exceedingly rare among them.

Legal remedies are another matter. I think it is important legally to limit abortions by banning the “partial-birth” procedure, by drastically limiting abortion after viability and by continuing to insist on parental notification laws. As for the early months, I would hope that everyone seeking abortions would have to justify such a serious act, much as is required in many European countries. Though permission might well be pro forma, such a requirement would underline the gravity of the action.

But abortion in this more limited sense would have to be kept legal and accessible...but not too accessible. In the long run I would hope that the moral landscape would change. Sex would once again be firmly connected with public commitment, family planning strategies (perhaps even of the natural kind) would be made more healthful and effective, dishonor would once again fall upon young men who got a woman pregnant outside the promise of marriage, and that the whole society would be more welcoming to and supportive of life, not only to the unborn but also to the born.

AMBITION

When you got drunk the night before graduating, you called your old roommate and he said his ambition was to drive every highway in America.

That phone bill with a twenty minute call to Michigan was forwarded months later into your new life of trains, work, dinners at well-lit restaurants.

You swore to the phone company you didn’t know a soul there. They changed your bill and it was winter before you remembered him.

He was gone by then anyway, after parking his car across a gray stretch of railroad tracks. The next train through took him to the only place he ever wanted to go.

Celeste Duder
Dear Editor:

Three of my father's heroes were Winston Churchill, Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft, and Dr. George W. Crane. He admired Churchill for wartime courage, Taft for avoiding cant and for the courage of his convictions (also the convictions themselves, political and fiscal conservatism), and Crane for practical wisdom useful in daily life.

If he used the word "hero," which I doubt, as too grandiloquent for the Midwest, he would have used it only for Churchill. Taft, strictly speaking, wasn't a hero; he simply behaved the way politicians, most of them spineless and morally clueless, ought to behave. Crane he learned from, and if we're attentive we learn from everybody, and we can't call everybody a hero. Can we?

Crane is the peculiar one in this trio, and he makes me reassess the notion of hero. I'm inclined to collapse all distinctions and say that the only true heroes are mentors, people who teach us, because true teaching is transformative. Heroes are the towering remote figures who save civilizations, but what is that to me? Those saviors—Churchill, King, Nader, maybe McGwire?—are off the charts, demigods, and therefore teach us nothing. We rejoice in their deigning to dwell with us, but we fall short of their glory, and we can't go out and do likewise. They're useless.

Meanwhile, as my father read Dr. Crane, I took up Sydney J. Harris, in those days when we were all mutually parenting one another, mother, father, younger sister, and I. Mother may have learned something about parenting during her two years at Indiana State Normal School in Terre Haute. It took only that length of time, in the late 1920s, to earn a lifetime elementary-school teaching certificate. I have no idea whether in those days a sort of John Dewey permissiveness dominated the curriculum, or whether the Wabash Valley had its own gentle ideology, but Mother was mild and imper­
turbable. Still, maybe her training was irrelevant; isn't classroom teaching a different thing from a parent transitioning her own toddlers into tolerable teenagers? This is all very complicated.

Dad's views of child-raising must have been a strange mix: what he learned from Mother plus a diluted form of the industrial­

strength Lutheranism fermented in St. Louis and bottled locally. His own parents were German immigrants, one arriving as an infant and the other as a teenager, who never amounted to much in the world's eyes. Immigrants are mentors notoriously off-key anyway. For parenting, if my father did defer to my mother, he would have been respecting not only her license to practice pedagogy but her place as seventh of twelve children. Her parents, also immigrants, had had plenty of practice.

Specific mentor-heroes are therefore irre­

trievable. I don't know, really, who raised me. Provisionally, it appears that we all—mother, fa­

ter, sister, and myself—were raised by people we didn't know, by strangers we never met face­
to-face but only in newspapers, magazines, and books. Both parents were readers, and not of harmful texts like King Lear, wherein two bad daughters and one good one exhaust a raving old patriarch, or vice versa. These Indiana parents did not avail themselves of soap operas on the radio, those daily labs of vexed domesticity. The
radio was hardly on; Dad awoke to the CBS world news roundup, and on Sundays at six we permitted ourselves Jack Benny’s sanitized Hollywood. TV was only being born (what an \textit{enfant terrible} that kid still is!); in its absurd fantasy world fathers like Ozzie Nelson wore coat and tie around the house.

My father read Dr. George W. Crane in the old \textit{Chicago Daily News}, and later subscribed to \textit{Organic Gardening}. Mother for a long time took the daily newspaper from her hometown, Lafayette, and had a collection of useful volumes such as \textit{You Are What You Eat}, advising that her children would turn into vegetables if deprived of “trace elements.” She read the Sears catalog but not Ward’s or Spiegel. They subscribed to \textit{The Christian Parent}, edited by Martin Simon, father of Paul Simon, former Illinois senator, and Arthur Simon, founder of Bread for the World. These two lads turned out fine, so the magazine must have been sound. I myself nibbled at it every month when it came in the mail, also \textit{Farm Journal}, and a magazine called \textit{The Cresset}. This \textit{Cresset} was at that time the size of the \textit{Reader’s Digest} (which we disdained subscribing to but somehow acquired), and it told us each month what movies it was OK for Lutherans to see.

I assume my parents got \textit{The Christian Parent} in order to read it, but maybe it was just something the church urged on people, instead of providing a parenting class. Was it Mother who subscribed to \textit{Farm Journal}, a tie to her childhood, or was it Dad, who worked for a company making farm equipment? This is all very complicated and uncertain, including that \textit{Cresset} subscription, which is somehow bound up with my father’s genuine interest in theology and his early support for nearby Valparaiso University (though he himself had not gone beyond tenth grade). Everybody in church, of course, got \textit{The Lutheran Witness}, the Missouri Synod organ, but Dad also subscribed to \textit{The American Lutheran}, which I recall as definitely a step up, intellectually, the theological ladder.

Dr. George W. Crane was what used to be called an “applied psychologist”; his newspaper column taught how to read and manipulate other people. He wasn’t (as I recall) a mere tip-meister, giving quickie cues for winning friends and influencing people, but was truly interested in how the human engine ran. If you learned something about internal combustion, you could decide for yourself what octane to use, and how far back from the tailpipe to stand. My father, as production manager of a small factory, often was compelled to help the foreman train half-awake machine operators; Dr. Crane, I think, helped too. One of the foremen was himself not always easy to get along with; as for voluntary crosses to bear, my father also taught Sunday school.

I assume that Dr. Crane was also put to work by Dad in raising his well-behaved children, both of whom, as I look back, must have seemed to our parents volatile in different and centrifugal ways. When I drove my sister to O’Hare airport after Dad’s funeral, we had some good talk about big things, and to my shock it turned out that she thought human beings are fundamentally the same. I have guided my adult life, including much teaching and informal counseling, on the premise that people are fundamentally different, and could not believe she had grown up so wrong. What would Dr. Crane have thought about \textit{that}? How did our loving parents assess their discordant offspring?

After a certain age, I read Sydney J. Harris, being in need of mentoring other than the latest agrinews, the ancient Lutheran ferment, and parents sort of mentoring each other. Only later did it occur to me what they must have been feeling, despite a fine show of confidence. I came into their lives only nine months and five days after their marriage—what could they have known about each other, much less about bringing up baby? Sydney J. Harris wrote the daily editorial-page column titled “Strictly Personal,” for the \textit{Chicago Daily News} and its syndication. For some 30 years now I had not read him, until the other day. I was startled to find that I still admire him immensely; he has some heroic qualities. And as I perused a book collecting his old columns it became clear that he also had three children.

I own three of these collections, one bought new in Chicago in my last year of college. One I bought used in Los Angeles, in my last year of graduate school. The third, dust jacket still intact and unblemished, I bought used one year later, at the end of a research summer in Cambridge, Massachusetts, after my first year of teaching. What does this mean—that in the long liminal stage called higher education I still
valued (or nostalgically cherished?) this old mentor-hero from adolescence? Inserted in the third volume, Last Things First, is a newspaper account of Harris’s death, clipped by me from our paper here in Dogwood, in 1986. Harris died at age 69, and according to the lead paragraph, he “could be tough or gentle in his writing, but in either case was someone ‘who made people think,’ a friend and colleague said.”

Yet when your search engine summons Sydney J. Harris on the Internet, you get homepage after homepage of people touting their quotation collections. I doubt that they know his mind and method at all; he’s simply a pithy compact car on today’s infohighway. Harris was indeed an aphorist, as was Poor Richard, and the guy who learned everything he needed to know in kindergarten. But is that sort of thing, chocolate cereal, what adolescents need and want, meaning that William Bennett and fundamentalist preachers are right? Lately I’ve read entirely through Last Things First, and I think not. I can see that what I wanted in a hero-mentor was not maxims but a rich blend of new and subtle flavors, with some affirmation of the flavors I already knew. But up-to-date viniculture is something few American parents are adept at. No wonder the most startling book of last summer was Judith Rich Harris’s The Nurture Assumption, arguing that “parents matter less than you think, and peers matter more.”

Peers do matter more, but peers (as most adolescents must feel in their palate) are clueless about the World and Time and Love and Eternity and Praise and Strength, and other of Marvell’s gourmet concerns still here in the cyberspace. Life is a mistress all too coy already, for adolescents, and a neat swoosh on the feet or the right logo on the backpack isn’t going to win her. Harris “was a lover,” the obituary said, “of classical literature, and was involved in the Great Books Movement launched in the 1930s by philosopher Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago.”

This will sound strange, but I actually once mentioned to my dad that I read Sydney J. Harris and admired him. Do teenagers ever tell their parents what they’re reading? Dad may have initiated the conversation, remarking to anybody at hand that Dr. Crane today was really right on the mark. We sometimes did that around the house, yielding ourselves so unreservedly to a text that we started muttering out loud. This is an archaic form of self-indulgence, but in the olden days some things were just different. Dad, mild and imperturbable, did not object to my reading Harris, but in my memory is a long pause and his comment to the effect that you wouldn’t want to accept everything he said. Meaning that Harris obviously wasn’t Lutheran.

The range of Harris’s shrewdness and mild heterodoxy is not easily rendered in a few sentences, and it’s already an injustice to introduce him as aphorist. It would condemn him further to call him a wit and humorist, though he often was. But we’re not talking Dorothy Parker here. Nor, in his quiet assurance, is he strenuously engaged, like Mortimer Adler, in a national dephilistinizing project. He isn’t exactly the thinking man’s Dale Carnegie either.

As a newspaper columnist, Harris also was not your tiresome automaton lurching toward every day’s new burble of slime or conniption. A typical column launches from some incident in his own life, or a conversation, or a book, but hardly ever from yesterday’s lead story. Often it proposes that some other year or century offers a sturdy slimeguard. Typically, Harris quietly cites (I open the book at random) Aristotle, Rodgers and Hammerstein, the Old Testament, Arthur Miller, Max Lerner, Thoreau, Epictetus, Tyrone Guthrie, Erik Erikson (on Luther), and the D. H. Lawrence of Lady Chatterley’s Lover. Quietly cites: “Looking through the Old Testament yesterday, in search of a quotation I had forgotten, I was once more impressed with one virtue of the Bible that is overlooked both by the book’s defenders and its detractors.” What virtue? The “utter honesty and impartiality of the ancient Hebrews”—their refusal to censor their own weaknesses and inconsistencies. “Reading the manual of Epictetus for a Great Books assignment last week, I came across a lovely sentence that anticipates—two thousand years ago—much of what we know about modern psychology.”

Epictetus was not lovely at all, but pompously aphoristic: “To accuse others for your own misfortunes is a sign of lack of education; to accuse yourself shows that your education has begun; to accuse neither yourself nor others shows that your education is complete.”
However, the rest of the 400-word column is Harris’s nuanced and lovely gloss. His main point: “Genuine education—of the emotions, and not merely of the mind—goes beyond blame. It tries to understand why we do the things we do, and only by understanding them, in their deepest meanings, can we acquire the resolve to alter our pattern of behavior.”

Imagine, if you lived in a Midwest small town, and were starting to think about your own education, reading that sort of thing in an American daily newspaper! Imagine that some man in the Oval Office, or in the sticks anticipating the company he could enjoy there, found this in his daily staff digest! Since I never wrote Harris an appreciative letter, I’m happy to see in his book that other readers conducted lively communication with this accessible hero. But I have sometimes blamed myself for this omission.

From Dogwood, faithfully yours,

C.V.

Two books of special interest to Cresset readers to order early for Christmas giving and the pleasures of family reading during vacation times:

*When True Simplicity is Gained* by Martin E. and Micah Marty, published by Eerdmans, whose number is 800-253-7521, or buy it at your local bookstore. Both text and photographs provide, as does each book of this Marty/Marty series, a deepening and centering moment in our worlds so urgently in need of both. And,

*The Bedtime Rhyme* by Walter Wangerin, Jr. This newest book is published by Augsburg Books for Children & Families (Call Augsburg Fortress at 800-328-4648). Dedicated to Walt’s first grandchild, this book is, according to Maurice Sendak, “the most beautiful thing Walt has written.” Could you argue with that?
in praise of changing back

Tom C. Willadsen

The man who gives the tours of Oriole Park at Camden Yards retired a few years ago. Like a lot of retired people he did not know how to fill his time. Someone suggested that he think back to what he loved to do when he was twelve years old and do that. Well, the man loved baseball fifty years ago, but where do 65-year-old men play baseball? After thinking about this he decided to apply for a job with the Orioles. Eventually they hired him. Now he’s the happiest retired guy you ever saw when he shows people how quickly water is absorbed by the high tech surface in front of the dugouts and when he tells his tour groups about the special mud that the umpires rub on every ball that is used in a major league game.

This man started me thinking about the childhood things that I have always loved doing, and the childhood things that I love to do, but stopped doing. And also those childhood pleasures I have been fortunate enough to rediscover in the past few years.

I’ve always been a leaf scuffler. Autumn, in fact the whole year, simply is not complete if I don’t get at least up to my knees in dry leaves. I have never walked past a pile of leaves and not scuffed them, except to save them for someone special. I have even gone to job interviews with little bits of dried leaves in my shoelaces. Maybe that sounds eccentric; I think it shows consistency!

The delight of finding buckeyes and change on the ground feels precisely the same now as it did when I was small. I stuff them eagerly in my pockets. My wife says I have “gopher check pockets,” which sounds like a compliment to me. My two-and-a-half-year-old son is also a gatherer (we’ll see if he also takes on hunting). Often my pockets bulge with treasures that he has found while we walk to the park: a pigeon feather, a fragment from a Nerf ball, some seeds, a dandelion, beads. He delights not only in picking these things up but in holding, just holding, them. Or better yet having Daddy hold them or keep them in his pockets, thus keeping his hands free for more treasure hunting.

Probably the best connection I have with the wonders of being little is my baseball cards. Over the past few years I have gotten closer to achieving a more than 30-year-old dream of completing my set of 1969 Topps baseball cards. I’m finding that Einstein was right as I do this. Einstein showed that as matter is accelerated to near the speed of light, mass increases, such that it becomes infinite when light speed is reached. As I narrow my search for the last four cards in this set, their price increases, if not to infinity, at least to the point that I’m simply not willing to spend $80 for a piece of cardboard. Even if it does have Roberto Clemente’s picture on it. Even if it’s traveling at light speed. Still, the moments I spend sorting these cards transport me magically nearly thirty years when the only words I could read were “Cubs” and “catcher.” Those were good years.

Since I started serving as a pastor, I’ve had the opportunity to rediscover activities that have always been fun that I stopped doing. Maybe I thought I’d outgrown them, maybe I thought I should leave my childish ways behind. It took a snowy winter in Minnesota to reacquaint me with these simple pleasures: sledding, snowball fights and hot chocolate.

Sleding was always one of my favorite activities to do with the youth group. It was free; it was fun and it was memorable. Throw in a few references to the goodness of our Creator for the joys of winter and you’ve got a day’s program. There is also the excitement of going fast and the danger of hitting a tree stump, piece of buried trash or seven-year-old that makes every trip down the hill thrilling.

Tom Willadsen
gives about life
in the church from
the other side of the
pulpit.
He and his family
kick leaves in
Baltimore.
Once an impromptu snowball fight broke out on our return to church. On seeing that my "authority voice" wouldn't bring a halt to the shenanigans, I joined in. Thirty years ago I discovered a great snowball fight strategy. I make two snowballs; lob the first on a high arc and throw the second at my desired target on a straight line. It still works. The fury of a seventh grader who has fallen for a simple ruse pulled by his minister is something to behold. This particular time I beheld it through the closed back door of the church. Why did I stop having snowball fights?

The first time I had watermelon with my wife, I relearned another fun activity. We were sitting on her deck and I said what I had been saying about watermelon for years: "Ya know, the guy who invents a seedless watermelon is going to make a mint."

"What's the point of that?" Mary asked after firing a mouthful of seeds onto the grass below.

Indeed. We spent the rest of the evening trying to hit the cars in the parking lot and the neighbor's geraniums.

We bought a seedless watermelon by accident last week. It doesn't taste as good. Seedless, we learned, really means "without black seeds." It wasn't any more fun than cantaloup. We'll keep our seeds, thank you very much.

Peter has also been a great resource for reacquainting me with fun things. Until Peter got some blocks, I had forgotten that the joy of destruction trumps the joy of building. Last month Peter taught me the joys of Play-Do as we shoved it through his "play-do plunger" and made snakes. Lots and lots of snakes. Long snakes which we mashed into balls and reincarnated as snakes. We dance a lot too. When happy music comes on Peter wants to dance, which means run around in a circle and pump our arms and giggle. In college I learned that dancing was about not looking stupid and not spilling my beer. Peter reminds me that dancing is about the joy of moving. Just moving feels good.

Probably the greatest joy in having a two-year-old is the spontaneity. Our favorite games are the ones we make up ourselves. The most beautiful songs are the ones that we make up while we're in the middle of something. At the top of the Willadsen hit parade are "Won't you play with me today?" and "Twenty-one string beans." Making up silly songs is just fun, just because. So is making faces.

As I described this concept of fun-things-that-we-stopped-doing-but-are-still-fun-anyway to a colleague, I realized that in ministry there are not many chances, most days, to indulge in formerly fun things. "Well, you get to play dress-up every Sunday!" my colleague responded. Ever since then I smile when I put on my Geneva gown and stole. "I'm playing dress-up," I think, "and four hundred people are gonna see me!"

I love this job.

Jesus said, "I promise you this. If you don't change and become like little children, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3, Contemporary English Version). I think what Jesus was trying to get his followers to see is that we need to know joy, and to do things that "joy-fill" us. We need to be open and curious and trusting, like little children to live as examples of God's love in the world. I don't think that Jesus is saying we need to be like little children who throw tantrums when we aren't give popsicles for breakfast, but who knows? Wearing diapers again, though, is one way I ain't going back!

I ran into a retired man, a member of my congregation, at the post office the other day. He was all excited because he was applying for his first passport, getting ready to go to England, Scotland and Wales. He'd always wanted to go, and now he could. People tell me they see him at every symphony concert, play and opera that comes to Baltimore. He is one of the busiest people I know. Until a few years ago he took care of his mother fulltime. After she died he joined the choir, became a Deacon and started doing all the things he still loved. I celebrate this man. He is how I want to be when I retire. He does fun, active things at an age when a lot of people would be content to watch the Orioles and scratch. He has a balance in his life that I envy.

It is the same balance that Jesus is calling us to when we become like little children. We need to reclaim joy and spontaneity, while we continue living as mature, faithful adults. A balance captured nicely in the poem by Thich Naht Hanh:

When you walk
You might like to take
The hand of a child.
She will receive your
Concentration and stability,
And you will receive
Her freshness and innocence.

Elie Wiesel has written "God made man [and woman] because he loves stories." What is crucial in this insight is that to be a person is to have a narrative, a story of oneself. Caroline Simon takes this a step further by suggesting that we recognize that as persons we each have a *destiny*—a true narrative about ourselves which only God sees clearly. Our task, if we are to flourish, is to realize our own destinies and to enable others, likewise, to realize theirs. What this requires is *imagination*, insight into someone's true destiny. But *fiction-making*, projecting upon someone a story that is not genuinely theirs, too frequently characterizes our thought, rather than imagination.

Caroline Simon's goal in *The Disciplined Heart* is to ask what moral insight can be gleaned from stories if we attend to them with care. How can the reading of stories improve our imaginations at the expense of our fiction-making tendencies? Simon examines through the lens of theology, literary analysis, and moral philosophy, what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself, what stories we should tell about ourselves and others if we are to live well and faithfully. In using narrative to get at the nature of genuine human love, Simon provides a thoughtful journey through various relationships that give meaning to our individual identities.

Simon navigates through the various loves by means of imagination. Imagination is the tool with which to cut away the illusions and deception that cloud and corrupt our God-given destinies. She distinguishes between self-love, neighbor-love, friendship, romantic love and marital love, and friendship between the sexes, using literary narratives to illuminate each of these types of love. Authentic self-love is the work of knowing oneself and allowing God to be co-author of one's story. Neighbor-love serves the purpose of allowing the imagination to view the 'other' as having a unique divine destiny. Imagination facilitates and encourages the best self to develop in the context of friendship. Romantic love, via imagination, brings about the highest ideals of womanhood and manhood. Within a marital relationship, imagination conceives a shared destiny and vision. Simon also probes the role of inter-gender friendships, where primary commitments lie elsewhere, yet an intrinsic good is developed in shaping one's destiny outside the realm of sexual liaison. Finally, the role of community, a shared tradition and memory, is examined as it shapes and is shaped by the communal imagination. In these various forms of love and diverse roles that the imagination plays, the central question at the vortex of our loves becomes: "Where is God in each of these unique stories?"

To train the imagination to be the primary moral faculty in our narratives, Simon utilizes literature. With a careful reading of stories we may discern proper and improper uses of our affections and discover how stories may tutor our hearts to turn to the Divine. Using literature at the crossroads of theology and morality is a skillful strategic move that proves her points in a way that our own lives cannot. Simon recognizes that we are always in the midst of constructing our own narratives. There is constant editing, rewriting, fictionalizing, and truth-telling. We run out of time long before we run out of stories. She mines the stories of Flannery O'Connor, George Eliot, Wallace Stegner, William Kennedy, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Isak Dinesen to achieve clarity and insight into the various loves, insight that may guide our affections, thus enabling us to realize our destinies.

In spite of her thoroughness in addressing the various types of love, a few questions remain. Although Simon highlights love's counterfeits: manipulation, coercion, fiction-making, infatuation, sentimentality, and self-interested projection, she fails to supply adequate criteria for distinguishing between love and its counterfeits. The ideal of the disciplined heart relies on imagination and attention for guidance, but this still leaves some things too gray. Although I agree that one can train one's heart to some degree to be more discerning of one's life within God's story, I side with Augustine; we are drawn to false loves and cannot help but deceive ourselves. We are all aware of the historical precedents of great evil committed by persons who believed that they were living out God's destiny for their lives. Therefore, I am skeptical that one can train one's heart to know when one is corrupted by self-deception. Accordingly, I would hesitate to share Simon's method of discerning the validity of another's authenticity as a requirement for healthy friendship.

Can one ever know what is right for a friend in living out their calling without risking undue judgment and Pharisee-like hypocrisy?
Simon actually recognizes this fault in her work and responds in the last chapter by resorting to the great eschatological out. "In the fullness of time" the ideals she purports will be realized. While I agree wholeheartedly that this may be the best one can do—live out our lives to the best of our ability in the wake of God's intentions, knowing that the salve of God's grace will bind our wounds—it undermines her project of using relationships as a vehicle to the Divine. I would also like to see more discussion as to how to discern the harmful loves from those that lead one to a fuller, more beneficial authenticity. In essence, do we ever truly know the harmful loves from those that only be cultivated by such a rich and provocative book as Simon provides.

Through her wise commentaries on the various types of love she provides rich sustenance. What is the role of relationships in pursuing the good life? In what sense are theological claims narratively grounded? How is literature a moral source? These are questions she helpfully explores. More directly, Simon challenges each of us to take more seriously our relationships and to attend to the Divine within the narratives of our individual lives.

I would also question Simon's discussion on the contingencies of life in living out our destinies. Her work is based on a response ethic not unlike that of H. Richard Niebuhr. A symmetrical dance is taking place between God, self, and the neighbor in an interdependent fashion responsible for the living out of destiny. According to Simon not everything in our story is self-chosen, the place of contingencies determines the setting and context. Furthermore, who one becomes may have as much to do with what one is denied, when our destinies rest in the hands of others. I agree with all this.

Yet, after this discussion Simon muddles her argument by claiming that the world prohibits some from fulfilling their destinies and that internal goods are dependent on external goods. As a call to justice I agree that one should work to create a world where people have more opportunities for fulfilling their God-given destinies. However, I am uncomfortable limiting the human spirit and the work of God to being contingent on the role of others in our destiny. There is no doubt that, Christian or non-Christian, there are times when the human spirit breaks under the weight of the world. Yet, there are just as many occasions when inconceivable odds are beaten and persons with great lack of external goods still cultivate internal goods in the shape of extraordinary virtue. This is grace, or the reaching of the infinite into the finite. There is no destiny lived outside the realm of such contingency. Throughout Simon's discussions of various loves, a response ethic is at work as people's identities get shaped by their choices in response to their environment. All the way through this work, God has been the redeemer of one's story; it is incomprehensible that at a certain point of contingency God can no longer be the teller of the tale, rather persons become passive things being told by the world.

Such issues as I have raised can only be cultivated by such a rich and provocative book as Simon provides. Through her wise commentaries on the various types of love she provides rich sustenance. What is the role of relationships in pursuing the good life? In what sense are theological claims narratively grounded? How is literature a moral source? These are questions she helpfully explores. More directly, Simon challenges each of us to take more seriously our relationships and to attend to the Divine within the narratives of our individual lives.


Some of us may recognize “God’s daughters” in R. Marie Griffith’s physical description of spirit-filled women whose “external attractiveness—bright clothing, slimness, make-up, neatly combed hair, manicured nails, and an always cheerful mien—are emblems of transformation” (104). Specifically, the daughters that Griffith is interested in are members of Women’s Aglow Fellowship, an interdenominational, international organization. It is also the largest conservative Protestant women’s organization in the world, one that Griffith labels "evangelical." This appellation raises a problem. It is that many of us may not recognize these women as evangelical. Evangelicalism, though historians agree that it grew out of fundamentalism, has been elusive to define. Scholars agree that fundamentalist roots lie in revivalism, holiness teaching, and the Reformed tradition. But practically, they have had to choose whether to emphasize the Holiness or the Reformed roots when discussing the evangelical heirs of fundamentalism. This is because, though both traditions play a role in the formation of contemporary evangelicalism, the results look very different. One sees this dilemma by contrasting Griffith’s work with George Marsden’s. Griffith emphasizes the holiness tradition. Thus her religious participants look very different from those from the Reformed tradition. It is easy to imagine that the rational, controlled Presbyterians in Marsden’s study of Fuller Seminary might not recognize themselves in Griffith’s emotional, spirit-led charismatics and Pentecostals. The problem is not with Griffith’s use of the term, but points out a larger question that needs to be addressed. Can religious historians do justice to the influence of both the Reformed and Weslayan traditions on contemporary evangelicalism in one study?

Griffith selects a very limited subset of women in evangelicalism to analyze: charismatic and Pentecostal women who have been depicted stereotypically as meek followers duped by the male leaders of the religious right (as the author herself admittedly saw them). Griffith combines ethnography and history to render complex the lives of these spirit-led women. This involved her in two-years of field research. Her readers are able to participate vicariously in the numerous prayer meetings, conferences, conversations, and encounters with Aglow participants, through Griffith’s vibrant descriptions. Griffith uncovers the freedom, healing, and transformation that comprise the primary themes of Aglow stories and prayers. She also shows how these prayers transform their lives and the lives of those around them. But she does not neglect the discipline and authority that result from Aglow’s emphasis on external beauty— including weight loss—and wisely submission to husbands, or single women's submission to fathers.

This shows the advantages of ethnography: it can render people and groups with a depth and complexity that members of the group might recognize. The disadvantage is that prox-
Gelical women become more accepting of their circumstances, healed of poor self-esteem, and submissive to their husbands. As they do so, their vulnerability recreates itself as power due to the relational re-negotiations that result. The most obvious example of this is the way that Aglow women come to accept and practice traditional family rules for men and women; yet, as women pray, change their attitudes, and submit to the head of their households, they transform, not just themselves, but their husbands, marriages, and families as well. Griffith is careful to point out that there are “gaps” in the claims of power through submission. She points out that the liberation Aglow women claim is contradicted in their regularly patterned spontaneity and particularly in the bodies of the women as they all dress and groom themselves alike. Thus, Griffith refuses to fall into the dichotomy of power versus submission or accommodation versus resistance.

In addition to presenting a complex description and analysis of evangelical women, Griffith also desires to “translate the lives” of these women into a language that nonevangelical academics, particularly feminists, can understand. She does this first by beginning with what has become de rigueur for feminists: the acknowledgment of one’s own particular perspective (also becoming an important part of ethnography). Thus, in the study of religion, it has become fashionable to testify to one’s religious leanings. In Griffith’s extensive example of this the reader learns that she has participated in an Episcopal women’s prayer group “as an ordinary member.” (We also learn what this group was like and why she attended.) And in her anecdotal account of how she selected her subject of inquiry and method of research, Griffith also identifies herself as a noncharismatic Christian whose ethnographic approach to research allows/forces her to share much of her own life story with, and ask for advice and prayer from, the objects of her study. The narrative style of this introduction is inviting, revealing both Griffith’s fierce sympathy for and conspicuous distance from her subjects.

Second, Griffith translates the lives of her subjects for academics by concluding with a reprimand for the elitism of feminist scholars who, “lobbing some choice insults back in their (conservative religious women’s) direction,” fail to treat all women with the respect their ideology indicates they ought. Quoting Adrienne Rich, Griffith writes: “It is pointless to write off the antifeminist woman as brainwashed, or self-hating, or the like. I believe that feminism must imply an imaginative identification with all women...and that the feminist must, because she can, extend this act of the imagination as far as possible.” As an alternative, Griffith suggests that feminists find the correspondence in ways that conservative religious women and feminists have developed to deal with issues facing American women, and in this way lessen distortions on both sides.

As a trained religious historian (we also learn in Griffith’s introduction that she received her training at Harvard in American religious history under William Hutchison), I would have liked to have seen a clearer distinction between conservative American Protestants. Griffith often resorts to writing of “the wider evangelical culture” or of what typically marks evangelical piety when, in reality, the phenomenon she addresses cannot be broadly ascribed to all of evangelicalism, but to the more charismatic wing. This is reason for future works on evangelicalism to address the question of its historical roots, at least to clear up whether we need to distinguish between branches of evangelicalism. Overall, Griffith’s study is engagingly written, nuanced, elucidating of gender within a particular type of evangelicalism, and makes important contributions to the study of both feminism and contemporary American religion. She opens the door for further studies, of other women and using other methods of analysis, to render with yet further complexity the lives of women in evangelicalism.

Pamela Hass
on poets—

J. T. Ledbetter
writes from California, where he teaches at California Lutheran University. He has published often in *The Cresset* as well as numerous other journals.

Michael Kramer
continues to teach “amazing students” at Lutheran High, Orange, California, and be a husband and father of four in Anaheim, California. He has published in *The Cresset*, and his recent chapbook, *Behind My Eyes*, is selling well.

Celeste Duder
lives in Nashville, Tennesee and is pursuing a degree in speech pathology. A graduate of VU, she has published poetry in *Borderlands*.

William Aiken
lives in Blacksburg, Virginia and has published poetry in *Poetry, Cream City Review, The American Scholar*, and *Iowa Review*, as well as *The Cresset*.

on reviewers—

Kirsten J. Lee
a graduate of Valparaiso University, is a student at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Pamela Hass
is a student of American religious history at the University of Virginia.
SOLSTICE, THEN & NOW

Trembling as the sun dropped south,
they saw beyond the winter
and the gray tops of trees
to something like fresh grapes and corn
or fishing in the spring.
As the short day approached
there was rising expectation
of some poise beyond them
affecting leaves and ponds.
They carted stones to prove it to their children.

Though wintriness around unfits a few,
we look to see the buds already
forming on the cherry branch,
the birds hopping, tree by tree,
northward in the blizzard,
and lichen blooming red-capped in the snow.
Inside the rocks still stand,
not just in Somerset or in Nevada.
Rock, star, bud, moss construct a formula.
Christ’s coming is as sure as this.

William Aiken
永遠の名作！人類最大のスペクタクルが70mm大画面に蘇る

モーリス・ウィンウィー監督
チャールトン・ヘストン主演
ユル・ブリンカー 共演
巨匠セルシル・B・デミル製作/監督
巨匠セルシル・B・デミル製作/監督

The Ten Commandments