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The above are from a retrospective exhibit now in Moellering Library of photographs by the late VU photography professor, George Strimbu.
Is This School Christian?

Now that the Establishment and the Counter-Establishment are both staggering about hip-deep in muck of their own making, everybody is talking values. If these things called "values" are important (that is to say, for Americans especially, "we need more of them") what are they and how do you get them? Those conversations are nowhere more earnest than on university campuses, and perhaps nowhere more agitated than on campuses with religious affiliation.

In these locations, there is first of all the argument about "what are Christian values and how did we lose them?" The people who discuss this often seem to regard their loss as a given in the discussion. James Burtchaell’s two-part essay in *First Things* is probably the best example going. Lots of people have read it, and even more are arguing about it.

Some places are going beyond the descriptive analysis and argument to programs addressing the aforesaid loss by reinvigorating positive commitment and sense of vocation in teaching staffs. For example, Valparaiso University, with the assistance of Lilly Endowment, Inc., will sponsor a conference in mid-October on Christianity and the Academic Vocation. But we are certainly not alone in this kind of endeavor, as the pages of most serious magazines are filled with announcements of similar meetings and seminars and workshops.

To me the most intriguing part of the discussion lies with the problem of knowing. How do you know you are dealing with an institution that is Christian, supports Christian values, nourishes Christian belief? Burtchaell has his set of criteria; he has looked carefully at what schools say about themselves in their formal mission statements and descriptions in marketing contexts. And those are filled with meaning, surely.

I would propose two additional ways to know. First, see what the institution says about itself to the newest members of its community—its first year students and faculty—in their orientation period. All schools have these. During several sessions, members of the community get up in front of the entering members and describe what’s important here. Entering students may be asked to read a text of some sort, which they will then spend time discussing with more established members of the community. The choice of text would tell you a lot about what values and beliefs were important there. A Christian school might ask all freshmen, and maybe even all new members of the faculty, to read Lewis’ *Great Divorce*, or an essay by a liberation theologian, or poems by Hopkins, or speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr., or Newman’s *The Idea of a University*, and then to discuss these in sessions during the first several weeks of the semester.

A second way to know whether you’re dealing with a Christian institution might be to examine the program for RAs—those students in the residence halls who form the most immediate and potent point of contact between the institution and its students. In sessions held on campus late in the summer to teach these young people about the institution’s values and how to make those palpable and attractive to the student community, what is being said?

Most of the time, these sessions, which cover a wide range of topics from homesickness and PMS to alcoholism, AIDS, and promiscuity, show that the institution is concerned about the well-being of its student members. But often the focus on values, on “what sort of life should students live?” goes no farther than law and secular healthy lifestyles suggest.

If I were to read that a morning of orientation was going to be arranged for RAs to learn about the reasons for greed and its long-term effects, how to prevent the prevalence of backbiting and slander, what kind of sanctions the university sets up for behavior designed to provoke envy, what alternative programs the Union will run to promote peace, gentleness, self-denial, and kind behavior—well, I’d guess that I was looking at a Christian university.

Peace,

GME

About This Issue

This month’s first three articles come out of the Spring 1991 *Cresset* Colloquium, whose members studied Glenn Tinder’s book *The Political Meaning of Christianity: An Interpretation*, published in 1989 by Louisiana State University Press. We hope our readers are encouraged to join the discussion, begun in last month’s issue, and carried on so ably here. The photographs allow us once again to remember our late colleague, George Strimbu. We only wish Ed Heinze, who died last summer, had left us with something more visible than our sense of loss. ☐
ON POLITICS AND CHRISTIANITY:
IS THERE MEANING OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?

Glenn Tinder describes his book as a "personal statement" and says that it emerged from "much solitary reflection." And as goes the author, so goes the Christian. In politics, Tinder argues, each believer is necessarily a solitary individual.

Personal statements are due a certain kind of honor; solitary reflection is something most of us need more of; and there is surely a sense in which each of us finally decides and acts alone in the important matters of life. Yet I fear that Tinder’s account of the political meaning of Christianity is impoverished by the individuality within which it is cast. Tinder the author deprives himself of the wisdom of the Scriptures (which are cited surprisingly seldom), of the company of the saints (only a few of whom are mentioned, and those briefly and out of context), and of the historical experience of the church (where the actual, if not the ideal, political meaning of Christianity has been disclosed). Christianity, the historical and socially embodied movement of response to God’s grace in Christ, is thus reduced to a set of concepts to be sorted out by the solitary thinker. In similar fashion, the Christian seeking guidance about political activity in the present day is offered advice, some of it stirring and some of it stifling, and that is all she is offered. She is specifically not directed to the place in contemporary history where she might come into contact with the ancient truths Tinder espouses and be prepared for the Christian political activity (or, as Tinder might prefer, inactivity) to which God might call her in the future.

Individualism, which is manifest both in Tinder’s self-reflective method and in the Christian approach to politics that he recommends, is the great weakness of The Political Meaning of Christianity. As a considerable body of twentieth century thinkers has argued, individualism is also one of the great mistakes of Enlightenment thought and one of the great ills of post industrial, consumer oriented society. Tinder anticipates that his book will fall prey to communitarian or ecclesiological critics of individualism, arguing in response that his individualism is “prophetic rather than ontological.” And there is some truth in this defense; Tinder clearly believes that all humans are joined to one another and to God through divine transcendence. Yet he neglects the social dimensions of this mutual and mystical unity. By diminishing the role of the church in the formation of both contemporary prophets and Christian political theorists, Tinder inadvertently supports some of the forces that deprive many contemporary Christians of the collective riches of our tradition. In the process, he also overlooks the most important political meaning of Christianity.

Tinder’s notion of “the exalted individual” has two parts. The first holds that every human being, however degraded in the judgment of the world, is disclosed by Christ’s incarnation and sacrifice to be a person of infinite value. “And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25:40, NRSV; Tinder might have cited this, but didn’t.) Mel Piehl’s essay on Tinder, in last month’s Cresset, offered a compelling account of the far-reaching political significance of this intense and powerful form of regard for the individual. So far I’m with Tinder (and with Piehl, in this and other aspects of his commentary on this book).

The second part of Tinder’s notion of “individual” is less helpful, however. For Tinder, each faithful Christian is also an “exalted individual,” and not only in the universal sense or even by virtue of baptism. Each Christian is also an exalted individual when judging whether and how to engage in temporal struggles over justice and power. In fact, Tinder says that it is “essential” that the “prophetic stance,” which he takes to be the correct Christian approach to politics, can be “maintained only by individuals.”

Of course there is one sense in which each person is thoroughly alone, as a soul before God, in choosing a place to stand. And it is true that the world, despising the claims of the prophets, seeks to drive them into isolation. But is it not even more true that

Dorothy Bass, a Church historian on leave from Chicago Theological Seminary, has joined the VU community as an adjunct professor of theology and director of a project on the history of the theological education and spiritual formation of the laity.

Dorothy C. Bass
every prophet is shaped by and beholden to a larger social and historical body of fellow disciples, even in great moments of individual stand-taking? Tinder’s argument summons up some powerful images of individual prophetic singularity: the reader envisions a solitary Jeremiah, crying through the streets; a Paul, summoned out of the bosom of his people and sent on a lonely journey; a Bonhoeffer, isolated in a prison cell; a King, preaching justice in the wilderness of Alabama. These images are probably more strongly shaped by the imaginers’ modern individualism than by the historical experience of these exemplars, however. The individualism of these prophets was not exalted; it was humble, reliant upon the memory, nurture, and courage of the historic, communal faith from which it emerged and towards whose fulfillment it acted.

Here the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer may be instructive. A Lutheran pastor, theologian, and resistance worker who was executed by the Gestapo in April 1945, Bonhoeffer is praised by Tinder at several points as a holder of the “prophetic stance.” In Tinder’s rendering, Bonhoeffer “went through long periods of uncertainty, waiting for signs of what he should do; and he went through these periods with little human company, for not many Germans, even among Christians, were as clear-sighted and independent as Bonhoeffer in facing the events of the early 1930s.” Finally, with deep awareness of the ambiguity of his action, Bonhoeffer saw his personal “destiny” and joined a violent plot by the resistance, which led to his lonely end.

Tinder, in short, ignores a leading theme in Bonhoeffer’s life and thought, the theme theologian Clifford Green calls “the sociality of Christ and humanity.” Ecclesiology was the focus of his early academic work, and pastoring was a constant feature of his personality. One of his most important acts of resistance was his teaching at the illegal Confessing Church seminary at Finkenwalde; in Life Together, he described the practices of worship, confession, discipline, and communion essential to strengthening that group and each of its members for life in a world where their very existence was a statement of opposition totalitarianism. As the ethicist Larry Rasmussen notes, interpreters who have emphasized Bonhoeffer’s this-worldly stance and bold ethics have overlooked a dialectical focus by which he sought to explore and possess the wisdom of the historic church, “his genuinely pious observing of the liturgical traditions.” Later, in prison, he sustained intellectual relations with the historic company of theologians, corresponded with a circle of family and friends, and created what community was possible with his fellow prisoners, whom he led in worship on the day before his execution. How to claim the Lutheran heritage of theologia crucis as a social ethic for the Christian community, which would participate as a body in a societal vocation of imitatio Christi was much on his mind in his final months.

Martin Luther King, Jr., also appears in Tinder’s book, to exemplify the author’s contention that “the spirit of love has been borne and movements leading to the improvement of social institutions have been called forth by individuals, such as Martin Luther King, set apart from society and finally crucified.” Without in any way devaluing the extraordinary presence of this one leader, surely the prophetic stance, as it took shape within the struggle King led, is deeper and wider than his person. Many people (including King’s parents and his teacher, Benjamin Mays) and many institutions (the NAACP, CORE, the interracial councils that had formed in the South, the Highlander Center) provided a rich formational setting within which not only King but thousands of others were prepared for the movement. Above all, they were formed in the black church—not an abstract entity, but a host of real, social institutions. Taylor Branch’s account of the civil rights movement, Parting the Waters, includes vivid portraits of several congregations, including Dexter Avenue Baptist Church before King arrived as pastor. King was “set apart from society” only from the perspective of one who knows the Enlightenment ethos of individualism too well and the black church too little.

Bonhoeffer and King would have agreed: without the Christian communities from which they came, their lives and witnesses would have been senseless. And without the Christian communities they yearned to form, there was little hope for Christian life and witness in the future. And are Christian communities important only for these ethical giants? I think not. Each of us needs to be challenged to feed, clothe, and visit “the least of these,” and to hear them claimed by Christ as “members of my family.” Each of us needs disciplines to still, focus, and invigorate our spirits. And, of course, each of us needs grace.

As does the church.

So far in this essay, I have been trying to relocate the discussion of the political meaning of Christianity from philosophy to history by insisting that the contexts and communities of believers, and their real Christian lives therein, constitute their Christian identity and their stance with regard to politics. At this point, however, my historical argument runs up against historical reality itself. All too often, the real historical church has deformed more than it has formed, oppressing those both within and outside its boundaries. History—past and present—abounds with ghastly examples. Even if we deleted the most horrible instances and considered only the ‘ordinary falleness’
of the church, many Cresset readers, I suspect, would refuse to honor the complacent, even corrupt ecclesiastical institutions we know as the nurseries of the prophets. In this, they might agree with Tinder, who seems to think that the empirical church falls so far short of the perfection of God's Church that it ought not preoccupy the politically attentive Christian. In a different way, they might even agree with the ecclesiological visions of Bonhoeffer and King, who called for radically committed Christian communities that would bear little resemblance to the places where North American Christians typically worship on Sunday mornings.

Yet I would argue that there are, even in this fallen world, many Christian communities where something like a prophetic stance is nurtured, and that there is no possibility of any positive political meaning for Christianity apart from such communities. To argue that they are not "perfect," as Tinder does, is so obvious as to be irrelevant.

My discussion so far has emphasized two well-known activists, and it may thereby have obscured the content of Tinder's "prophetic stance." For according to Tinder (in themes well explored by the other authors in this Cresset symposium), this stance should more often encourage reluctance than eagerness for political engagement. It requires "waiting"; Christians ought never gladly to initiate political action. It also entails "solitude and inaction," which result from the recognition of history's tragic character and one's own inadequate virtue. And it demands "attentiveness and availability."

Advocating greater political reticence on the part of certain Christian leaders is not a bad idea. There are too many examples, on right and left, of zealous political interventions that have not stood long enough in the presence of text and tragedy and timely discernment before bursting forth. Tinder's opposition to such interventions, however, crowds out the attention he might have paid to the quieter ways in which Christian communities exist as places of political activity. While he chastises liberationists and theocrats, the most important political meaning of Christianity emerges in the weekly lives of Christian congregations, hidden from public view.

A very important recent study by sociologists C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, The Black Church in the African American Experience, provides great insight into how this meaning emerges within the congregations related to seven historically black denominations:

Politics in black churches involves more than the exercise of power on behalf of a constituency; it also includes the community building and empowering activities in which many black churches, clergy, and lay members participate daily. ... [P]rotest and electoral politics are only made possible by the prior foundation of community building activity and black churches are examples of structures for human association par excellence.

Is this building of community what Tinder would call "waiting"? Is this kind of human association "action" or "inaction"? When it was illegal, as it once was in many parts of our country, was it then "action," while it is now "inaction"? Whatever the answers to these questions might be, the Christian experience described here is certainly not one of solitude, though within this context, at its best, individuals reportedly do experience themselves as exalted.

Attentiveness and availability may be very helpful concepts as we try to understand what Christian communities do to enable their members' political engagement and disengagement. (They seem to interest Tinder less than waiting and inaction do; they interest me much more.) Being attentive to the suffering of the world and being available for ministries of service and action within it is not the usual mode of the North American middle class in our time; these ways of being must be learned in an alternative setting. "We were just sitting there talking when lines of people began to form, saying, 'We need bread,'" wrote Dorothy Day. Simple, yes; but note that the Catholic Worker group she described were sitting in a place where the hungry could find them. And they were practicing the disciplines of study, prayer, and remembering that let them know what would come next. "We could not say, 'Go, be thou filled.' If there were six small loaves and a few fishes, we had to divide them. There was always bread." They were available, and they were attentive—to human need, through the Word.

The congregations to which most Cresset readers belong are not in New York City's Bowery district, and they are not led by saints as insightful and disciplined as Dorothy Day. But the story and the call can come to us there, too, at least in the text and sometimes in the practice. Praying, gathering at the table and the font, feeding the poor, confessing sin, caring for the sick, studying the Bible, giving alms, visiting those in prison; are not some of these learned, against all human probability and in contrast to prevailing systems of politics and economics, even in the obviously imperfect churches of the North American middle class? These practices sharpen our attention and sometimes even win our availability for efforts to expand the reach of peace, justice, and love to more of humanity.

I cannot conclude without a comment on how I hope this essay will be received, though doing so will
force me to overgeneralize and may lead me unintentionally to offend some readers. Each Christian has grown from some particular branch of the Christian family tree, and on each of those branches there grows some wholesome fruit and some that is bitter. My own home branch is the theologically liberal side of the Reformed tradition, where Christian political activity is celebrated, but where the practices of worship and piety are not strongly nurtured. To this portion of the Christian family I intend this essay as a call to take more seriously the importance of ecclesiality as an indispensable aspect of faithful engagement in humankind’s struggles over power and justice. To Lutheranism, I am a relative newcomer. But my perception is that it tends in the other direction; there is much celebration of ecclesiality, but more reluctance about Christian involvement in struggles over power and justice. This portion of the Christian family, I think, needs a different counsel. I would urge its members, including Glenn Tinder, to take more seriously the ways in which God, through the sacraments and texts they love so much, is striving to form a people who cannot fail to be attentive to the suffering of the world and available for political activity within it.

Day-labor, light denied

The sledgehammer blasted
the street
with cadenced explosions
of concrete
that fractured the air
like a graveside salute.

The bare blackpowder
back broad
and hard
as the belly
was cannon barrel big
and iron tight
fired
its 12-pound mall
along trajectories
that rose
from the hip,
grazed clouds,
and crashed down
with a crack
of ballistic steel
against stone.

The man’s
white beard
draped
like his blue work shirt
tied half mast

by arms and wrists
around his waist
and both fluttered
with each blow struck.

He fell to his labor
a disciplined soldier
giving and taking
the pounding
out of nothing
but hard habit.

I searched
that spent face
for fragments
of an epitaph.

Close set eyes
menaced
like the double bore
of a shotgun
when in frightful silence
he looked up
with the dead countenance
of a bomb on its rack.

Bryce Moreland
"The principle that a human being is sacred yet morally degraded is hard for common sense to grasp." Glenn Tinder, *The Political Meaning of Christianity: An Interpretation* (35)

Former Beatle John Lennon’s song “Imagine” retains its fetching wistfulness even now after some twenty years of not infrequent radio airplay. Its almost religious appeal extends to several generations of rock listeners and to those with widely disparate tastes and commitments, political as well as aesthetic. “Imagine all the people/ living life in peace... /You may say I’m a dreamer/but I’m not the only one/! hope someday you’ll join us/ and the world can live as one.” It’s hard to object to Lennon’s lyrics, no matter what one thinks of the melody, especially hard for those of us who were “growing up,” in some sense, during the Vietnam War. Enough of us could really want peace, we think with Lennon, and if enough of us really did want peace, we could have it. The problem, Lennon suggests, is merely a failure of imagination. Idealistic sentiments such as these still merit expression, radio station managers seem to think, especially during the Christmas season and during times of national crisis. We’ve heard a lot of “Imagine” in the last year and a half.

That we do not use our imaginations, that we tend to “shoot too low,” tend to demand too little of ourselves in social and political matters, is a view that is espoused by academics and political theorists as well as the clergy and rock stars. A case in point is Robert L Holmes’ recent *On War and Morality* (Princeton: 1989). In this work Holmes, professor of philosophy at the University of Rochester, subjects both “political realism” and the “just war” tradition to trenchant criticism. Both of these theories “aim too low,” demand less than what we humans are rightly capable of. Furthermore, Holmes argues, integral to both of these has been some version of the Christian view of human nature, so this too gets its knocks, precisely because the Christian view of human nature leads us to accept less than the moral goodness of which we human beings are capable.

For Holmes, this is the rub with the Christian view. Christians, following Augustine, locate moral evil in “willful, prideful disobedience to the will of God.” We do wrong not merely because we lack something, but because we want to do wrong, want to snub our creator. This Augustinian view is profoundly pessimistic, for the achievement of goodness is largely beyond our ability as a result of our corrupt wills. This Christian view is contrasted with classical Greek thought which locates the evil that persons do in the absence of some type of knowledge, rather than in the presence of a rebellious will, an absence that can, in principle, be corrected.

The difference between these two views of human nature is stark. “The corrupt human soul,” and not merely ignorance, is for Christians “the convenient explanation of all the wrong that men do.” Ignorance, Augustinian Christians admit, can perhaps be eliminated. Corrupt souls, on the other hand, are a bit more intransigent.

Holmes maintains that this Christian view of human nature has been counter-productive, in fact has contributed to one disaster after another in Western history. It has served to give *carte blanche* to repressive and totalitarian governments who must wield power in order to subdue the rebellious wills of their citizens. It has been appealed to in order to “justify” immoral wars and the slaughter of innocents. In short, the Christian view of human beings as fundamentally fallen and corrupt has led to a radical devaluing of persons. Tendentiously, perhaps, Holmes puts it as follows:

But to locate the source of man’s problems in human nature is, in effect, to reconcile oneself to their perpetuation. For then all that is left is to participate in evil and to confess one’s guilt in the process. You may then proceed in Christian love to slaughter your fellow men by the thousands. Wars then do indeed become inevitable. The
most that one can hope for is, as most just war theorists argue, to try to minimize the horrors of war and to devise rules to limit the carnage. If wars are inevitable, it makes little sense to ask whether they are justified; only their conduct is open to assessment. To ask more is to ask the impossible. (264)

For Holmes there would be sufficient grounds for rejecting the Christian view, I think, if the Christian view were only morally repugnant. But things are even worse than that. Holmes finds the pessimism of the Christian view of human nature not only morally repugnant, but intellectually unsupportable. One's holding this Christian view of human nature is an intellectual mistake, Holmes suggests, as well as a moral fault. "What does it mean to say that every soul is corrupted?" Holmes queries. We can easily enough identify evil persons—the Adolf Hitlers, the Josef Stalins and the Pol Pots among political leaders or, among citizens, the Jeffrey Dahmers and those who maliciously do violence to others. But why the view that every person is evil? Why think that every person is by nature capable of this type of evil? Instances of wrong-doing, of yielding to temptation, etc., can be proffered to support this claim that all human beings are corrupt and disposed to do wrong, but "only those bent upon thinking the worst of human beings" could think these isolated instances are evidence that the whole of human nature is corrupt.

Holmes does not claim that he can disprove the Christian view of human nature, but instead he asks us to carefully consider alternative views of human nature. Holmes elaborates an alternative view of human nature which he calls moral personalism, the view that human beings alone are of intrinsic and ultimate value. Our most fundamental moral obligations, he contends, involve our valuing individuals for what they genuinely are; most basic to morality is our obligation to treat persons in ways consistent with their ultimate value. Our success at accurately and appropriately valuing individuals depends, however, upon how we see human beings, upon how we understand human nature. We ought, he suggests, to choose which way of viewing human beings, "which set of values seem [sic] most rational and humane, which strike [sic] the deepest chord in our inner being and seem to promise more hope than despair." This choice about how we see and value human beings is of the utmost importance:

At stake in this choice is our most fundamental conception of the value of the human person—whether to regard the human person as we find and experience it here and now as so sinful that it can justifiably be used as a means, an instrument to serve the ends of those who wield social, political, and military power, or to regard it as something of infinite worth, to be cherished when close to us, respected when at a distance, and always regarded for what it is, the source of what is known to be good in this world. (266)

Although I think Holmes is correct in drawing our attention to the importance of our view of human nature for the moral life, there are a number of puzzling things about Holmes' argument. The first puzzle concerns his understanding of the Augustinian-Christian view of human nature. To be sure, Augustine's view, and the Catholic view of the West following Augustine, is that human beings are fallen, are corrupt. In Western Christianity, at any rate, the dominant understanding is that the fundamental posture of human beings vis-a-vis God is a posture of our pitting the self's interests over against God's interests. This is Augustine's view and, with some modifications, the view of that twentieth century giant among Christian political thinkers, the Christian realist Reinhold Niebuhr.

How one gets from this admittedly pessimistic view of human nature to the view that the abuse of persons can be morally justified, which Holmes maintains follows from this Christian pessimism, is utterly unclear. How Holmes thinks one gets from this view to the conclusion that "the human person as we find and experience it here and now" is "so sinful that it can be justifiably used as a means, an instrument to serve the ends of those who wield social, political, and military power" is nothing short of a mystery. By no means does Augustine think there is moral warrant for using persons created in the image of God as instruments to serve the ends of social, political and military powers themselves corrupted by human evil. Augustine's respect for human beings created in the image of God alone would preclude this. So Holmes' conclusion is not Augustine's view, and although there are undoubtedly some in the Christian tradition who have embraced the conclusion that sinful persons deserve whatever harm is done to them, these persons are few and far between, preaching to small bands of similarly mean-spirited folk, or barely endured with long-suffering patience by good Christian folk. Our first puzzle, to be brief, is why does Holmes think that the Augustinian-Christian view of human nature entails that human beings can justifiably be used as means to serve the ends of social, political and military institutions or powers? He shouldn't.

A second Holmesian puzzle involves just exactly what, having reflected upon alternative understandings of human nature, Holmes is asking us to do. Perhaps
his view is something like this: We can't prove which, if any, view of human nature is true. But, given this fact, and the fact that we do have to act, that we do have to treat human beings in one way or another, and that we do have to create and sustain institutions which will treat human beings in one way or another; given this, we ought to choose the view of human nature which best supports what we think ought to be done. Given these facts we ought to adopt that view of human nature which will encourage the sorts of institutions and the types of actions that are appropriate for the ultimate value of human beings.

But this, of course, is to beg the question, for how we think human beings ought to be treated will depend upon our view of human nature. We know what to do and what not to do to persons only because we possess some knowledge of what persons are. Furthermore, it is doubtful that one's principles for how to treat human beings can be any more easily established than one's view of human nature. Any moral principle about how to treat human beings inevitably assumes certain things about human nature; the moral principle can be no stronger than its assumptions about human nature. It is puzzling, thus, to think of moral principles, themselves apparently ungrounded, serving as the grounds for a particular view of human nature.

A third and final puzzle about Holmes' argument revolves around what theories of human nature do, or are meant to do. Most understand the various theories of human nature to be making claims about the way things are, about what the character of human beings really is, about what we can know, and about what sorts of choices are within our power. The important thing to notice is that these theories of human nature—whether we are talking about Darwin's theory, or Marx's, or Freud's, or Plato's or Augustine's—make assertions of what is the case about human beings. As such, they are either true or false, regardless of whether we can prove them to be true or false. But Holmes appears to suggest that in light of the fact that we can't prove what is the case about human beings, we ought to adopt that view of human nature which best fits what we want to be the case. This is, I think, a troublesome move. It is unwise to drive one's car as though there are no drunk or reckless drivers on the road, although we wish this were the case. It would be foolish to advise a young woman to believe and act as though there are no date rapists, although we would prefer such a world. What we need, then, are principles which inform us about how to act in the world which we inhabit, and what we need is a theory of human nature which captures, more or less, what we are and what the world in which we live is like.

It is precisely this last concern that troubles many of my students upon reading Holmes. Their charge is that Holmes is out of touch with the way things are, that Holmes' view is not only naively idealistic, but dangerous. Any person, any people which embraces Holmes' moral personalism does so at some significant risk to their own well-being. The single fact about human nature, self-evident to these students, is that all human beings are, at bottom, selfish bastards. All human beings are fundamentally motivated to action by their own private set of self-interests and passions. Hobbes is right, Holmes is wrong.

I am not certain what attracts students to this dark and deeply pessimistic view of human nature, a view much darker, I would maintain, than that held by Augustine himself. Augustine could wax at length about the goodness of the created realm and about a grace of God which enables even fallen and rebellious humans to perform kind and beneficial acts, although I don't think so. I have very few students who are so aware of their religious heritage and so willing, at this time in their lives, to embrace their tradition. Nor do I think this view about human selfishness is merely Augustinianism or Lutheranism gone to seed, but I don't think so. I have very few students who are so aware of their religious heritage and so willing, at this time in their lives, to embrace their tradition. Nor do I think this view about human selfishness is merely a by-product of growing up during the Reagan years in which selfishness was presented as a badge to be proudly worn, though I do think this is a better answer.

In fact, it is no small mystery to me why students who have benefited so much from the largesse of others, especially the largesse of the Reagan administration, think all human actions are selfish. That the relationships of individuals and the relationships of nations is best characterized as a contest of competing wills? Why do they think that neither nations nor individuals are able to rise above self-interest? It could be that this is merely Augustinianism or Lutheranism gone to seed, but I don't think so. I have very few students who are so aware of their religious heritage and so willing, at this time in their lives, to embrace their tradition. Nor do I think this view about human selfishness is merely a by-product of growing up during the Reagan years in which selfishness was presented as a badge to be proudly worn, though I do think this is a better answer.

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about human interests. So, when I say "It is wrong to lie," you ought to know that that really only means that I think I will be better off if no one lies to me. When George Bush proclaimed that the Gulf War was morally justified, we should have taken him to be claiming that our national interests warrant an attack upon Iraq. The best policy of action, for individuals and for nations, according to these students, is to pursue a policy of enlightened self-interest. And we are all better off if we are aware and up-front that this is what we are doing.

If my students are critical of Holmes for his "naive idealism," they are hardly more welcoming of Augustine, or Glenn Tinder after him. The problem with Augustine is that, for all his talk about corrupt wills and sinful humanity, he still speaks the language of morality, of right and wrong. Augustine still thinks this language is relevant for the analysis of private and public, individual and national actions. For all his insight into human nature, Augustine has failed to see that all moral talk is just a sham.

And the same criticism goes for Tinder. Tinder can write accurately enough of our sinful condition, these students might contend. For example:

> [T]he inclination toward evil is primarily an inclination to exalt ourselves rather than allowing ourselves to be exalted by God. We exalt ourselves in a variety of ways: by trying to control all of the things and people around us—by power; by accumulating an inequitable portion of the limited goods of the world—by greed; by claiming to be wholly virtuous—by self-righteousness and so forth. (36)

But if Tinder goes far, these "vulgar realists" would argue, he does not go far enough. Rather than acknowledging that our most fundamental moral concepts and principles are shot-through with self-interest, Tinder continues to employ moral categories in his political analysis. He refuses to give himself over to how thoroughly self-interestedness affects all we do. And they are quite right to see this resistance in Tinder. He is, I think, genuinely prophetic in his denunciation of those who are "candidly selfish," those who elevate national interest to the first of priorities. Tinder writes:

>[I]n principle, power can serve ends set by agape, and men of power are not inevitably so consumed by selfishness that it is pointless to say that it should. Hence, Christian doctrine, for all of its realism, clearly implies that selfishness among nations is no more justified than is selfishness among individuals. Correspondingly, the notion that nations are obliged to serve only the national interest is no more valid than an ethics of selfishness for individuals....Nations will no doubt be selfish as long as nations exist. To acquiesce unprotestingly in the selfishness of one's own nation, however, would be to conform voluntarily to the way of the world, abandoning agape. (240-241)

Tinder, rightly, refuses to make selfishness king.

That we, even though we are ineradicably selfish, are bound by the demands of agape, this view and not what Holmes suggests, is the heart of Augustinian-Christian political thought. We are selfish, Tinder roundly affirms. But it does not follow that the selfishness which so fundamentally characterizes us removes us from standards of love and justice. On the contrary, acknowledgement of these norms of love and justice is critical for our health.

This last claim, that recognition of norms of love and justice is critical for human well-being, is not far removed from Holmes' moral personalism. And it, like Holmes' moral personalism, is rejected by my more recalcitrant students as insufficiently realistic. The concepts of love and justice will be filled by me in such a way as to promote my own interest. Better to end the hypocrisy by refusing to allow these terms into our moral vocabulary. Never mind that, when pushed, they acknowledge that they cannot live in a world with so impoverished a moral vocabulary. They profess to know those who do and flourish.

They are not alone in their rejection of the norms of love and justice as morally binding upon them, I think, but are reflective of our society, and goodly portions of the Christian church in the west. In his preface Tinder speaks of writing *The Political Meaning of Christianity* in order to correct just such forgetfulness. His success at this would be no small achievement.

But there remains the question of the extent to which Tinder's words are relevant to those who find their identities outside the church, to those who perceive the Christian moral vocabulary, and all moral vocabularies, to be bankrupt, to those who live without this vocabulary and flourish. By virtue of what are those who do not stand under the cross to recognize the norms of love and justice? And what might lead them to construe love and justice as Tinder insists Christians must construe them? By means of what arguments can we establish these standards as normative for all persons?

It may appear as no real criticism of Tinder to say that he takes us no great distance down the road in addressing these questions for, although he invites others to listen in and learn from the *Logos*, he writes primarily to correct Christian forgetfulness. But answers to these questions about the universality of
moral norms are critical for any adequate understanding of Christian political spirituality, and it is just this which is Tinder's goal in his book. If the norms which guide my political activity can only be seen as senseless or irrelevant by those outside the church, then those virtues which equip one for suffering well—patience, longsufferingness, hope, etc.—will have a great prominence in my spirituality. So, for example, Søren Kierkegaard's knight of faith must be silent and he suffers from the misunderstanding of others because they cannot grasp what God has commanded him. He cannot but be misunderstood by others, so he cannot evade the suffering which comes as a result of his incomprehension. If, on the other hand, all that Christian hear God say about the political life can be overheard by others outside the church a different set of virtues, those more critical for cooperative endeavors—trust, loyalty, etc.—may rise to the fore.

It would be wrong to see the Christian realism of Glenn Tinder as a synthesis of Robert Holmes' moral personalism and my students' vulgar realism. Better to see each of these positions as either corruptions or incomplete anticipations of Christian realism. Tinder makes the case effectively, I think, that the exalted, yet fallen, individual is the most critical fact for Christian political thought and that a view such as Holmes' neglects our fallen character while the vulgar realism of my students has forgotten the exalted character of persons.

But what Christian realism needs, and what I think Glenn Tinder has not yet provided, is an adequate account of what our Christian realism should look like in a post-Christian society such as ours in which there appears to be rather substantial disagreement as to what is owed persons. And what Christian realism needs is a fleshing out of the nature of those character traits and dispositions which will enable us to avoid both cynicism and utopianism, which will enable us to hear God's immediate call to love our exalted yet fallen neighbors. Christians ought to be grateful to Glenn Tinder for reminding us of the tradition of Christian realism and calling us to that tradition of Christian political life. But what it means, here and now, to own that tradition, what it looks like for the Church to own that tradition, and how I become one who owns that tradition, these remain hard, but essential, questions. 

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T.S. Eliot: L'Uomo Che Piange

So he would have left . . .
As the mind deserts the body it has used

And as I am left
with these cogitations—
mere images woven
in sunlight, or troubled
when the moon intrudes—
a trick of lights, a girl,
an empty skin
discarded

So I would have her

It is difficult
to be a man
who must break the body,
the garden urn, the girl
bruised and broken.
But the hair, the awful
brown hair over her arms,
the ludicrous flowers—
a man might cry!
his tears the mind's
invention

So I would have

Carol E. Miller

The Cresset
ON BEING A PATIENT LAWYER
IN A NOT-FOR-PROPHET SOCIETY

Edward McGlynn Gaffney

On the day that I first wrote these comments in May of 1991, the following four events were unfolding in the news:

- South African authorities were considering a prohibition of possession of spears at a “cultural rally” at which followers of Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi would appear before their king in “traditional garb.”
- South Korean authorities were pondering whether to raid the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Seoul, where hundreds of students had taken “sanctuary” to avoid arrest for their advocacy of reunification with the People’s Republic of Korea.
- The United States Supreme Court was receiving briefs in Lee v. Weisman, a case that will decide whether a rabbi violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment when he offered the following berakah at a public school graduation:

  “God of the free, Hope of the Brave: For the legacy of America where diversity is celebrated and the rights of minorities are protected, we thank You. May these young men and women grow up to enrich it. For the liberty of America, we thank You. May these new graduates grow up to guard it. For the political process of America in which all its citizens may participate, for its court system in which all can seek justice, we thank You. May those we honor this morning always turn to it in trust. For the destiny of America we thank You. May the graduates of [this] school so live that they may help to share it. May our aspirations for our country and for these young people, who are our hope for the future, be richly fulfilled. Amen.”
- In Los Angeles a federal judge was poised to sentence Jeff Dietrich and other members of the Catholic Worker community who have been held in prison since last February for the felony of spilling forty gallons of oil and two pints of human blood on the steps of the Federal Building in protest of the Gulf War.

Are these events purely “political,” in the sense that the outcome should be determined only by power and will—that of the majority or their representatives in a democracy, that of the ruling class in places like South Africa and South Korea? Are the political categories even roughly precise, or do they merely disclose the perspective of the observer? Do these situations call for decisive action, and if so, how does one reconcile that demand with Glenn Tinder’s call for a “spirituality of patience”?

I finished editing these comments during the week of the Second Russian Revolution, August, 1991, a date many think will be as significant as the outbreak of the First Russian Revolution in November, 1917. This dramatic week shattered our glib classification of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire” and made it look a lot more democratic than, say, South Africa or South Korea.

Why did the coup fail? Single cause explanations of complex phenomena are seldom satisfactory, but if one cause can be singled out for the fall of the Gang of Eight—a cause for which the reading of Tinder’s book is surely relevant—I would say it is the Russian people, the very ones whom the experts left out of the equation on Monday and Tuesday. These unarmed people surrounding their parliamentary leaders achieved what no pitched battle on the ramparts can do: a virtually bloodless revolution. The people who put their bodies on the line in massive numbers demonstrated not only that Stalinism has been long dead in Russia, but also that no old guard is capable of resurrecting it.

Although John LeCarré hasn’t told us yet, at this very moment George Smiley is telling his friends at Cambridge Circus in his quiet, understated way that he has known this all along (why do you think his name is Smiley?)

Although lawyers typically work on cases far less complicated, all of these events required or will require prompt, decisive counsel by lawyers. Of what use to us is Tinder’s counsel of patience? Before answering this question, I explore two points. Law and politics have much to do with one another. And religion—at least as a form of ethical discourse—has much to say to both (Berman; Coleman; Neuhaus; Perry).

The Connection Between Law and Politics.

The first point may no longer be controversial, but less than a decade ago many of our law schools rang with acrimonious debate over the position of the “Crits” (members of the Critical Legal Studies

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movement) that law has much more to do with politics than many lawyers or law professors let on. Although law and politics may be formally distinguished, both are social constructions of reality that are closely connected with one another. It is no longer sufficient to assert that rationality and coherency—once thought to be the epitome of judicial craftsmanship—distinguishes law from politics, which deals merely with issues of power, or the expression of majority will. A close study of the decisions of an activist judiciary has led legal historians like Morton Horwitz to the conclusion that a rigid separation of law from politics appears artificial. "Law" is frequently associated with dominant social attitudes. Judicial opinions are often the elegant (or not so elegant) expression of those prevailing views rather than the mere passive discovery of what was intended by the politicians. Writing in 1973, Professor Horwitz argued the radical potential of legal history:

Once legal history attempts to penetrate the distinction between law and politics by seeing legal and jurisprudential change as a product of changing social forces, it begins to undermine the indispensable ideological premise of the legal profession, indeed of any profession, that its characteristic modes of reasoning and its underlying substantive doctrines may not be universal or necessary, but rather particular and contingent (281).

The Connection Between Religion and Politics

Tinder's insistence on a connection between religion and politics needs commendation, if only because this connection is often overlooked in our increasingly secularistic age. But this point should be commonplace among literate people. Within Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestant Christianity, the line between religious and political concerns is often a fine one, and these concerns often overlap. For example, a Jewish representative testified as follows before a congressional committee inquiring into the connection between religion and politics:

Each of the affiliates of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council [NJCRAC] regards its program as an expression of the tenets of the Jewish faith which it is organized to advance. Their activities are inspired by the Prophets' mandate to pursue justice. They believe that mandate governs [their lives] in all its aspects and requires those who adhere to the principles of Judaism to let their views be heard in support of justice for all. (Legislative Activity, 99)

The point is not whether all Jews would agree with the political views of NJCRAC—they emphatically do not. Neither is my point that all of NCJRAC's political stances are fairly derived in some hermeneutical method from the historical preaching of the prophets in the Hebrew scriptures, even granting the wide latitude in biblical interpretation for which rabbinical commentary is famous. My point in citing this text is a much simpler one: many Jews would insist that their position on political matters in our society is a correct restatement of what Tinder calls "the prophetic stance."

A prominent Roman Catholic spokesman, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, made a similar point recently:

[T]here are important moral and religious dimensions to each of the problems facing the human community, and these dimensions must be taken into consideration in the development of public policy.... The major issues of the day are not purely technical or tactical in nature; they are fundamental questions in which the moral dimension is a pervasive and persistent factor.... The participation of the Catholic bishops in public policy discussion is rooted in our conviction that moral values and principles relate to public policy as well as to personal choices. It is also rooted in a belief that we honor our constitutional tradition of religious freedom precisely by exercising our right to participate in the public life of the nation. Entering the policy debate as Catholic bishops we make use of a long tradition of moral analysis and relationships with the universal Church which provide us with valuable perspectives about the influence of U.S. policy throughout the world (4, 6).

Similarly, the Presbyterian Church (USA) recently issued a document tracing their political stances not simply to the Reformation theology, but to biblical mandates:

Since the time of Calvin, Reformed Protestants have felt called to share their vision of God's intended order for the human community, and Presbyterians have recognized and acted on the responsibility to seek social justice and peace and to promote the biblical values of freedom and liberty as well as corporate responsibility within the political order.... In "attempting to influence legislation" churches speak to the moral aspects of political issues. Such witness flows directly from fundamental faith and is integral to its free exercise. It is essential to the church's identity and mission, and to the moral authority of its pronouncements, that it speak as "church" through its religious structures and leaders (God Alone is Lord of the Conscience, 335, 364).

Once again, to make claims of this sort is not to say that all members of a particular church agree with the church's official position on a political matter. For example, the Franckean Synod was well known among early nineteenth-century Lutherans for its ardent abolitionist view on slavery, which it condemned as "a sin...opposed to the spirit of the Gospel." In response...
to this Synod, the Lutheran Synod of Virginia resolved in 1835: "That we discountenance the circulation of all so-called religious papers, which are designed to support the cause of the abolitionists."

In short, one cannot sustain the claim that religious bodies have been an unmitigated force for good whenever they have drawn connections between their religious convictions and American politics. In this respect, religious organizations have sometimes behaved as though they were political parties, without much differentiation about their "prophetic stances." I am pleased to notice the willingness of the American Catholic Bishops in the past decade to recognize that not all of their teaching, even on matters as crucial to our world order as nuclear war and the state of the global economy, is of equally binding moral force. This approximates what Tinder recommends as the hesitancy to pronounce with too much certitude.

One can, however, note a constant interaction between religion and politics on all the large issues confronted in American politics. Even where the churches have been wrong, in a pluralistic society they must be given the dignity of their mistakes. Their errors are best corrected by stating counterarguments, not by stilling their voices. Tinder's voice is thus from my perspective a most welcome one in American law and politics.

**Hope: Patient Expectation, Active Engagement, or Both?**

Tinder is very helpful in keeping one's historical perspective in the much larger perspective of God's rule. "The air is full of alarm," he writes, "but hope is demanded of us, Christians believe, by God. Faith is confidence in the future that God has placed before us in Christ" (232). Tinder is not exactly breaking fresh ground here. Others, notably the theologians of hope (Rubem Alves, Carl Braaten, Johannes Metz, and Jürgen Moltmann, to mention a few) have written powerfully on this theme.

Tinder takes too much for granted when he uses the vocabulary of hope, which is neither self-defining nor univocal. Hope is polyvalent, embracing attitudes from quietism to activism. He offers a reading of hope that is neither quietist nor activist, but something in between: a spirituality of patience that can serve as an antidote to cynicism and despair. Although Tinder does not, in my view, sort out the various meanings of hope with precision, he does offer an account of the Christian life that challenges our eagerness to be engaged in world events, as though we always know what we're doing. "Some of the worst disasters and most flagrant atrocities of our century have resulted from uncritical confidence in our powers of action" (14). This, I take it, is not an argument for quietism in the face of the atrocities of the Third Reich, but it is a disturbing reminder that by the end of the War, the Allies had become indistinguishable from the Axis on the issue of killing innocent civilians. The principal difference between the Nazi fire-bombing of Coventry and our levelling of Dresden was that our war crimes were not tried at Nurnberg.

Tinder defines biblical spirituality at its core as "simply a concentrated and disciplined way of waiting for the meaning of history to unfold" (205). This spirituality calls for solitude and inaction, but that does not mean indecisiveness and irresponsibility (69). On the contrary, it entails watchful attentiveness and availability for relationships that flow from a sense of responsibility not merely to human leaders but to our dependence on God.

Tinder frequently invokes the name of Reinhold Niebuhr in his argument (77, 157, 164, 238). The pervasive realities of original sin and original grace are equally important to both. Tinder clearly agrees with Niebuhr about the slow pace of progress, and he stresses that only God makes his kingdom present in this world (Niebuhr, 1944). Tinder is also close to the spirit of H. Richard Niebuhr's famous essay, "The Grace of Doing Nothing, published in 1932. (Reinhold was not impressed with brother Richard's effort; within a week he fired off a reply entitled, "Must We Do Nothing?)

Another voice that Tinder evokes is that of Johannes Metz, who insists that every abstract idea of progress and of humanity stands under God's future promises or "eschatological proviso":

No doubt, these promises cannot simply be identified with any condition of society, however we may determine and describe it from our point of view. The history of Christianity has had enough experience of such direct identification and direct "politifications" of the Christian promises. In such cases, however, the "eschatological proviso" which makes every historically real status of society appear to be provisional, was being abandoned. (Church and World, 114).

In this respect Charles Curran agrees: "The Christian strives to make the kingdom more present in this world, but the fullness of justice and peace will never be here. I maintain there can be some truly human progress in history, but such progress is ordinarily slow and painful" (284).

Both Tinder and Metz start at a common baseline on the impossibility of collapsing the present age into the consummation of all that is devoutly to be expected. There are moments when Tinder seems to take this premise in a quietist direction: "Maintaining a posture of nonresistance can be genuinely Christian only if it is a way of waiting for God in history. It must
embody moments of inaction and solitude as well as attentiveness and availability” (144). But he is also clear that Christian principles decisively rule out political skepticism and quietism (191).

Metz, by contrast, takes a sharp turn from the premise of the eschatological proviso towards engagement in the socio-political order: "It is impossible to privatize the eschatological promises of biblical tradition: liberty, peace, justice, reconciliation. Again and again they force us to assume our responsibilities towards society” (Church and World, 114). He insists that the salvific relation of Jesus to the world is “not to be understood in a natural-cosmological sense but in a socio-political sense; that is, as a critical, liberating force in regard to the social world and its historical process” (Id.).

There is something in me and probably in most lawyers (though most of us would find the jargon of the theologians strange) that finds Metz's approach more appealing. Precisely because that something in me needs also to hear Tinder’s call for a spirituality of patience, I return now to each of the five events I mentioned above, and comment on them in light of Tinder’s book.

First, the neat question from South Africa—whether spears could be banned not only at political rallies, but also at “cultural” rallies—needed reformulation, if it did not become moot, by virtue of the subsequent revelation that the government of South Africa had funded Buthelezi’s followers and fomented the strife between them and the African National Congress. The question called for a prompt resolution, but the passage of time helped to refine, if not supplant, the question with a larger one. That question in turn shed light on a still larger and more complicated question: is it time to lift the economic sanctions against South Africa? Tinder’s counsel of patience is appropriate in one sense: if one waits, more shall be revealed. But a spirituality of patience does not relieve the lawyer of the duty to act when an urgent question is raised.

Second, an American lawyer’s answer to the South Korean question requires more reflection and deliberation than meets the eye. At one level the question is easy; for us about the most unamerican thing to say is “You can’t say that.” But before we tell the Koreans a thing or two about free speech, it might at least be appropriate to recall the seamy side of our own history from the Sedition Act of 1798 to the suppression of the Abolitionists and the incarceration of political leaders like Eugene Debs, from the violence of Woodrow Wilson’s soldiers against the Suffragettes to the brutality of the LA cops against the participants in Operation Rescue. Although our history is spotty, mere advocacy of a point of view is now normatively protected in our society. I am willing to acknowledge that this view has prevailed in our society only recently. The constitutional shift on free speech began with the later Communist Party cases of the late 1950s, and was solidified only in response to two major events of the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement and the protest against the Vietnam War. So while I assert boldly that the principles of free speech we have developed in this country should also govern in South Korea, I am prepared to admit that our principles developed gradually and that much more patience—that is, suffering—may be necessary before they become operative around the world. So before I assert impatiently that our norm should govern in South Korea, I am prepared to admit that much more patience—that is, suffering—may be necessary before free speech principles obtain as a matter of course.

Third, I have answered the constitutional question about the establishment of religion by filing a brief in the Supreme Court in favor of the rabbi. The legal precedents can be distinguished. Engel v Vitale (1962) condemned the practice of governmentally composed prayers, which are bound to be liturgically thin; here the rabbi composed a prayer faithful to his own tradition. Abington School District v Schempp (1963) ruled that government employees may not recite daily prayers in the presence of young schoolchildren; the rabbi was an invited guest at an annual graduation ceremony. But the point of the nonestablishment clause of the First Amendment is that the government should not coerce or even influence our religious choices. So I find the case a close one. In acting decisively on one side of the debate, I do not think that I was violating Tinder’s spirituality of patience. I was just observing the deadlines that all lawyers must respect when they deal with clerks of courts. I am, after all, engaged in a very collegial process that sharply limits the hubris or scotosis of any one of us. The Court will hear persuasive arguments from the other side from people I know and respect; it will probe these arguments in an open hearing and will deliberate collegially in conference about the matter. Time will tell which side is “right,” and I will not confuse the outcome with the fullness of God’s rule, especially not “as long as this Court sits.”

Fourth, if called to serve as the lawyer for Jeff Dietrich and the other protesters against the Gulf War, I would have urged no sentence heavier than cleaning the oil and blood off the sidewalk or paying for it to be done. I would have to act decisively in that situation, but that does not mean I would be acting impetuously. I would try to justify this recommendation to the
sentencing judge because of the convictions on free speech that I mentioned in my comments on the Korean episode. I know that there is a theoretical distinction between speech and action, but I would extend the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment to communicative deeds such as the pouring of oil and blood on the steps of the federal building, or to pickets in front of the Supreme Court, or to people sleeping in the federal park opposite the White House demonstrating the plight of the homeless.

It is not that my mind is made up in a flash, without any opportunity for the reflection that Tinder hopes will come from solitude and inaction. Decades, indeed centuries, of reflection are available to me as I, in turn, decide what to do in the face of this concrete situation. I refer not simply to American case law, which I must as a lawyer consult, but which is hopelessly confused. (One may burn the flag, but not a draft card!) I refer rather to the ancient tradition of prophetic deeds, curiously unexplored in Tinder's frequent discussion of what he calls the "prophetic stance." Think, for example, of Jeremiah walking around Jerusalem with a yoke around his neck to communicate to its inhabitants that they would soon be subject to Babylonian rule. Or think of Jesus bearing the wood of the cross through the same streets to announce the liberation of the city not from the Roman legion, but from sin and death itself. Especially at moments in our history such as the Gulf War, I am convinced that more play must be given to people like Jeff Dietrich who have something important to "say" to us by acting out their convictions.

Coming finally to the Second Russian Revolution, I trust that no one will confuse this event with the eschaton. Lenin was not so foolish about the first revolution, so why should I, a Christian, be so muddled about the second, which clearly has not triumphed in any ultimate or definitive way? There are, after all, a million employees of the KGB, and nearly four million informants; there are frightening weapons of mass destruction still in the Soviet arsenal; and there are massive problems of economic disarray that face the Soviets in their future, however the republics are to be structured.

For all that, the events of the Second Russian Revolution evoke the memory of Gandhi's improbable, yet successful, overthrow of a truly "evil empire" in India. The nonviolent Russian revolution has triumphed—with far less blood shed—in the grand manner of the civil rights protesters in this country in the 1960s who sang "We Shall Overcome" in the face of the fire hoses and Bull Conners' dogs. As in Manila with the revolution of Corazon Aquino, and in Berlin when the wall came tumbling down, in the three day coup the church played a significant, if not decisive, role in Moscow. At least it was not indecisive. Tinder's volume helped me to appreciate the powerful image of the bearded Orthodox priests chanting a benediction to the resisting Muscovites. (By the way, in fairness to the Soviets and with appropriate differences noted, problems similar to those I noted above in the Russian context still exist in post-colonial India, in Crown Heights, and in Manila.)

In keeping with Tinder's admonition about letting God be God, I do not wish to identify any historic revolution as the ultimate revelation of God's plan. I do, however, make the claim that it matters whether a revolution is violent or nonviolent. The character of a revolution can have long term consequences not because a revolution changes everything once and for all—only the revolution of the Cross did that—but because it sets in motion a condition of possibility that everything can change. (Think of the effect of the Cromwellian revolution on Irish history centuries later.)

I am truly impatient with Tinder's call for patience on the pace of change as to the morality of nuclear weapons. The urgency of this issue was reemphasized when the Washington Post disclosed that the Gang of Eight had access to the codes to unleash the Soviet nuclear weapons during their brief stay in power. The dissolution of the Soviet Union into several republics, each with its own doomsday machine, would surely not improve the situation. I agree with Tinder: "It may be, even while dreading the thought of nuclear war, that we calmly entertain attitudes that make nuclear war a likely eventuality. If so, the nuclear crisis is not fundamentally military or political but moral" (240). But I find his analysis predicated on Christian confidence in the face of death an avoidance of the moral issue. Being unafraid to meet my Maker because he has already met me on the Cross does not mean that I get to play God and destroy creation. Albert Einstein was much closer to the mark: "Just as we have changed our thinking in the world of pure science to embrace newer and more useful concepts, so we must now change our thinking in the world of politics and law. It is too late to make mistakes... Past thinking and methods did not succeed in preventing world wars. Future thinking must prevent wars" (Schell, 31). The fact that Einstein wrote these words decades ago doesn't mean that we have much time left for patience on this issue, with proliferation around the corner.

Whatever one makes of Tinder's socio-political analysis, his chastening reminder of the need for
thoughtful reflection appeals greatly to the ever-too-busy one within me and within most lawyers I know, perhaps suggesting that we lawyers suffer from an occupational hazard. I would, however, suggest that such reflection can occur in moments of “attentiveness and availability” as well as moments of “inaction and solitude.”

Tinder has much to say, no doubt, to those fellow citizens of good will who would be hostile to any claim of a connection between religion and politics or between religion and law. They may not represent a very large percentage of the population, but they occupy places of considerable influence, including many seats in the academy. By speaking in unabashedly religious terms about the political meaning of Christianity, Tinder has not chosen to address them here.

He avoids the trap of mashing Judaism and Christianity into one vaguely defined “Judeo-Christian” phenomenon, but he has made a mistake in not attempting in this volume to note profound similarities between the approach he advocates and its roots in the Hebrew scriptures and subsequent rabbinical interpretation.

As for those of us he does address—Christians open to a connection between religion and politics—a significant flaw recurs throughout the volume. Tinder repeatedly yields to a simplistic bifurcation of Christian understandings about politics into “Reformation” and “Catholic.” Paul Tillich might have been able to get away with his grand division of the Protestant principle and the Catholic principle forty years ago, but that was long before Vatican II. All these decades of ecumenical dialogue later, it is a bit tedious to read an author who imagines that the theological universe can be divided neatly into “Protestants” and “Catholics.” The term “Catholic” is no longer a narrowly sectarian reference, but one which comprehends all sorts of Christians, including “Protestants” interested in restoring the church—after much more of the patience Tinder prescribes—to the organic unity Christ desires for us. Tinder writes, however, as though sociologists of religion had not discovered long ago that the ideological divisions of which he speaks cut across denominational lines when, indeed, they matter at all (Wuthnow). The last point really matters: too many Christians in our society are indifferent to the important questions Tinder raises.

Having made this criticism of a recurrent flaw in the book, I hasten to add that the flaw is not fatal. On the contrary, the real point of my criticism is that Protestant Tinder has written an important book that challenges not only “Protestants” like Dick Balkema, Dorothy Bass, Tom Kennedy, and Mel Piehl, but also “Catholics” like me. It deserves reflection, especially by busy folks who are tempted to act too quickly.

Related Works:
Rubem A. Alves, A Theology of Human Hope (Corpus, 1969).
John A. Coleman, An American Strategic Theology (Paulist, 1982).
Charles E. Curran, American Catholic Social Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches (Notre Dame, 1982).


Legislative Activity By Certain Types of Exempt Organizations, Hearings Before the House Ways and Means Committee, 92d Congress, 2d Session (1972).


The Safety

“Always leave the safety on,” you warned
like a father, “until the last second.
Shoot the air in front of the duck—pick one—”
I remember now, “he’ll fly into it.”

When the empty sky shattered next to my ear
like a stack of plates, you waited in your blind
to call out: “I hated to look,” you apologized,
“it got too quiet.” The phone rings

in the middle of something, my hands in the dishes,
maybe I’m eating, and I have to swallow in a hurry.
“Hello,” an old friend’s voice says long distance,
“Jim’s shot himself . . . Are you there?”

I hear the dial tone for weeks, compose my grief politely in a letter to his folks: “Truly sorry . . .”
and I was “that I can’t be there . . .”
and I couldn’t. In my mind it becomes a story

I write over and over; I can never get it right
because none of the characters resists me,
and without having all the details, I know how it ends. I dreamed I tried to call you, Jim,

when Margaret was born: “What do you mean there’s no number,” I shouted, drunk and laughing,
“this must be a mistake.” The woman’s voice went briskly about the world’s business, which is to say sorry.

for Jim Arms

John Ruff
I-80 (arrow on pull-off, Wyoming), The American Landscape Series, 1976

To Photograph is to See
Photographic Studies by George Strimbu
The following are short excerpts from the George Strimbu retrospective exhibit catalog essay by Joseph Jachna, Associate Professor of Photography, University of Illinois at Chicago.

"George had chosen to photograph nature in architectural ornamentation partly to satisfy ‘...my need to contribute something to society...’ He sensed that his subject was worth seeing, that photography could bring it about, and that he had to learn something which could only be learned through working."
George wrote: ‘For myself, this project has added to my awareness of the rich details in ornamentation and is only the beginning of a study in American Landscape which I hope to continue in the years to come.’

George Strimbu did continue this pursuit... The I-80 pictures are about the road, connecting New York City and San Francisco. This was his Bi-Continental project.’
The Highway #41 pictures are about things made accessible by the road, from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula to Miami, Florida....

There are deeply satisfying pictures here. The 1981 pictures of the Tumacacori Mission in Arizona show how well George could ‘see’ a subject...
Che, Dickens, and the Search for the Mountain Toucan

James M. Stuck

The greatest change existed at the airports themselves. Flat heat and concrete buildings at O'Hare versus heavily forested mountains looming over the Mariscal Sucre airport. But the most exhilarating impression in Quito is the air-fresh, bracing mountain air blowing off some of the world's highest snow caps. Here they call it *primavera eterna* ("eternal spring"), and it stays perennially between 66 and 72 degrees fahrenheit. Since psychologists tell us the ideal temperature for human productivity is 68 to 72 degrees, it should be a fruitful summer for me in this Andean "kingdom" of Ecuador.

We used to joke in downtown New York City that descending from the Chase Manhattan Plaza to the subway was a 30-second trip from the First to the Third World. One escalator ride exchanged the marble and gleaming bronze of the Chase Bank building, and its WASPs in tailored suits, for a subway station with dripping ceilings, graffiti, the smell of urine, and a mostly non-WASP clientele.

Here in Quito the changes are much more subtle. The apartment I am subletting for the summer has all the modern amenities: color television, VCR, microwave oven, electronic alarm system, an IBM computer and printer, even a maid's quarters. But the Third World creeps in. When I turn on the IBM, a beeping sound alerts me to a series of switches under the desk. These turn on a battery charged backup system so the user doesn't lose his or her work if the city power goes off. And the purpose of the two huge plastic containers full of water becomes clear the first time the water supply fails. I have an important interview at 8 Monday morning—will the water come on by then or not?

A taxi ignores the red light and almost runs down an American companion and me crossing the street. My friend yells at the top of his voice, "Hijo de maricon!" I decide not to tell him that he got his expletives mixed up and just called the taxi driver a "son of a homosexual." Wonder what the cabby is thinking.

I attend a high school graduation at the 400-student American Alliance Academy in Quito. They announce a $3,000 grant from Valparaiso University for graduating senior Yvonne Mateer. She is a straight "A" student who was accepted by several universities in the United States but by a process of elimination chose VU, which she has never seen. After introducing myself to Vonnie and her family, we arrange for them to stay with my wife, Lois, when they visit VU for the first time in July. It really is a small world.

What images do the words "Student Accounting Society" bring to your mind? Probably not posters of guerrillas with automatic weapons held high and revolutionary slogans of Che Guevara. These covered the student accounting society offices I visited at the 8,000 student Facultad de Ciencias Administrativas of the Universidad Central in Quito.

Sunday, June 17 are the national congressional elections. Ecuadorian law requires every citizen to vote on that day. Those who vote receive a stamp on their identification card; persons whose cards lack the stamp are subject to a monetary fine. More than half of the individuals I spoke with went to vote but cast a totally blank (protest) ballot—there were 17 parties, and the differences between them were perceived as meaningless. You can lead a horse to water....

Dickens has come alive in Ecuador. My major leisure reading is *The Pickwick Papers*. Following the Pickwickians in their travels about

Jim Stuck, who teaches in the College of Business Administration at VU, was born in Ecuador and has worked all over the world. He revisited Ecuador as a Fulbright Scholar last year. Professor Stuck was named an outstanding campus teacher and leader by the Sears Foundation in the fall of 1991.
England and all the interesting and varied persons they meet is a delightful mirror of what is happening to me. And the pronounced class structure underlying events taking place in 19th century England is much more vivid when reading Dickens in a country where differences in social classes affect one’s every relationship.

An American friend living in Quito has just finished writing and directing his first full-length feature film, Cancion de Navidad ("Song of Christmas"). It is a low-budget film (U.S. $8,000) shot in Quito, using Ecuadorian actors and actresses. It recently won first place in a national U.S. competition, in the Spanish film category. To me the most interesting aspect of the film is that it is a South American/Andean adaptation of Dickens’ A Christmas Carol. Try to imagine Quechua Indian women sitting behind their baskets of mountain produce in the market scenes as Scrooge (“Senor Riquetti”) bargains with them and you get an idea of the film’s fascination.

Following the Latin press sometimes reveals trends or phrases that move south-north instead of the reverse. Two years ago, while doing other research in Ecuador, I frequently saw the word narcoterrorista and watched it catch on in the U.S. press six months or so later.

There is an old Romanian proverb that says, “It is difficult to predict, especially about the future.” I want to make a prediction, however, about an article in last week’s leading newspaper, El Comercio. It was about the Triangulo Amazonica, which is 50 percent Colombia, 30 percent Peru, and 20 percent Ecuador. This “Amazon Triangle” has been rated the third-best location for growing coca by the Medellin Cartel. (For interest’s sake, let me add that jungle cocaine is twice as strong as the Andean mountain variety.) My prediction is that soon we will see the description “Amazon Triangle” used as commonly in our U.S. press as “narcoterrorist” has become today. Move over, Bermuda and Golden...!

The downside of being a northerner in a developing nation? In one word, the stomach: food poisoning twice already, regular "gastrointestinal difficulties" (as the American Embassy literature so gracefully puts it), and a separate two-day amoeba course. Hurrah for the Third World and Pepto-Bismol!

And then that one week of nausea and overwhelming physical weakness, with visions of what travelers of European stock fear most—the "H" word! One goes to the hospital for tests and waits anxiously until the doctor telephones and says those blessed words, "It's just a virus of some kind, there is absolutely no trace of hepatitis in your blood."

The Brazilian Lambda music video is a big hit here, as the tape and the dance are with young Europeans. The video is banned in the United States—too erotic and abusive to children. I haven't seen it, but I suppose it could give a young American a relatively innocent thrill to purchase it in Quito and "smuggle" a "black market" copy into the States. The Archbishop of Bogota, in neighboring Colombia, has also banned Lambda. I am told it is selling like hotcakes there.

The World Cup is played once every four years, and I am lucky enough to be in South America this time around. One has to be outside the United States to really catch the craziness of world championship soccer. In Spanish it is just referred to as El Mundial, roughly translated as "The World Event." The Italians are charging the United States $30,000 per second to broadcast the World Cup, and it is more than 50 long games played out over 90 days.

The World Cup is far bigger than our Super Bowl, World Series, and every other sports playoff combined. One university I visited was losing over a third of its male students during the major games. When I was asked where I came from, on the day after the U.S. team lost disastrously 5-1 to the Czechs, I replied I was of German heritage. Several days later, our boys held the world-class Italian team 0-1 and I answered, "I am from the United States!"

I took off a day when a friend invited me to go birding. We left Quito at 5 a.m., and our altimeter read 9,200 feet above sea level. The van climbed up, up, crossing an Andean pass at 11,600 feet before winding down, down, to 6,000 feet—and all within 25 miles from our starting point. It was an incredible day! Alpine vegetation, temperate vegetation, and then tropical vegetation. We observed alpine birds while wearing sweaters under our jackets, spotted temperate birdlife while in long-sleeve shirts, and, stripped down to T-shirts, watched tropical birds along jungle streams.

I will never forget the visual feast of watching an absolutely gorgeous pair of plate-billed mountain toucans for almost half an hour as they were feeding, hopping, and preening in the bright-green rainforest. Just listen to their colors as I quote from my copy of The Birds of Colombia: "glossy black, golden olive, green, lemon yellow, dark slaty green, blue, golden yellow, maroon-brown, crimson, dark gray, tipped rufous, yellow-green, yellow, red, dark red, and black."

It was at that point that I felt the farthest removed, intellectually and emotionally, from Valparaiso and the Lake Michigan region. Back in the United States now, I will sometimes pause in the midst of academic work and still see, in my mind’s eye, those airy branches and that bright equatorial sun reflecting off a pair of restless, brightly colored mountain toucans. 

October, 1991
Dear Editor:

There are these two riverwalks in northeast Indiana. A very new one along the Mississinewa in the middle of the city of Marion, the other along the Wabash, not new but recent, in the town of Bluffton, south of Fort Wayne.

I was not alone, those two different days in August, though it seemed I ought to be—alone and quiet. Other people were on these riverwalks, including children on bicycles. With me at Marion was an aunt; in Bluffton, a cousin my age, and his wife. The town of Dogwood, Virginia, looked strange from these south of Fort Wayne.

This same thought, about the strangeness of home, occurred in Traverse City, Michigan, near the Grand Traverse Bay. In Charlevoix the previous day, lunch was outdoors, in a cafe one flight above Main Street. The drawbridge opened, and one of those huge Lake Michigan freighters slowly moved into the tiny harbor in the heart of town and then into Lake Charlevoix beyond. A metal leviathan, bulky and purposeful, among the sailboats almost levitating in the sunlight, and even the natives stopped to gaze.

By disagreeable contrast, Dogwood, a pretty town in rural Virginia, has no serviceable river, no bay or harbor. We ought to have an ocean, since 70% of the globe’s surface is ocean, but not so—and of course, no Great Lake, the *summum bonum*. To sit on a sand beach looking westward, watching weather as it ponders and maneuvers, a Dogwood person has to go hundreds of miles. Big unbriny water, with a dune as your backrest, is not possible in Dogwood territory.

Yet here in Dogwood are people who’ve never visited the Great Lakes, and they seem to survive. This is strange. We do have mountains, important mountains, the Blue Ridge Mountains of song and legend, with tourists cruising the parkway more languidly than God intended. Visitors from the Midwest once came to see me in Dogwood, and their hearts were set on mountain laurel. We drove the parkway and became one with the other cars and cameras. It was ineffable, but it wasn’t a Great Lake.

As a duneland child hooked on the Bobbsey Twins, I remember trying to figure out these twins and their culture. They were the “other,” as we say today, referring to people as far away as the next block, utter strangers. The Twins lived, as I recall, in “Lakeport,” and the big summer question was whether to vacation at the seashore or in the mountains. It gradually occurred to me that the fictional Lakeport was a city really way off in Otherland, the northeast U.S., and that salt sea and mountains were genuine options in that area. Years later, having done some traveling, I could supply names: a cabin in the Adirondacks, a Victorian hotel at Cape May. But in childhood what was a mountain, and why was “seashore” a word Midwesterners encountered only in books?

It wasn’t only absence of dunes that made Dogwood seem strange last August. There was death in the Midwest, as I drove around. In northwest Indiana, drought counties like Lake and Tippecanoe, field corn was dying. Headlines sought federal disaster relief. In a metaphorical sense there was death near Traverse City. All Saints Lutheran Church was closing at the end of August. Only twenty-two people came to worship the Sunday I dropped in, and the words of greeting from the pastor concerned the FOR SALE sign. It was coming on Tuesday, and he needed a post-hole digger.

Dogwood seemed strange from Michigan and Indiana, from cornfield and fading congregation, because Dogwood seems a model of growth and self-satisfaction, and nature beneficent. Restaurants close (and quickly reopen, expensively transformed), but has a church ever closed in our Southern town? Dogwood harbors a flourishing university, and now three huge retirement communities, drawing hundreds of affluent, well-educated people to our paradisal mountains. We even got a new downtown “performance arts space” last summer. In Dogwood the occasional dry spell quiets the reservoir spillway but never ruins crops and harvests.

Thus Dogwood in those August days seemed as wraithlike as the distant sailboats up and down the coast from my Lake Michigan beach. It seemed inexplicably strange; in Dogwood the days and seasons of the previous year had really made me quite happy, yet now I seemed to need for survival this dune in a southern Michigan state park, and that huge body of fresh
water, and those distant dark clouds dropping rain on Chicago.

Dogwood seemed improperly strange: I and the mountain laurel, and the university and retirement people, were being spared death and disaster. The two days I was in Wisconsin there was death in Milwaukee, mass murders by a man named Dahmer. Driving down the hill out of Belleville, Illinois, a German Catholic cathedral town, I found myself in the famously derelict city of East St. Louis. Dogwood has its share of drugs, crime, and poverty, but it seemed suddenly and improperly exempt from carnage and squalor.

Dispersal made up much of the All Saints sermon; some who had worked hard and long in the parish will go one direction, others will head elsewhere. Ironically, the chairs (no pews) were Samsonite plastic, and the Samsonite trademark connotes pleasure trips, not forced separation. The only dispersals associated with Dogwood are those of late May, as students finish degrees and get on with their lives. A normal—if momentarily painful—ritual, not sacrifice of one's own flesh and blood invested in a church building and its modest furnishings.

Of course the usual banal thoughts strayed through my vacationing mind. Wasn't it a good thing to experience this defamiliarizing? Shouldn't everybody, once a year, stand back and gain perspective? You put your life in context, tasks and pleasures and obsessions, by seeing where and how other people live.

I even started to calculate: How many minutes are being given here to silly romanticizing of a sand hill? Back in Dogwood, in October and November, I will not be feeling its lure. In fact that day at the beach will be recalled for near absence of sun and the surcharge I had to pay for a near absence of sun and the surcharge I had to pay.

Upon returning to Dogwood, however, I was struck by an experience not so banal: the reminder that words about an experience take on a height, a profile, as a consequence of just having had that experience. Maybe I want to use the image of hologram rather than profile, owing to an exhibit in the splendid new Wexner Center at Ohio State. This was my last real stop, a crafty postmodern building for art and theater, right at the main edge of campus, replacing an old armory.

Frederick Law Olmsted, designing the Ohio State campus years ago, set it apart from the city of Columbus by shifting it 12 degrees from the city grid. A subtle demarcation of gown from town, and the architects of the Wexner Center, Peter Eisenman and Richard Trott, determined to bring the two back together. So girders above and floor patterns below make visually clear the two different grids, with the building becoming a harmony of these differences.

I liked that, though I'm deficient in New Age holistic passions. It seemed a design challenge offering real opportunity for creativity. Not just a building for the arts, but an experiment to see whether you could combine good spaces and subtle symbolism. It seems to work well, and so does the landscaping on the city side, a formal garden of prairie grasses that is wickedly sentimental and agreeably loony, seen from the fastfood strip.

But the holograms. These were by Michael Snow, eight different images inspired by the conventions of still-life painting. They were hanging by themselves in one room, in a show devoted to videos, photography, and multimedia works. Probably I've been away from science museums too long, and good children's museums, but here were Snow's images, featuring telephones and drinking cups, holograms reaching out so aggressively that I instinctively backed away. I moved left and right, and yes, the things were three-dimensional, just as holograms are supposed to be. The misshapen phones and cups were almost palpably there, yet nothing but hanging panels and lights.

I wondered why in the language of excitement we haven't yet expressed peak experiences—close encounters—in the single word hologram. Suppose someone asked me, "What was the audience response at Interlochen when you heard violinist Itzhak Perlman last August?" Shouldn't I be able to say, of that smiling, engaging, crippled virtuoso, "Hologram!"

Standing out, as I began to say—reaching out for attention—are sentences about the experience of travel, when you see them right after getting back from a trip. Travel produces salience in a piece of writing that otherwise you'd pass over.

As in The New Yorker, in the pile of accumulated mail. Reviewing two books of travel, Adam Gopnik says they both suggest "that the only decent journeys are penitential ones." There's a hologram sentence. It reaches out aggressively, as any aphorism does, though it might be just a plane through which light produces illusion. Am I so impervious to human feeling and archetypal experience that this notion of penitence never came near me, in 4,000 miles and nearly four weeks? Might there be truth here, that proper travel is pilgrimage-movement, Godward, confessional in direction, and that pleasures of new sights and thoughts are merely transient and unfulfilling? Was I just moving around, instead of leaving behind old mental and spiritual grime?

The answer of course was no, as was Gopnik's on this subject: doubtful that travels have to be theorized and spiritualized. Still, I kept...
looking backward, to see if peni­

tence was hidden in the fields and
dunes. It wasn't. Though I'd seen
aunts, uncles, cousins, high school
and college classmates, former
teachers, and a variety of old
friends, and walked and talked with
them, along rivers and in back
yards, in restaurants and kitchens
and living rooms and nursing
homes, it was not a trip symbolizing
sorrow over intimacies unmain­
tained. Or a feeling that I ought to
be more like these "others," people
mostly not in university life. Like
John Cheever, in the same issue of
The New Yorker, I'm inclined to think
of family as both a "healthy and pre­
posterous concept." We get
together, family and extended fami­
ly, about often enough; I don't want
to appear any more preposterous to
them than I already do.

Living rooms and back yards,
talky places, enhance that risk.
Riverwalks don't. Along the river, I
noticed, we allowed ourselves at
least some silence. I felt glad that
two Indiana small towns had trou­
bled themselves to take pleasure in
their downtown rivers. Dogwood
keeps talking about putting in a
riverwalk, from Monticello to Pen
Park, but otherwise we ignore the
Rivanna River, which ignores us by
flowing nowhere near the heart of
town.

Four days after I got back,
Dogwood still looking and feeling
strange, there were tanks in the
streets of Moscow, and the networks
bewildered as a child in front of a
hologram. Suddenly it was all
strange, not just Dogwood: the
beaches, the fields, the riverwalks,
the campuses of the United States.
Here, South, Midwest, and every­
where else, was a whole country in
which people pretty much knew
what was going to happen tomor­
row.

With Moscow as a backdrop,
symbol of tomorrow's wild uncer­
tainty over much of the globe, we
started the new school year. The
first event for incoming students was
the "Common Reading Experi­
ence," a compulsory discussion of
Hermann Hesse's fable Siddhartha.
We used it last year too, this book
about a journey toward wisdom, set
in ancient India.

Last year I found myself inter­
ested in a question: whether in real
life you have to experience every­
thing directly, to know it.
Siddhartha says so, in justifying his
variegated life, asceticism to hedo­
nism and back. This year something
else stood out (like a hologram), an
image rather than a problem: the
"holy" river that symbolizes a great
unity of all peoples and contradic­
tions. Siddhartha has learned to
listen to the river "without passion,
without desire," which I guess is all
right. But especially interesting to
me was the voice of the river, which
sounded to me like Russia, the
Baltic countries, the Ukraine, and a
few other places, and which seemed
very loud and properly so: "full of
smarting woe, full of insatiable
desire."

From Dogwood, yours faithfully,

C.V.
Conspicuous Compassion

Edward Byrne

As the 1990s have begun to unfold, many critics and social observers have been busy attempting to sense the distinctive characteristics which will identify this decade as different from the past ten years. In the shorthand of historical summary, particularly in twentieth-century America, writers have enjoyed labelling time periods. Especially since the Jazz Age of the Roaring '20s, each successive decade of this century has acquired a clever title which evokes impressions embodying the decade's dominant political mood and social concerns, and which immediately distinguishes it from other decades, before or after. Some decades have taken a few years to establish their own identities; however, the Nineties already have exposed their true nature, easily seen in a spate of new films this summer—and it is not a pretty sight.

The summer of 1991 has been a disaster for American cinema, both artistically and economically. As the leaves of autumn begin to fall, so too have the expectations expressed last spring by many studio executives for high box office receipts and notable filmmaking. Only two films—Terminator II, an adventure sequel, and Hot Shots, a slapstick parody, have proven to be successful hits living up to the early expectations. At the same time, no clearly superior movie has emerged to garner the accolades of film critics. Nevertheless, American filmmakers have accomplished one feat this summer. They have confirmed the suspicions many have held about the emblematic characteristics by which the 1990s are becoming known. Rather than the decade of conspicuous consumption, symbolized by the "yuppies" and the economic politics of the Eighties, the Nineties are beginning to be seen as the decade of conspicuous compassion, marked by the "greenies" and the demands for political correctness.

Of the half dozen films released in the last few months which could have been cited, two films for which one would have held high hopes as the summer season began, Regarding Henry and The Doctor, display most clearly those themes and concerns which might be anticipated as the focal points for films in the Nineties. These two movies, like a number of others screened this summer, can be viewed as further reflections, along with additional aspects of American arts and academia in the last few years, of an unfortunate trend toward self-congratulatory compassion which has spread throughout the country. This trend has been recognized in recent issues of various academic journals and arts reviews, as well as in current copies of national magazines and newspapers, such as Time, Newsweek, Esquire, The New Republic, and The New York Times.

In its September cover story, entitled "Have a Nice Decade!", Esquire sarcastically describes the Nineties as a period which appears to be signalled by "a New Sincerity." In two cover stories this summer ("Who Are We?" and "Busybodies and Crybabies"), Time characterized the Nineties as a time of hypersensitivity and moral posturing on a whole range of issues, including political power, anti-capitalism, sexual politics, environmental concerns, ethnic diversity, the revision of history, and a rejection of materialism. Some have suggested that in this new decade sensibility has been sacrificed by many in the effort to publicly display sensitivity. An excellent example of this outrageous behavior surfaced in the August issue of The New Republic, which reported that a number of public school systems across the nation, in an effort to be more sensitive about educational materials which might promote "racism, sexism, ageism, handicapism, and other anti-human values," have determined the following books no longer suitable for elementary classroom use, unless the teacher should choose them as objects for ridicule: Rumpelstiltskin, Snow White, Peter Pan, Mary Poppins, Babar, Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, and Twas the Night Before Christmas.

This trend toward a self-aggrandizement gained through the discovery, even if it may be somewhat artificial, of a heightened awareness, not only of the feelings of others, but also of one's own feelings, is evidenced in fashionable adult reading fare. Positive proof exists in the popularity of Robert Bly's New Age, pop psychology text about rediscovering the sensitive side of manhood, Iron John, which is currently the longest running non-fiction entry on The New York Times.

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bestseller list, and which was a source for a series of specials on Public Broadcasting stations by Bill Moyers, perhaps the sensitivity guru of the Nineties. In the political arena, the most interesting example of '90s thinking can be observed in the debate which arose upon Judge Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court. Most of the objections to Judge Thomas did not concern any problems in the credentials of his judicial record, but instead questioned the depth of his sensitivity toward the conditions of the underprivileged, women, and minority members.

Since it appears that the nation has become obsessed with vague notions of sensitivity or sincerity in all aspects of culture, education, government, and personal relations, one would expect American filmmakers to follow suit. Throughout its history, Hollywood has served as a barometer, recording the changing social atmosphere in the country, and today's films are no exception. A number of critics noted the inception of the Nineties' new sincerity and sensitivity in the recent films of Kevin Costner. Dances with Wolves (1990) and Robin Hood (1991), although challenged by some critics for their heavy-handed use of politically correct themes and characters, as well as their revised visions of history, have opened a floodgate for dogmatic and condescending films which promote certain acceptable behavior and ideologies, especially those consistent with the aims of special interest groups currently in vogue.

When Dances with Wolves won the Oscar for Best Film in 1990 over Martin Scorcese's Goodfellas (recognized overwhelmingly by critics as the best picture of the year), the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, representing mainstream Hollywood, offered its imprimatur to a new approach to filmmaking which prefers '90s sincerity over '80s cynicism, pretentious sensitivity over true grittiness, and posturing revisionism over stark reality. Consequently, the first wave of films filled with scenes portraying the new self-conscious sincerity and sensitivity of this decade reached shore this summer.

One might have guessed that Mike Nichols would be among the first filmmakers to exploit this new trend. Throughout his career as a film director, Nichols has repeatedly made movies containing characters or themes which reflect current social situations and chic attitudes. Some of Nichols' wonderful earlier films were presented with precise and mostly uncompromising style: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf (1965), The Graduate (1967), Caramel Knowledge (1971), and Silkwood (1983). Even Working Girl (1988) managed to succeed despite an obvious softening of the Nichols' vision. However, Regarding Henry represents a turn from soft toward flabby.

Regarding Henry is the story of a New York lawyer consumed by his work and inattentive to the emotional needs of his wife and daughter. Henry Turner, as portrayed by Harrison Ford, is the ultimate stereotype of the egotistical, selfish, and materialistic individual of the '80s. Nichols relies so much on such an apparently exaggerated profile presenting the cold and impersonal traits of his main character in the opening scenes of the film that it becomes about impossible for viewers to trust the accuracy or honesty of any of the film's subsequent events. When Henry is shot in the heart and the head by a thief, causing the loss of all Henry's physical and mental abilities, the audience is even encouraged to perceive this as a fortunate occurrence. After all, this incident allows Henry to turn miraculously into an equally exaggerated and stereotypical man of the Nineties; as his heart renews itself and he relearns his language and motor skills, Henry also develops a new sensitive and sincere personality, full of innocence, caring, selflessness, and compassion.

The Doctor, directed by Randa Haines, who previously had contributed Children of a Lesser God, seems to have followed the same formulaic script as Regarding Henry, with only slight adjustments. First, the protagonist, Jack MacKee, played by William Hurt, is a heart surgeon instead of a lawyer. Second, Jack's transformation from a heartless, self-centered doctor, who ignores the emotional needs of his wife, son, and patients, into a sensitive and compassionate husband, father, and doctor arises as the result of having to overcome the growth of a malignant tumor in his throat, rather than a gunshot wound. Nevertheless, the scenes which depict both sides of Jack's character are just as stereotypical and extreme as those which chronicle Henry's regeneration.

Like other films this summer which ostentatiously display the new sensitivity of the Nineties, Regarding Henry and The Doctor fail despite decent performances by their actors. These movies fall short because contrived plots dishonestly designed by the directors do not allow viewers to determine for themselves the relative importance of various values and morals. Continually, these films dictate preferred emotional and intellectual responses to the audience members, particularly those who might share the economic and social backgrounds enjoyed by the films' protagonists. The movies' messages indicate it is possible to maintain suitable principles, even a moral superiority over others, only by behaving in a prescribed, politically and socially correct manner, and by denying any other advantages that might have arrived through one's achievements. These films deliver the point that, unlike in the Eight-
ies, those who decide the direction this decade follows will deem wealth, career success, social position, political power, and personal ambition as characteristics which one must renounce, or at least for which one must constantly apologize and express guilt—especially if one is a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant male who has never had the benefit of viewing the world as a recognized “victim”—because, inevitably, they all lead to corruption of the soul. As in numerous routines by stand-up comics, doctors and lawyers are the easy targets for the cheap shots in these pictures. (Successful businessmen, another group which came to prominence during the boom years of the Eighties, were left to be attacked likewise in a third film this summer, Life Stinks, a Mel Brooks comedy.) However, the ease with which these targets have been drawn on the screen only emphasizes the shallow and simplistic nature of these films, as well as the kind of thinking they represent.

The recent death of Frank Capra, whose finest films (It Happened One Night, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Meet John Doe, Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, and It's a Wonderful Life) contained genuine empathy for the problems of the average American, reminds everyone of the need for directors to reinvigorate the film industry with new movies which continue to investigate the importance of values to individuals. However, Nichols, Haines, and the other moviemakers responsible for this year's collection of clumsy and self-conscious films have not followed fully Capra's advice. Although these directors in the Nineties would like to wear the mantle which once cloaked Capra's shoulders, signifying him as the champion of the masses, they have disregarded his warnings not to overlook the primacy of common sense, his stress on the need to earn honestly the emotional allegiance of the audience, and his advice to avoid a conspicuous compassion which condescends to the very people heralded in the film. As Capra once stated, "I would sing the songs of the working stiffs, of the short-changed Joes, the born poor, the afflicted. I would gamble with the long-shot players who light candles in the wind, and resent with the pushed around because of race or birth. Above all, I would fight for their causes on the screens of the world. But not as a bleeding heart." Unfortunately, on and off the screen, this summer Hollywood was filled with bleeding hearts, from Henry Turner's bullet punctured heart to the open-heart surgery performed by Jack MacKee to the bleeding-heart direction evident in a few misguided movies.

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Marvell’s Garden

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walked without a mate

The mind's a naked romp
through a green shade,
a paradise of one
soul suspended
in apple boughs.

You, Andrew Marvell,
this ripe fruit
about your head—
you have no need
of help, meeting

each bite squarely
with your teeth,
ecstatic.

Carol E. Miller
Expressions of love and humanness are rare in a struggle like that between Palestinians and Israelis, now well over a half century old. This book is about the tough power of love and forgiveness that can make a dent, if it cannot move mountains, in the face of bitterness. It is a set of memories from the life of an exceptional priest, a man born into one of the most agonizing human problems in our world.

Abuna (Father) Elias Chacour is a priest in the Melkite Byzantine Church, an Eastern Church recognizing the Roman pontiff and, in contrast to most eastern churches, in communion with the Roman Catholic Church. A Christian Palestinian, Chacour was born in the village of Biram, not far from Haifa. Like many Palestinian villages through the years, Biram fell victim to an Israeli policy of destroying settlements that were, for one reason or another, in the way of governmental plans and aspirations. And like many displaced and dispossessed Palestinians, Chacour grew up hearing his parents long for the opportunity to return to their home, to water the fig and olive trees they had planted, and to love the fields they had cultivated. Memories like these could well up in a sea of bitterness, and no doubt they often did.

But Elias tells us: "I grew up knowing that forgiveness brings healing and peace. My parents went to the church in Biram every Saturday evening to attend vespers, a service of evening prayer that ended with the confession of sins. Then Mother and Father would come back home, and before we ate, they would ask for our forgiveness saying, 'Children, we love you. We might have hurt you in some way this week; if so, we ask your forgiveness. If we have failed you in any way, please forgive us.' That is the most beautiful image I remember of my family."

A few people in our world can carry from their families a charisma into the rough and tumble of public life. Abuna Elias was equipped to translate the intimacy of familial forgiveness into his public involvements, as priest and spokesman for one part of the Palestinian community. First, his story is of discord within the Melkite village church of Ibilin to which he was sent, and how people learning forgiveness could overcome their animosities to become a community working together in the midst of oppression. Then, his story of the foibles of a bishop, whose flirtations with self-serving power destroyed rather than worked for the good of a church, and how tough love could confront hypocrisy in high places.

But then the most difficult challenge, dealing with Israeli authorities in numerous oppressive confrontations. We can read here the truth of the observation often made. Give young men uniforms and guns and they (there are exceptions, of course) will transmogrify into creatures that seem to be something other than human. Such non-humans we hear of, driving up the hill in their military vehicles to threaten defenseless Palestinian children, to harass the elderly, and to find every way possible to discourage a "different" people from finding its own identity. Anyone who has lived or travelled in the Palestinian towns of Israel, and in the occupied areas of the West Bank, has witnessed this scene so many times as to find it totally debilitating.

Could the Lord's radical words of slaying evil with love ever really work? Chacour's many recollections of personal anguish make it evident that he could never focus long on the question of what would be effective or not. In a marvelously believing way he begins not with questions of what will work, but with a life learned from "elsewhere," the gift of forgiveness imbibed from the
Word and transmitted through the eucharistic community. He begins where a priest alone can begin, with the single gift he is commissioned to dispense. And so, from the time that he drives into Ibilin in his rickety Volkswagen, to begin his ministry among a depressed and oppressed people, he knows that only in the radical message of forgiveness can anything real really begin to happen.

The most important happening Chacour tells of is the village people's success in building a school for the children of Ibilin. This is not one of the world-shaking events that would make the front pages of any of the newspapers, but in another way its meaning is far more important. We hear how the local Israeli police, those controlling building permits, indeed the whole of the Israeli establishment, conspire against the construction of the Prophet Elias School. Why? What in heaven's name could be out of place in building a school for children? What contorted thinking could lead people to kill the spirits of eight thousand villagers simply trying to assure a better future for their children? But occupation of another people, as many Israeli friends of mine know, is not good for one's own health.

But love can be expressed in radically tough ways, with anger as a blessed accompaniment. Chacour candidly writes of his emotions, his words, his attempts to beat the beast to the ground—not with weapons or hatred, but with honest love. And in this case the victory was finally on the side of the oppressed. The school was built, and quite a few people throughout the world who know the story of Ibilin, have found hope in its telling.

Anyone who reads this book will share in that story, and in Abuna's conviction that the two peoples can live together. It is a good story, a refreshing one, a strengthening and edifying one. And its lesson is that somewhere out there meekness and love will win, even as the earth's Peace-bringer has promised.

Walter Rast


(The book being reviewed is the paperback edition of a work which was originally published in 1986. Therefore, the content of the book has been available for five years.)

The author serves as a visiting associate professor at Harvard Business School and professor of the Weston School of Theology. She did her doctoral work at the University of Boston, and her doctoral advisor was Dr. James Fowler. She taught for many years and also served as chaplain at Whitworth College. These facts about the author are helpful in understanding her perspective and appreciating the content of The Critical Years.

Dr. Parks has been influenced by individuals who have proposed theories of psychological development and more particularly those who have explored the stages of faith development. The content of the first chapters of the book explain the major elements in various theoretical models that have been proposed by Erik Erikson, Jean Piaget, Robert Kegan, Carol Gilligan, Lawrence Kohlberg, William Perry, James Fowler, and others. Readers unfamiliar with the work of these individuals will find Parks' summaries to be well written and helpful in understanding elements of the historical evolution of theories of psychological development.

The primary contribution of this volume is the proposal that Parks makes to clarify the developmental process by differentiating between adolescents, young adults and adults rather than simply adolescents and adults. Parks proposes that in categories such as forms of cognition, dependence, community, self, logic, world coherence, role-taking, and moral judgment there

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are substantial differences between the approach employed by young adults as compared to those of adolescents and adults. Parks believes that her proposal is helpful in avoiding what she judges to be perjorative words like "prolonged adolescence."

The author defines faith as "making meaning," and making meaning is defined as the activity of "seeking pattern, order, form and significance." (14) This definition of faith differs from the definition of the words "belief" and "religion. " "Faith is not simply a set of beliefs that religious people have: it is something that all human beings do." (12)

Since a portion of the young adult developmental stage occurs during the years that many young adults are enrolled in courses of study in institutions of higher education, the content of the book is especially useful to all who are engaged in the higher education enterprise. The author questions the helpfulness of having the instructional process dominated by an understanding of academic objectivity that precludes "a self-conscience searching for and teaching of value and meaning." (134)

The alternative offered to such limited academic objectivity is an institution that can be described as "a community of imagination" (133). As the author describes some of the elements of a "community of imagination," the reader will find ideas that are exciting and worthy of further exploration and implementation.

For those who believe that theoretical models should be descriptive, elegant and simple, the content of the book may be disappointing. Including Parks' concept of "young adult" adds to and makes more complex an already complex model of faith development in human beings. As the proposed models become more complex, one cannot help but wonder whether there will be a model created at some time in the future that will encapsulate all of the variables that have been identified as being important.

Individuals who wish to reflect more thoughtfully on their attempts to help young adults "make meaning" will find the book worth the time and effort it takes to read it.

Alan Harre


Frederick Buechner is that rare thing: an ordained Protestant minister who also happens to be an artist. In recent years his congregation has become so vast that it cannot be contained within the walls of any particular sanctuary. In fact, one is hard-pressed to imagine a typical setting for Fred Buechner because he is at home among Catholics, Jews, mainline Protestants, evangelicals, and both postmodern and old-fashioned agnostics. He can be found speaking in small Southern congregations and the New York Public Library; he has taught one-semester stints at Harvard Divinity School and at Wheaton College.

The author of over twenty books, Frederick Buechner has received nominations for both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. The recent reissue of The Book of Bebb, a collection of four novels (Lion Country, Open Heart, Love Feast, Treasure Hunt), allows one the privilege of reassessing some of Buechner's most riveting work. These novels present the continuing story of Leo Bebb, head of the Church of Holy Love, Inc., based in Armadillo, Florida, where Bebb runs his mail-order ordination business. He also has a disconcerting, not to mention indecent, habit of exposing himself in public: in front of children or now and then while officiating at a funeral.

This is territory that may sound somewhat familiar to readers of Flannery O'Connor or Michael Malone or even, to a certain extent, Walker Percy, and Buechner does have much in common with these writers (even though he purposefully did not read O'Connor until just a few years ago), but his unique angle of vision comes from the fact that he is not a Southerner, even though he has wintered in Florida for a number of years. In a real sense, then, he writes of Bebb not as an insider, but as an alien, a voyeur in the guise of the narrator, Antonio Parr from—appropriately—New York, who initially sets out to write an exposé, but who ends up marrying Bebb's daughter. Antonio, who, early in Lion Country, sends away for his certificate of ordination, entitling him to marry, bury, and administer sacraments, comes to realize by the end of Treasure Hunt that what had once seemed a joke and a fraud might actually be the truth itself, a truth that Bebb, in all of his tawdriness, points to. As an agnostic friend of mine said several years ago after reading Flannery O'Connor, characters like that are so grimy they just don't deserve grace.

Antonio is finally as filled with doubt and skepticism as was my friend, but doubt, he realizes, does not exist unless there is something to doubt. He describes his search "for whatever it is we search for in Poinsett, South Carolina, and Sutton, Connecticut, for whatever it is that is always missing. I am not sure," he continues, "I have ever seen it even from afar, God knows,
and I know I don’t have forever to see it in either. Already, if I made the mistake of listening, I can hear a dim humming in the tracks, Time’s winged chariot hurrying near, as Andrew Marvell said to his coy mistress. But to be honest I must say that on occasion I can also hear something else too—not the thundering of distant hoofs, maybe, or Hi-yo, Silver, Away! echoing across the lonely sage, but the faint chunk-chunk of my own moccasin heart, of the Tonto afoot in the dusk of me somewhere who, not because he ought to but because he can’t help himself, whispers, Kemo sabe every once in a while to what may or may not be only a silvery trick of the failing light.”

Telling the truth becomes a most uncertain endeavor under these circumstances, for who can ever see it completely or report it unerringly? And furthermore, who is really willing to confront the apparent contrariness of God’s truth? One of Buechner’s earlier books was Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Comedy, Tragedy and Fairy Tale, and in it he speaks frequently of God’s holy and impossible jokes—the serious and divine comedies of Easter morning following Friday of the Cross. In Buechner’s most recent book, Telling Secrets: A Memoir, he is once again, but this time in a most personal way, attempting to tell the truth, to reveal all (yes, even as Bebb reveals it all) and one cannot help but stand in awe of his sacred gutsiness. He tells of his father’s suicide, and his mother’s cruel vanity, his daughter’s anorexia, his own psychotherapy, his realization that he was one of his children’s chief problems, and his involvement, as the “adult child” of an alcoholic, in AA.

He also speaks of recovery, not his mother’s or his father’s certainly, but his daughter’s and his own. He speaks also of his surprise at finding himself enjoying that midwestern evangelical college where students he was lunching with asked each other what God was doing in their lives. Just like that without embarrassment. He speaks of worshiping at an Episcopal church many Wheaton students attend, where the words of worship where given back to him through worship that was “more than words.”

He describes the general state of most modern American churches as being something like that of a dysfunctional family with an authoritarian father/pastor who cannot communicate with the communicants, who in turn put up a good front and appear to be much less lonely than they actually are. We are a people filled with secrets, he tells us, many of them with deathly potential. Speaking of his own family, Buechner writes, “What, for one, was the secret that was too dark or dangerous or private or complicated to tell in any other language which our daughter could bring herself to talk about only in the symbolic language of anorexia? Why did my mother close her eyes when she talked to us—what secret was she trying to close out?” He also describes the secret he for years kept from himself and unwittingly pushed onto his children.

Buechner’s writing is compelling and masterful. I know of no other living writer—except for perhaps John Updike—who uses language with such style and, yes, grace. Perhaps that is because both of these writers realize that words may be all we’ve got, but they can go only so far. There is, at the heart of Buechner’s work, a respect for silence which allows us to hear—occasionally—that still, small voice we usually drown out with too many words.

Jill P. Baumgaertner

Notes on Poets—

Carol E. Miller, who graduated from Wheaton College, is a graduate student in English at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Bryce Moreland, of Baton Rouge, describes himself as married, with four children, the owner of a creative services company producing newsletters for corporate clients, writing poems “when I can.”

John Ruff teaches in the Department of English at VU, and is completing a doctorate at University of Washington. His poetry has appeared in Seneca Review, Seattle Review and Poetry Northwest as well as The Cresset.

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