A review of literature, the arts, and public affairs

Michaelmas 2005

The Lutheran Political Legacy
William V. Frame
John von Heyking

Evangelical Populists
Joe Creech

The Church in China
Janet Carroll
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in luce tua

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beginnings

I love the first day of class.

Every year, I walk into a classroom filled with new faces—freshmen making a new start. These young people stand anxiously on the edge of a new world. I tell myself that they are excited chiefly about the intellectual journey they are beginning—ideas, books, philosophy, literature. . . . I'm sure that's part of it. Of course, most of these students are living away from home for the first time. They now get to make their own decisions about what to study, what to read, what to eat (and drink), when to go to bed and when to get up. I imagine all that's on their minds too. They are ready to forge ahead into this new world but apprehensive about what they will find in it. They wonder how blank the slate really is. How strict are the rules? What happens if they make bad choices?

I see all this in their faces on the first day. There is a little bit of it in every student—even the grizzled senior, but it is most intense in the freshmen. As professor on that first day, I can feel the energy in the room. Freshmen take things seriously, because they know the stakes are high. They know that every class they take might be the one that introduces them to their choice of major, their job—their lifelong calling. Every book they read might be the one that stimulates an important new idea—maybe their first book. Every essay assignment might produce the moment when they find their literary voice. No student argues more passionately about what Socrates really means than a freshman in her first month of class. And as professor, I get to play the guide in this adventure. When I walk into the room they look at me, as if they expect that I should know where they are going and what's going to happen along the way. I love that moment. Every year, the looks on my students' faces on the first day of class remind me why I wanted to teach.

It lasts until about October.

Usually, by the middle of the first semester, the excitement that charges the air in my classes at the beginning of a school year gets harder to feel. The students don't look at me quite the same way anymore. After all—as my students often remind me, I'm not their only professor. I'm not the only one assigning books and articles and essays. And—as they also remind me, they have lives outside the classroom too—friends, families, jobs, clubs. These all demand time. The excitement I felt on the first day is still there, You just have to know where to look for it. When you aren't careful, the sense of discovery that should distinguish academic life can get lost in the shuffle. Part of my job as teacher is to bring the intense excitement of the first day back and to make it seem real for both students and professor in every class session, every book, and every assignment.

Although Michaelmas comes near the end of the Christian calendar and in many countries is associated with the harvest—the end of a year's labor, in the academic world Michaelmas marks the beginning. It is the first term of the school year—beginnings for new classes, new students, and new endeavors.

Somehow, this Michaelmas I feel like the freshman. This is my first issue as editor of The Cresset. My excitement and anxieties over this new endeavor are much like what I imagine my students feel on their first day. Like my students, I have an opportunity to make something new for myself. This is a different kind of work than what I've been doing the past few years. It is a labor that I turn to eagerly, anxious to plow new fields and reap a different kind of harvest. I'm sure that this work will change me in some ways, although I'm not sure how.

Of course, my duty here is not to create things anew; it is to care for a legacy with which I have been entrusted. I know how well this journal has filled its mission. The Cresset has been described as "a small lamp set on the wall." Eleven editors before me have tended that lamp, and I can only hope that the products of my efforts will add something to the light that their labors have left us. This is a time of beginnings, but I will work to make it a continuation—a continuation of the traditions of wisdom and excellence that my predecessors have established.

So treat this first issue as my first assignment. Feel free to take out your red pen. I know that many of you have your own ideas about what this journal is or should be. I've heard from more than a few already. Please, keep the advice coming. I need to know what you are thinking. My immediate predecessor noted in one of his first columns that he was perhaps the first editor of The Cresset of a generation who never knew O. P. Kretzman and the first editor who was not born and raised Lutheran. If he was right, that makes me the second on both counts. When I remember that, it reminds me of how much I have to learn—and of how grateful I am for the trust that has been placed in me. I hope my excitement for my new vocation is apparent in the pages that follow, and I hope that it keeps coming through in every future issue. I will try to remain always your anxious freshman.

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I'm a political scientist by training, and I'm fascinated by the interaction of the realms of politics and faith. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Jesus made it sound so easy, but sometimes it's hard to know what belongs to each. So often, both God and Caesar seem to have a legitimate claim. How do we render unto both Caesar and God what each deserve? It can't be as simple as following God and letting Caesar shift for himself, for we are also told that "the authorities that exist are appointed by God." Does this mean that our duties to the political order—our duties as citizens—are themselves sacred. At what point does Caesar ask too much of us?

Two of the essays in this issue examine the teachings of the Reformers on some of these very questions, but the essays draw very different conclusions. William Frame sees in the Lutheran tradition, particularly in the writings of Melanchthon, the basis for a sort of "Christian civility" that allows for a vigorous life of service and civic engagement. John von Heyking, on the other hand, is more cautious about the Lutheran legacy. He suggests that Lutheran teachings are prone toward a sort of individualism that isolates us from the friendships and public life that are necessary in political order.

The remaining essays provide portraits of groups of Christians looking for ways to witness to the Gospel in the unique contexts of their own political communities. Joe Creech presents a study of conservative Christians moved by their faith to reform a nation that already called itself Christian. Sr. Janet Carroll considers the prospects for Christians who currently are seeking out a role to play in a nation that has long been suspicious of all things Christian.

Sometimes, we boldly proclaim our faith, even in the public square. Sometimes, we cautiously search for means of dialogue with fellow citizens who are suspicious of our motives. As Luther taught, the Kingdom of Man is not the Kingdom of God. The work of the state is not the work of the church, and, as Christians, we cannot use the state as one more tool with which to do the church’s work. Yet, sometimes even Christians will need to render unto Caesar. Political community is not the end of Christian life, but it is one more realm in which we are called to serve and to seek God’s truth.

—JPO
GOD GARDENING

Maybe one of God’s favorite jobs is gardening.

On an early August morning He goes out to his Yukon garden, runs his fingers along the tops of pines, picks a dead tree or two—there and there—lets them fall.

Checks the owl’s burrow in the Southeast corner, admires the fireweed though He knows the deer will eat them later.

Checks the dampness of the soil, His fingertips pushing into cool earth dirt His body will never return to. Does He feel this separation on His skin?

But oh how He must love the sweet smell of the rained-on earth—and the way it is absolutely faithful without ever being asked.

Emily Wall
Philip Melanchthon and the idea of Christian civility

IN 1518, AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-ONE—AND ON THE HEELS of Luther posting his theses at the Wittenberg Schlosskirche—Philip Melanchthon joined the University there as its professor of Greek. It was a prized appointment. The university had been founded only in 1502 and was already a leading light of the new learning facilitated by the Renaissance. It was the apple of the Elector’s eye and a harbinger of a new Germany just beginning to rise from the remnants of the medieval Christian empire.

Melanchthon’s facility with the classical languages, including Hebrew, had won him the Wittenberg job. But his seminal role in the Reformation grew from competencies that depended on and yet went far beyond grammar and linguistics—history, medicine, rhetoric, and, the ultimate gathering point of them all, philosophy. Indeed, his linguistic acumen was but the critical investigative competence of his study; it grew to fluency in the act of retrieving the teachings of the ancients from the vulgar and “epicurean” scholarship of the Schoolmen.

Even so, the reconciliation that Melanchthon eventually effected between classical thinking and reformed Christianity could not have been achieved by the professor of Greek as he first arrived at the university. Some of the credentials still needed were acquired at Wittenberg itself, amending his earlier training at Heidelberg and Tübingen. Nor did Melanchthon immediately inspire the confidence of his eventual colleagues, including Luther, upon arrival at Wittenberg. In fact, he made a poor first impression, in part, perhaps, by his physical self-presentation. He entirely reversed this impression with an inaugural address delivered four days after he set foot in the city. Entitled “On Correcting the Studies of Youth,” it took the place by storm, and elicited from Luther the observation that he thereafter “desired no other Greek teacher” than Melanchthon for whose appointment he thanked both the rector and the elector.

From beginning to end, Melanchthon’s speech “commended” to the university a curriculum and pedagogy intended to “recover” the learning of the ancients and put it in the place of Medieval Sophistry. This “original” learning had declined precipitously in the collapse of empire, and had since been corrupted by such “moderns” as Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and St. Bonaventure. In both this speech and in many statements issued over the length of his career at Wittenberg, Melanchthon blamed the political and moral collapse of Europe—and even waywardness in the Church—on this loss of the ancient learning. He often noted that the iconoclasm of periods in which “the Greeks were held in contempt” prevented philosophy from influence in human affairs, on the one hand, and corrupted the Church by the “slow death of sacred things,” on the other. This mixture of decay and iconoclasm had developed and done its damage in the 800 years preceding—and, he hoped, ending with—the Reformation.

The only way to retrieve the learning of the ancients was to enter into conversation with them—in their language and on their terms. This required reading them in the original, as Luther had done the Scriptures. In addition to the high competence in grammar required for this ad fontes approach (to the Greeks in particular), understanding the material required a pedagogy of dialectics that issued in regular classroom disputation. For Melanchthon, dialectics both prompts and accomplishes human intellectual ascent from opinion about to knowledge of the Creation. His critical assumption here was that nature—the essence of the Creation—was a work of mind and therefore accessible to reason. The rules governing disputation, aided by the collateral rhetorical skills practiced in the dialectic, would keep reason, according to Melanchthon, attentive to ordered Nature and prevent it from drifting off, as it was otherwise prone to do, toward self-absorption or the puffery of fine expression. Disputation, in short, prompted the discussion toward the “public,” in the ancient sense, and prevented it from resembling the empty and self-indulgent exchanges of the Schoolmen.

THE ORDER WHICH THIS PEDAGOGY DISCOVERED IN THE Creation was admittedly assumed from the beginning, but this assumption did not in the least relieve the un armed mind of the responsibility for confirming or “proving” the truth and detail of it by what we might call the Rules of Reason. Hence, understanding for Melanchthon’s Christian students was produced by disciplined human inquiry; it was not the result of God’s revelation, either as faith or as a recompense for it. The radical distinction between faith and reason embraced by the Reformers, and especially by Melanchthon, degrades neither faith nor reason. Rather, it consigns each to a partic-
ular jurisdiction—nature to reason, grace to faith, for example. In the terms of epistemology, this is close to a divorce; in ontological terms, the two jurisdictions stand on a continuum made of God’s providential intent. That reason, operating dialectically through disputation, can approach the truth about nature is a Kingdom on the Left implication of divine providence; the simultaneity of faith with our recognition of grace is an almost tautological example of a Kingdom of the Right connection between understanding and Providence.

Melanchthon’s assumption of the intelligibility of divine providential purpose in respect to nature made him a devotee of classical, particularly Aristotelian, teleology. Armed with the conviction that all things have purposes or ends and are defined by them, and possessing an impressive arsenal of linguistic, grammatical, and rhetorical skills, Melanchthon could lead his students over the dark valley of Scholasticism to a new life of service and civic engagement. Full participation in what Luther came to call the Kingdom on the Left required an embrace of Law as well as of Gospel. Indeed, it required a Christian civility if not a Christian political science.

In his Funeral Oration, Melanchthon says Luther “adorned and defended civic life as it has never been adorned and defended by anyone else’s writings” (Kusukawa, 1999, 258). The kind of writing he has in mind here is marked by “eloquence,” and for Melanchthon, eloquence is the highest form of forensic rhetoric. It belongs largely to “statesmen”—non-tyrannical leaders who both represented and formed the kinds of communities warranting the name “polity.” Luther, said Melanchthon, did not allow his piety to blind him to human reality. In the face of “weighty decisions on public dangers,” he usually “saw best of all what would be useful” because he “both knew the state and accurately perceived the frame of mind and wishes of all those with whom he lived.”

There can be no question that Luther recognized and embraced the distinction between the Christian, on the one hand, and the Christian Citizen, on the other. In a 1519 piece called “Two Kinds of Righteousness,” Luther describes two “private” Christians and, then, the “public” Christian or Christian Citizen. The first private Christian seeks “vengeance and judgment from the representatives of God.” The second does not, and gives his cloak to those who would take his coat. “These,” says Luther, “are sons of God, brothers of Christ, heirs of future blessings.” The Christian Citizen, however, is “in persuasion . . . like the second type just mentioned, but . . . unlike in practice.” Such Christian Citizens “. . . demand back their own property or seek punishment . . . not because they seek their own advantage, but through this punishment and restoration of their own things they seek the betterment of the one who has stolen or offended. They discern that the offender cannot be improved without punishment. These are called ‘zealots’ and the Scriptures praise them. But no one ought to attempt this unless he is mature and highly experienced in the second class just mentioned . . .” Otherwise, he would be prone to mistaking “. . . wrath for zeal and be convicted of doing from anger and impatience that which he believes he is doing from love of justice . . .”

Melanchthon’s constant admonition that his students’ civic engagement was to be founded upon the virtue of moderation as propounded by the ancients was intended to supply the “maturity” that Luther identifies here as the critical condition of what we can only call “Christian Vocational Life.” This “maturity” is marked by the discipline of self-denial, which takes the form of a notable openness in public as well as academic forums. “Nothing is better in all things,” he once said, “than moderation, readiness to be appeased and forbearance.” Referring to the Iliad, he asks, “What is more just and human than . . . to decree, as the first laws in the assembly, freedom for those who speak and patience for those who listen? Do we not see how our century is afflicted more than anything else by the fact that the mighty cannot bear free speech, and not even any thought of freedom?” And of Aristotle, he says, “How beautiful it is that he alone saw that the nature of virtue is the moderation of emotions!”

The idea of vocation was intended from the beginning to make the Cross real in the earthly life of the Christian (Wingren, c 1957, p. 53). Civic engagement was the communal setting and orientation in which calling was heard and answered. The university, in which theology and philosophy met and mingled, was the training ground of vocational life and, ipso facto, of citizenship and civility.

Melanchthon seems to be re-establishing—on perhaps higher (or at least firmer) ground than did Aristotle—the view that “man is by nature a political animal” (Politics, i, 1, 9). The Christian definition of sin as self reliance makes the business of building community very challenging, indeed! The idea of vocation, supported by civility and amplified by an educational regimen relying upon dialectics and protected by a close alliance with Electors and Christian magistrates might very well succeed—but only by constant cultivation.

Melanchthon’s preference for the ancients as partner for Luther’s accurately-recovered theology was premised in large part on their systematic and teleological philosophy. He also favored the ancients, however, for an additional and still faintly teleological reason: He thought their discussion of human nature superior to later efforts precisely because it was the earliest. This earliness permitted the ancients direct access to the subject, unencumbered by any obscuring curtain of existing bibliographic opinion. Not only were the parts of nature available to direct view at the dawn of the academy, but man himself appeared before the ancients in something close to his original and Godly form.
The ancients gave Melanchthon and Luther a better peep than they could otherwise get of the original, pre-Fall human being. Through them, they and all Christians could see “how great a wound the enemy inflicted on [the human soul] . . . and show also the traces of the divine image on it, and the remains of the heavenly gifts.”

Fortunately, the ancients supplied Melanchthon with an “original” portrait of Man without blinding him or his students to the implications of the Fall. His regard for the ancients did not weaken his rejection of their supposition that human perfection was approachable by the discovery and practice of virtue through reason. (Neither did Melanchthon adopt the Epicurean view that our “natural” inclination is to pleasure. He thought this an accurate diagnosis but of a “depravity” occurring in the Fall rather than of “nature.”) The portrait revealed to Christianity that the classical “teaching on morals and description of virtues” were crucial for “showing the way to live properly and as a citizen.” Without these disciplines, the communal life of fallen man would have been even worse than Aristotle alleged for the natural man living outside of or before the polis.

The question remains: Did Melanchthon, in his profound regard for history, grammar, dialectics, and—eventually—the whole array of the “arts” that constituted for him the critically important subject of “philosophy,” corrupt Luther’s theology? I don’t think so. It is clear to me that his every effort was to identify and cultivate the political conditions in which the Church could flourish (as can be seen in his preface to the Augsburg Confession). He was fully aware that civility is a leading virtue only in the Kingdom on the Left, and that the vocational life which it makes possible is the highest life for us only on this side of the grave.

He does not allow his Philosophy to trench upon the Gospel, which must itself be regularly proclaimed and confessed. He does, of course, flatly reject the pietistic proposition “that the writings of the pagans are unworthy of being read by Christian people, and that Christians should give a wide berth to philosophy.” He never wavers from the conviction that philosophy neither knows nor interprets “the will of God, nor does it instruct on the fear of God and the trust in Him; that pertains properly to the Gospel.” What philosophy does, however, is to “teach” the “precepts for civic life [that are necessary]” so that “men may live peacefully with each other.” Philosophy propounds these and their “causes” and “put[s] them in relation to each other” for perception and cultivation by “excellent men.”

Neither Christ nor the Gospel does so. “[O]ne must not think,” says Melanchthon, “that Christ came into this world to teach these [ethical] precepts; He expounded something else, about the will of God and trust in God, which human reason could not understand. However, God also favours civic duties and requires them from all ages, and by that discipline He wants men to be restrained in no other way than by the laws and institutions of the magistrates, which have great affinity with those precepts, for all laws and all justice has sprung from them as if from springs. For this reason this teaching is very useful, because, by demonstrating the causes of the laws and of public justice, it helps much with the understanding of all discussion of civic matters.” This marriage of law and civility explains, I think, why Melanchthon’s clear preference among Plato’s dialogues is for The Laws rather than The Republic.

Melanchthon uses a reference to Homer’s Odyssey—his favorite poet (and poets were, for him, the chief architects of the formative art of History)—to drive home his point: “Since Christians should cherish and support this civil society, this teaching of civic morals and duties has to be known by them. It is not pietie to live like the Cyclopes, without justice, without laws, without teaching, or without any of the other things helpful for life that are contained in literature. Therefore those who disparage philosophy not only wage war against human nature, but they also severely injure the glory of the Gospel, which commands that men be restrained by civic discipline . . .”

Melanchthon’s philosophy amounts to “moral philosophy,” or what Leo Strauss called with careful distinction “political theory.” His reconciliation of the ancients to Luther’s theology makes of his particular version of philosophy a pure adjunct to that theology. It therefore differs profoundly from, for example, Alfarabi’s effort, five centuries earlier, to recover in the ancients the “one, true philosophy” of the human condition.

Nor does Melanchthon’s politics ever find itself in profound tension with civil society, as did quite regularly the original from which he recovered it. The saga of Socrates’ indictment, conviction, and execution makes it quite clear that Plato, at least, grasped quite fully the sedulous nature of philosophy, particularly from the point of view of civil society properly so called. Perhaps it was in view of this tension that Melanchthon stood to declare Plato’s dialogues inferior to Aristotle’s “ordered” delineation of the “arts,” saying of Plato’s Socrates that the scintillating heights to which his “irony” rises in eloquence makes it “more appropriate for mocking than for teaching.” In fact, even though Plato’s eloquence is the highest and best of all—and contains many wonderful ideas—“he [Plato] did not hand on any art completely or in order.”

Those who fault Melanchthon for this preoccupation (Caemmerer, 1947 is the leading example), are deni-
grating the great service he rendered for the Reform and to Martin Luther, his friend and workmate. For Melanchthon—and for us—neither the Scriptures nor the Church have any chance of survival except in civil society. “What, I beseech you, is the future shape of kingdoms or states without erudition or teaching of the Scriptures? . . . Let us just cast a look at those places in which learning once had a home, where the schools even now retain these scholarly titles, but abuse them for promotions in rank and the achievement of honours. We can see how much turpitude is apparently there all the time. . . . Their bad example should move and admonish us to grant safety to schools both in the state and in the Church of Christ.”

No passage in what I have seen from Melanchthon’s hand better establishes his view that civility, coached by classical learning, is critical to the educative undertaking of both the State and the Church.

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Bibliography


Those looking to the Lutheran tradition—at least to its origins—for insight concerning today’s deepest problems of political order will be a little disappointed. The Lutheran tradition, with its origins in the writings of Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon, started with great promise on the question of religious freedom in opposing the abuses of the medieval church, but we will be disappointed if we expect from it a robust defense of freedom in politics.

The twentieth century’s great example of a Lutheran conscience confronting state power is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose courageous role in trying to assassinate the evil that was Adolph Hitler can be admired. However, it is well known that Bonhoeffer wrestled with the Lutheran political teaching of the two kingdoms, according to which the inner freedom of the Christian remains solidly founded upon a fortress of religious faith—and only religious faith—and where no amount of good works amidst unredeemed nature makes a difference. In short, he wrestled against the two kingdoms doctrine that teaches that tyranny harms bodies but has no impact on the soul, which God protects, because only religious faith can justify the soul. Bonhoeffer found however that totalitarianism does indeed harm souls, and he grappled with the implications of how his decision affected his relationship with God.

Unfortunately, North Americans and Europeans do not face the tyranny that Bonhoeffer confronted. However, as Aristotle observes of courage, in the study of political matters, there is value in examining the extreme case in order to understand their essence. Even so, we receive only a partial view of the Lutheran tradition of political teaching if we focus exclusively on the example of Bonhoeffer struggling against a tradition whose prescription of quietism toward tyranny is based on a longstanding reading of Paul’s letter to the Romans that requires absolute obedience to the state. The Lutheran tradition is more complicated than Bonhoeffer understood it. Even so, the early tradition has its limitations.

Two interrelated dimensions of the Lutheran political tradition bear attention: 1) the state-conscience relationship, and 2) Luther’s replacement of the medieval notion of amicitia with God as the essence of religious faith, with his doctrine of sola fides.

The image of Lutheran political teaching providing the historical foundations for modern authoritarian state teachings (Rechtsstaat) is common, and not what Luther intended. Part of Luther’s and Melanchthon’s attacks on medieval natural law teachings stemmed from their perception that these teachings failed to give due weight to the virtues of equity and judgment. The Catholic Church had sacrificed commonsense and decency on the idolatrous altar of a fraudulent legalism. Canon law had become too legalistic and had sucked the life out of religious faith. However, the reformers could not simply revive the Church’s own teaching on equity and practical judgment, because it was based on Aristotle. Instead, they had to root it in conscience as formed by religious faith. Conscience is natural as well, as we can know naturally the contents of the Decalogue. However, sin prevents us from seeing its contents sufficiently, and it also prevents us from judging properly in our own case.

Sin explains the divine sanction of the state, whose purpose is to preserve public order. Its role is especially necessary when each individual—by religious faith alone—is an authority on Scripture, Luther’s famous “priesthood of all believers.” Luther and Melanchthon were sufficiently realistic to understand the implications of this doctrine, though a little too late. If everyone is a Scriptural authority, then no one is. Anarchy is the political consequence. In 1525 Luther responded to the Swabian peasants’ demands for revolutionary freedom by admonishing the bishops, whom he previously called fools and knaves, to massacre the heretics.

Melanchthon’s view of the state extends that of Luther.
Not only is the state divinely ordained, it is now also the guardian of the Decalogue. Because the second table, which governs social relations, depends on the first, which governs man’s relationship with God, the magistrate is to guard both tables. Emory University Law Professor Harold J. Berman argues that the drafters of the treaties of Augsburg (1555) and Westphalia (1648) had Melanchthon’s doctrine in mind when they formulated the principle of cuius regio eius religio, the notion of state sovereignty that sustains both legal positivism as well as Realpolitik views of international relations.

Moreover, the Decalogue must be the basis of law, not only because it is the perfect statement of the natural law, but also because its authority is divine. Its divine source makes it more reliable than the shifting rationalizations of sinful legislators. This reliable authority makes the state, which embodies and interprets the Decalogue, more authoritative when it coerces the sinful to behave. However, this makes the state more sacred than in medieval times. As a result, Melanchthon thought that the state should teach people the natural law (the Decalogue) in addition to being the “top cop.” It teaches virtue to people through the particular dictates of law.

The state primarily teaches man’s utter dependence on God. It is unclear how a Lutheran today should understand the state’s role in teaching citizens their dependence on God. One could point to the numerous ways that the modern state, following Machiavelli, has made people dependent on it (thus making them too complacent to revolt). For his part, Luther believed the state taught man’s dependence on God by illuminating the need for forgiveness. As South Africans and Eastern Europeans know, forgiveness breaks the cycle of vengeance in which states find themselves. However, juxtaposing forgiveness and vengeance is to overlook the justice that lies between them, which, as Melanchthon observes, is what the Decalogue is about.

Without sufficiently considering justice as a foundation of the state, one gets caught in the dilemma of either denying to the state any form of political ethics (everything it does is necessarily sinful) or requiring extrapublic actors to guide it (i.e., the Church). Luther’s dilemma is probably the reason Melanchthon felt compelled to develop his theory of the Decalogue: without it, Lutherans would have to become Roman Catholics again if they were to have a moral basis for politics. The two main sources of the Lutheran tradition are ambiguous on forgiveness and justice, and thus the moral authority of the state.

Lutheran teachings on the state thus do not leave a lot of room for conscience because the state always has divine authority, and as guardian of the Decalogue, it is its more reliable interpreter. Moreover, the state takes over enforce-
soon to be published essay on Luther and Calvin, friendship plays no role in Luther’s (or Calvin’s for that matter) political and ecclesiastical teachings. Grace is taken up in the collective, but in no way can one say that it is taken up amidst the collective, which is the realm of unredeemed nature. Like his failure to see political justice between forgiveness and injustice, so too did Luther fail to recognize friendship as grace amidst the collective, between the extremes of his individualized grace in the collective, and grace for the collective, as demanded by the Swabian peasants whose destruction he demanded.

Instead of looking to friendship as a way of mitigating the extremes of his individualism and Swabian collectivism, Luther preached what political philosopher Eric Voegelin calls a “respectable eschatology” for society. By definition, good works are good on account of their being performed by justified individuals; Luther rules out a standard of ethics outside of justification that can judge their actions. Even the Decalogue must be interpreted by the justified. Moreover, the celebration of ordinary life, which Charles Taylor calls Luther’s special contribution to the modern self, is a species of utilitarianism redeemed by “respectable eschatology,” and which today gets expressed as the liberal faith in moral and technological progress.

However, the modern self is the autonomous self who stands against God, and against society. Luther doesn’t go as far as later, more radical, moderns including Friedrich Nietzsche, but I will conclude with a statement of Luther’s that illuminates how justification and selfhood replace amicitia: If you “trust a man, you trust him because you consider him a righteous, true man; and that is the greatest honor that one can extend to another.” And when God sees the soul honoring him through religious faith, “He will honor it in return, and consider it righteous and true, which indeed it is through such religious faith.”

Voegelin observes of Luther’s statement that, “amicitia has changed into something that comes dangerously close to mutual trust between respectable burghers.” If this is so, then Christians looking to the Lutheran tradition for intellectual support for religious freedom and a robust civil society against the state will be disappointed. Lutheran “respectable eschatology” separates the individual from others and places him into a framework of positivistic laws that lacks the public space that political philosopher Hannah Arendt notes is the substance of politics. By this she means the deeds and stories that a political community shares and that distinguish it from other communities. Put another way: political communities share a kind of political friendship that is communicated via their common narratives and memories. The kind of transaction of which Luther speaks is an act of commercial trade, where the goods exchanged are praise and high regard. Friends, unlike trading partners, find it hard to imagine their lives without one another. Luther’s burgher is apolitical; his world of “everyday life” extends no further than the household and the cool benevolence toward his neighbors. In a postmaterialistic society like that of Europe and North America, where religious faith alone plays next to no role in grounding public policy, the Lutheran tradition looks more comfortable helping the expansive welfare state and its “good works” than in carving out spaces of freedom for associations, including friendships.

Liberal democracy is about good works, not friendship.

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**vox populi, vox dei:**

religion and populist politics in North Carolina

**Joe Creech**

Even though there are a number of persistent questions regarding the aims, constituency, and longevity of the Religious Right in America, most historians and political scientists agree on at least one thing—its emergence in the 1960s marked a change in the way conservative religious Protestants or fundamentalists, especially in the South, engaged the political sphere. And without question, the surge of religiously-motivated, theologically-conservative voters who supported Goldwater’s presidential run or were part of the calculus in Nixon’s “southern strategy” marked a notable shift in national voting alignments. As historians such as George Marsden and Joel Carpenter and political scientists such as Michael Lienesch have pointed out, we can, however, overstate the novelty of the Religious Right. Conservative Protestants, even fundamentalists, had been politically active as a movement in the earlier part of the twentieth century; in many ways, then, the emergence of the Religious Right marked a recovery of older patterns of political behavior or, as Lienesch argues, one more in a long cycle of Protestant hand wringing and subsequent moral crusading. But while these scholars call our attention to the William Jennings Bryans of the early twentieth century, the notion persists that, in the American South, at least, the Religious Right’s eruption in the most religious region in the nation was indeed something unprecedented. We certainly know how reticent southerners were to join various political-moral crusades of the early nineteenth century, and by the early twentieth century the malaise of “solid south” voting patterns had no doubt settled in—part of which meant that white southerners, regardless of religious preferences, simply acquiesced to the political status quo of Democratic white supremacy, at least until the 1960s.

Given these assumptions, events surrounding the election of 1892 in North Carolina seem far from normal—or were they? The election of 1892 saw perhaps the most powerful third-party movement in the nation’s history—the People’s or Populist Party—emerge as a national contender that consolidated workers and farmers across the nation. For a time, Populists threatened to overturn political convention and in particular white Democratic dominance in the South, all with the sense that they were acting in accord with the will of God. As they entered the political fray, the Populists of North Carolina demolished any purported wall between church and state. One religious paper, for example, in 1892 noted that many good Christians were “ready to consign to eternal punishment all who do not agree with them both in religion and politics. We heard a very good man consign a certain political party to hell and every man who voted for its nominees” (North Carolina Baptist, 26 October 1892). Moreover, Populists expressed absolute conviction that they were fighting on God’s side. One Populist warned: “There can be but two political parties to claim the suffrage of the people, the one having truth, justice and right on its side; the other the love of money, office and corruption. . . . With God for the acknowledged leader of the former and the devil for the latter, all good people ought to know which will win” (Progressive Farmer, 10 May 1892, 17 October 1893). Populists often considered it a sin even to affiliate with another political party. One wondered how anybody “professing to be a Christian can vote the Democratic ticket”; another wrote that the Democrats represented “the abomination of desolation” and were “stennes in the nostrils of decent people”—a party crying “lustily to Baal.” Still others accused Democrats of “idolatry,” “harlotry,” “heathenism,” “iniquity,” of being the “whore of Babylon” and “of the Devil” (Hickory Mercury, 6 April 1892; Farmers’ Advocate, 24 August 1892).

These Populists, then, invite us to consider how conservative religion, in this case North Carolina evangelicalism, could galvanize such a radical political movement. Even though, as with the case of fundamentalism more broadly, many historians of southern religion have demonstrated that nineteenth-century southerners often mixed religion and politics, we still usually imagine theologically conservative southerners prior to the late 1960s as captive to the prevailing southern cultural ideals, willingly submitting to the “powers that be.” While such a view is not entirely mistaken, as we can see with these North Carolina Populists, it misrepresents the historical record with regard to all southern evangelicals. Moreover such a view rests on the dubious inference that conservative religion—traditionalist beliefs, institutions, and practices entrenched in a particular place—must invariably reinforce that status quo. North Carolina Populists demonstrate otherwise, for even though not every Populist was an evangelical (and vice versa), conservative evangelicalism shaped the Populists’ understanding of themselves and
their movement as they wove their political and economic reforms into a grand cosmic narrative pitting the forces of God and freedom against those of Satan and tyranny. This narrative gave the movement an apocalyptic sense of urgency and in the process challenged the very southern sacred canopy that gave it birth.

Central to the Populists’ sense of urgency was their belief that the economic hard times, political corruption in the two old parties, and even the drift towards centralization among a number of Protestant denominations in the 1890s signaled a crisis in American democracy or “freedom.” For Populists, freedom meant economic independence on a personal level, laissez faire capitalism in the political sphere, freedom of conscience in politics and religion, and the absence of concentrations of population, wealth, and power—either in politics or the church. In their minds, the loss of freedom in any one sphere—economic, political, or religious—eventually would poison Christian civilization in America, leading to a victory for Satan and his minions.

Again, this narrative had such power because the ideals upon which it drew were so central to the religious beliefs entrenched in the region. Yet, because these religious beliefs were so embedded in southern culture, they also complicate the story, for conservative evangelicalism shaped not only Populism but opposition to it as well. Nineteenth-century evangelicalism displayed both countercultural and conservative tendencies. Evangelicals’ egalitarian, anti-elitist, and liberal strains helped engender Populism’s assault on the southern economic and political “powers that be,” but for many southerners, evangelicalism also sacralized political, economic, and cultural power. It led some evangelicals, usually white Democrats, to reject and ultimately quash the People’s Party as it threatened their hegemony. Even though the issue of race was deeply woven into this conflict over the sacred in southern culture, the volatility of southern politics in the 1890s and, in particular, the vehemence with which Populists and non-Populists did battle, reflected both sides’ alignment along this central fissure within an evangelicalism that informed basic southern understandings of politics, economics, and society. In other words, because evangelicalism so deeply molded southern ideals and ways, it was able to propel such a powerful movement of social change and such an equally forceful backlash against that change.

To make some sense of this conflict, the focus here, however, will fall on the religious presuppositions that shaped the Populists’ response to the economic, religious, and political problems they witnessed in the 1890s. What distinguished a Populist in 1892 from her Democratic neighbor down the road was a deep sense that the divine experiment begun in 1776 was failing and at fault were the hell-bound political parties that had failed to embody and protect American freedom. Redemption therefore required a new party that could restore those sacred ideals of freedom.

The Populists’ mixture of religion and politics drew on a long theological heritage concerning the relationship of church to state and more broadly about the nature of personal and political freedom. These patterns of thought derived from the evangelicalism that had become thoroughly established in the South by the late nineteenth century—so much so that religious life in North Carolina was in many ways akin to Puritan New England or Mormon Utah; evangelicalism was an inescapable presence.

As historians such as Charles Reagan Wilson and Donald Mathews have demonstrated, by having achieved such a central place in southern culture, evangelicalism stabilized or legitimated many elements of postbellum southern society; hence, the idea that the southern evangelicals were “captive” to predominant cultural mores is not without merit. Yet, evangelicals’ egalitarianism, values of justice and equality, and stress on individual conscience almost always complicated their relationship to their prevailing culture. Even the most socially conservative evangelicals often felt uneasy about an outlook that seemed elitist.

Evangelicals’ beliefs interacted with commonsense understandings of human beings and institutions that were widely-held in nineteenth-century America. This commonsense way of perceiving the world—based on Scottish Common Sense philosophy—stressed the ability of all people to apprehend and conform to certain axioms, ideals, or “principles” by which God ruled heaven and earth. Evangelicals, in other words, imagined a world of oaths—things ought to be according to God’s static or axiomatic principles—and all people could or ought to understand and conform to these principles. Furthermore, most evangelicals linked this way of thinking to the idea of “God’s moral governance”—the idea that, since acting according to godly principles produced right behavior, if all members of a society acted rightly, that society experienced the “moral governance” of God, or more simply put, was in line with the way things ought to be.

By the late nineteenth century, commonsense thinking, in various degrees of sophistication, along with this notion of God’s moral governance, was well established in the southern evangelical mind and engendered a number of often contradictory intellectual and social trajectories. On the one hand, this outlook stressed conformity to absolute rules—an idea that could support relationships of power or social control, including oppressive ones. Evangelicalism in the late nineteenth century helped mythologize the Old South and undergirded conservative gender relations, and its ambivalence on vindictive justice and penchant for sacralizing hierarchies of race created an environment hospitable for lynching, Jim Crow, and black disfranchisement. This was...
especially evident in matters of race, gender, and sometimes class.

On the other hand, commonsense thinking also had egalitarian implications. These egalitarian strains in commonsense thinking, and evangelicals' more general egalitarian tendencies, stemmed from their insistence that an individualistic conversion experience—a radically personal sense of knowing one belonged to God—was essential to salvation. Specifically, most evangelicals believed that all people were equal before God in a state of sin and likewise that all people could apprehend the divine without the mediation of priest or church. On the egalitarian side, for example, it stressed the innate "common" ability of all people to think and act morally regardless of social class, race, or gender. Drawing on this egalitarian, individualistic impulse (which was often combined with a strong anti-elitism), evangelicals insisted that an individual believer, armed with a sanctified conscience, could read the Bible, develop ethical and theological positions, and deliberate such matters without political, ecclesiastical, or in some cases creedal coercion. One Baptist insisted along these lines that his denomination was "democratic" and bred "independence" because "the Baptist reads the Bible for himself and teaches his children to do likewise" (North Carolina Baptist, 17 February 1892).

This tension between conformity and conscience indelibly shaped evangelical political and social thought. Again, evangelicals believed that when Christians acted according to their converted consciences, their obedience to religious, economic, or political truth put them in harmony with God's governance which insured a well-ordered society. Thus, they traditionally voiced opposition to the twin evils of ignorance and political coercion that could bind the conscience and thus thwart God's governance. This emphasis on freedom of conscience was at the heart of Protestants' assaults on Papal hierarchy, for example, and after it became politicized in the eighteenth century, this belief undergirded evangelical attacks on religious establishment and furthermore supported liberal ideas of toleration and especially republicanism or democracy. Evangelicals often further bolstered their support for the verity of democratic governance by pointing to the contradiction between hierarchical patterns of governance and the egalitarianism they saw as implicit in the command to love one another.

This stress on individual autonomy, especially as it combined with American democratic political thought, caused southern evangelicals by the late nineteenth century to think of themselves as historical champions of freedom of conscience and religious toleration, believing further more that religious liberty established a foundation for democratic government more generally. Most southern evangelicals believed, for example, that the vote was the voice of the conscience that in turn reflected the voice of God—vox populi, vox dei. They moreover considered religious liberty and their voluntary ecclesiastical institutions as tutors for civil liberty, for reliance on one's conscience in religious matters, they believed, led to a general independence about the things of life, meaning one could cast a vote or serve one's government independent of the suasion of party favors, greed, or self-interest.

While advocating the verity of democracy in church and state generally, nineteenth-century evangelicals usually stressed the particular importance of American democracy in God's providential designs. Undergirding the idea that their denominations were central to American democracy was the notion that God had special designs for America as the beacon of democracy to the world—that America was Winthrop's city on a hill, the culmination of all that was good in western Christian civilization. This idea permeated southern evangelicals' speech. Disciple of Christ Miss Mattie Ham wrote that, because it had resisted British tyranny, "the American government more fully embodies the principles of Christianity than any other political system on the globe" (Watch Tower, 7 June 1901).

In proclaiming the verity of democracy and especially the sacred mission of the United States, how might evangelicals react if it appeared that American democracy was in peril? Here, we need again to go back to their commonsense patterns of thinking to understand their unique restorationist view of reform. Evangelicals argued that human beings and institutions were sacred—a part of God's moral governance or in line with the way things ought to be—only insofar as they embodied God's eternal principles. For human beings, the embodiment of these ideals commenced at conversion and grew as one reached true Christian manhood and womanhood, which meant exhibiting a fully integrated belief system rooted in an independent conscience—in other words, having the "backbone" or "courage" to act in accordance with one's conscience—one's internalized, eternal principles and hence in accord with God's moral governance.

As with grown men and women, institutions of civil and ecclesiastical government were considered sacred only if these institutions—or, more specifically, their members—embodied God's eternal principles. We can see this way of thinking in evangelical ecclesiology, for most evangelicals believed that their denominational organizations were subject to the voice of their members, who, by embodying God's principles, spoke the voice of God—the institutions themselves were not sacred. Most moreover believed that ecclesiastical governing bodies—or any concentrated group of leaders—posed an inherent threat to autonomy or liberty. Even their churches, like all governing structures, were prone to centralization and therefore to "tyranny" and the loss of God's governance. As many southern evangelicals looked out over the ecclesiastical horizon by the 1890s, they saw just such a state of centralized ecclesiastical and even political tyranny emerging.
While almost all evangelicals agreed that political parties, like ecclesiastical bodies, existed solely to express God’s principles as revealed by the vote or participation of a God-breathed conscience, their thinking became much more complex when applied to the actual temporal relationship of the church to the state.

Two contentious ideas informed the practical dimensions of Church/State relations—contentious ideas that reflected the conservative and countercultural tensions we already have seen. On the conservative side, many southern evangelicals articulated the doctrine often referred to as the “spirituality of the church” that relegated to the state all power in the political sphere and to the church all authority in the moral or “spiritual” sphere. Many also adhered to more vague ruminations about “the separation of church and the state.” From a commonsense view of obedience to the “powers that be,” other evangelicals simply thought politics was best left alone, and, as was usually the case, “leaving it alone” meant acquiescence to the status quo. Some expressed a fear going back to Roger Williams, that where the state and church mix, the state corrupts the church.

On the more activist side, many southern evangelicals instead looked to eternal axioms to judge the status of society in terms of what it should be. And many evangelicals were, in fact, less than satisfied with the southern status quo. Many late-nineteenth-century evangelicals were concerned about growing economic inequalities and the partisan nature of politics; others were alarmed by the influence of the “whisky ring” on politics, while still others worried about the growing Roman Catholic “menace.” Together, these dangers indicated a general drift in the land towards tyranny. These sinister forces threatened to move America away from her millennial course, and evangelicals believed that they had a responsibility, through political involvement, to keep America on her democratic and Christian path.

From these anxieties emerged the Farmers’ Alliance, the most powerful farmers’ union in the nation’s history, which in turn begat the People’s Party. Blasting into North Carolina from Texas in 1887, the Alliance drew on Protestant evangelicalism for its basic intellectual orientation, its moral fervor, and, most importantly, its apocalyptic fears that greedy, unscrupulous plutocrats had altered God’s New Israel. The Alliance began as a non-partisan movement, although most members in North Carolina were Democrats. Originally, the Alliance cooperated with the Democratic Party in North Carolina, but by 1892 many if not most North Carolina Alliancefolk had grown disaffected, believing the Democratic Party had succumbed to the diabolical forces of tyranny. In evangelical Alliancefolks’ minds, just as an ecclesiastical body might forsake the ideals of Christianity, so might political parties and institutions forsake the true ideals or “principles” of political economy, and for the Populists, that is just what the old parties had done. Hence, with righteous indignation, North Carolina Alliancefolk likened themselves to Protestant reformers and the patriots in 1776 and formed a third party, the North Carolina People’s Party.

The Alliancefolk did not just mimeograph evangelical ideals. Within the Alliance, evangelical patterns of thought and Jeffersonian yeoman ideals merged into a uniquely evangelical and rural reform agenda involving progressive farming, economic cooperation, religious or moral reform, and political action. What for many evangelicals had been somewhat vague notions of political action took crystalline form within the Alliance as a program of economic and political cooperation. In the process, the lines between the Alliance and Christianity, between farmers and Christians, and between Jesus and Thomas Jefferson, blurred. Jesus became a radical agrarian reformer and his circle of disciples a Galilean sub-alliance, while the Democratic and Republican Parties became the Pharisees and Sadducees in league with the money changers (monopolists) in the temple. One preacher and Alliance advocate went so far as to label the Alliance “Christianity in concentrated form,” while others believed it was the salve provided by God to heal the church of tyrannical “churchanity”—a hollow institutional shell, devoid of Christ’s principles and devoted only to self-preservation (Progressive Farmer, 4 November 1890).

By casting the economic and political situation in terms of centralization and especially “tyranny,” Populist leaders like W. R. Lindsey (the first state chairman of the North Carolina People’s Party and a deeply evangelical lay leader who denounced the Democrats as satanic and “Popish”) tapped into values beyond the ethereal laws of political economy. Centralization in the broader political economy had a trickle-down effect on personal liberty and independence. Economic centralization robbed farmers not only of fair compensation but more insidiously of their freedom to earn a living and hence their personal independence as they became enslaved to non-producers. Moreover, not only were individual producers enslaved, but because present and future generations would not benefit from economic independence, the entire system of democracy was exposed to decay from within. The decay inevitably would spread back into the
political realm, as emasculated, spineless dupes and slaves led by political partisans would fail to vote according to a God-breathed conscience and hence halt God’s governance of the nation.

Again, these assertions were part of a larger frame in which an eschatological battle between organizational tyranny and individual liberty raged. Populists argued that individual freedom, no matter where it existed, was constantly threatened by the Satanic forces of institutional centralization. As the President of the Alliance put it: freedom, “... like the manna that fell from heaven, because it is perishable, must be contended for every day” (News and Observer, 17 September 1895). Importantly, contending for this manna required a new institution, since the fault in old parties (or the ecclesiastical institutions Populists likewise attacked) was not bad “governing principles” but the multiple failures of their leaders to embody those principles. Reform therefore required a new party, made up of committed, disciplined members who embodied the principles of freedom necessary to bring the nation’s political economy back under God’s governance.

Populism’s critics, drawing on conservative views of church and state, were unable or unwilling to make this distinction between eternal principle and temporal institution. They cast the institutional church or their political parties themselves as the basis and defender of peace, civilization, the “powers that be,” and ultimately the status quo; Populism therefore threatened all things sacred in the southern order. One Populist critic announced, for example, that a Populist “turns his back on his Bible and sneers at the churches,” while pushing the South down “the road to anarchy” (Caucasian, 21 November 1895).

Populists, however, believed—in commonsense fashion—that implementing God’s axioms was the only way to secure harmony in the political economy, and therefore placed their principles above party fealty. In doing so, they imagined themselves as heirs to the other great Christian reformers or restorationists who had placed principle over party or ecclesiastical body in order to assure eschatological victory. In that context, State Alliance President and Populist office holder Cyrus Thompson called on the church to follow John the Baptist who “... inspired His prophets to meddle with politics and to say that national evils were consequent upon national sins” and Jesus who “was himself the model of indignant rebuke of sin in high places.” Thompson had witnessed such activity in the Alliance, which, for him, had come “together on grounds of purest patriotism and Christianity” (Caucasian, 6 February 1896).

With such ideas shaping their self-conception, it is easy to see why Populists leapt into the political fray with such devotion. Perhaps, in fact, the more difficult question is why these evangelicals did indeed become more passive about political involvement or even voting in the early twentieth century. Certainly southern Democrats’ successful use of white supremacy to destroy the Populists and disenfranchise blacks played a critical role, as the ultimate result of these campaigns was a devastating drop in voter registration among both blacks and whites. Why vote, Populists might have asked, if one’s apocalyptic forebodings actually came to pass—if the Devil won?

It is then correct to assume that the emergence of the Religious Right in the mid-twentieth century marked a shift in religious and political thinking in the South, but only if one’s point of comparison is the first half of the twentieth century rather than the last half of the nineteenth. One might even argue that the Religious Right marked a recovery of older nineteenth-century patterns of mixing religion and politics in America. Such a statement, however, needs qualification, for the political activism of Populists differed in significant ways from the twentieth-century’s Religious Right. Whereas political and religious commitments were of a single cloth in the nineteenth century—commitment to American democratic values and processes equaled one’s commitment to Jesus since both derived from God-given, axiomatic truth—the twentieth-century Religious Right has seemed content using American systems of governance to address, recover, or restore particular religious values without necessarily preserving or restoring those political processes themselves. For the Populists, however, America’s political process was a sacred entity worth fighting for or preserving.

In a more general sense, the Populists’ mixture of religion and politics suggests that we continue to reckon with the ability of conservative religion to stimulate movements that challenge the status quo. As sociologist Christian Smith has argued so effectively, especially where it is central to or legitimates a predominant culture, religion can shape the social and political agenda of movements offering a radical, although often complex critique of that very culture. Populists’ religious convictions had an inner cultural logic that drew on ideological, social, and religious traditions foundational to their understanding of what it meant to be Christian and American. For Populists, a political and economic reform program fused with evangelical hopes of eternal life in the arms of Jesus and the establishment of the millennium. This produced a movement baptized in a religious fervor matching the ultimate, eschatological certainty and seriousness of the ideals and hopes that propelled it. Populist editor J. F. Click epitomized this sense of ultimate concern. For Click, the failure to enact Populist measures, in this case monetary reform, would
mean "abject slavery to your children and their posterity. It means damnation to your children whom you have tried to teach to reverence God as the great Ruler of the Universe. When your children realize that this claims to be a Christian nation and that the religion of the Lord Jesus reigns, they will be loath to accept such Christianity and such religion that underlies a government that has no humanity in it, and that would oppress the poor, those Christ ... wanted ... free from want and misery which is brought upon them by uncivil, immoral and unjust laws, instigated at all times by the devil himself." For Click, monetary or economic reform was "not only a political question, but ... a great moral principle that is too vital to be trifled with"—one for which his contemporaries would be held "morally responsible to God and man." Click warned that, "unless they repent, hell will be full of editors, politicians and even professed Christians for the ignorant and reckless manner in which they have exercised the rights delegated to them by God Himself, in the way of giving the people just and civil laws" (Hickory Mercury, 6 April 1898).

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Christianity in China: its promise and potential

Sr. Janet Carroll, MM

Perhaps never has a country and a people attracted more interest and fascination than does the People’s Republic of China today. The rapid and radical transformation that China’s immense population of some 1.3 billion people has endured in the past quarter century is surely without parallel in the modern age, if not throughout recorded history. What many fail to appreciate is the astounding capacity of the Chinese people to endure and absorb change. As one of the world’s oldest continuous civilizations, the Chinese people take great pride in their culture and in the unique civic and social infrastructures they have developed over five thousand years of history. China’s self-identification as The Middle Kingdom was less a geopolitical conception than a sense of its primacy and centrality within the known world. Therefore, political and economic fortunes and failures notwithstanding, China maintains an indefatigable posture of strength and an unwavering conviction of its destiny as a country and as a people. As we have so often seen in recent years, when its national pride is trampled or challenged, China’s response tends to be characterized by a nationalistic fervor which undergirds its very existence as a nation state. Since the mid-nineteenth century, China has harbored a deep resentment over having been thwarted as a nation by the imperial Western powers which ruthlessly exploited its good will and hospitality. In this context, the Chinese perceive any external criticism as interference in their internal affairs. All of these sentiments are compounded by a profound sense of chagrin at having been denied the prestige and influence in world affairs which the Chinese believe commensurate with their status as both a great civilization and the largest population in the world.

Christianity in historical perspective

There are several maxims to be born in mind when thinking about China. First and foremost is the importance of an historical perspective. Probably nowhere else is the old saying more true—those who fail to appreciate their history are doomed to repeat it. A second caution is to accept that since China is such a vast reality almost everything you may have heard about it is true, with the caveat that it is true only at one time or in one place. This presents interested observers (the typical American, at least) with the inconvenient fact that there are no short cuts, sound bites, or synoptic syntheses of the issues they seek to understand. Finally, most efforts to generalize, extrapolate, or predict what may, or may not, happen in China, tend to be wildly off the mark. Even the most astute sinologists often miss the mark, and few, if any, have envisioned some of the most radical and dramatic turns of events that have occurred in China in recent decades.

With these cautions in mind, the effort to learn about, understand, and interpret Christianity in China, especially since the founding of the PRC, can be a rewarding and inspiring endeavor. Obviously, it is necessary to begin with a brief reprise of the early historical development of Christianity in China as a prelude to a consideration of what may be the potential and promise of Christianity among the Chinese peoples in this the third Christian millennium.

Some observers have come to term the post-1980 period as “the fifth era” of evangelization in China. In the Roman Catholic tradition, the previous four eras are understood to have been Nestorian Christianity in the seventh century, the Franciscan Mission to Peking in the thirteenth century, the Jesuits Mission in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the Modern Missionary Era from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century.

Since the 1980s, many students of Christianity in China hold that for the first time, China’s Christians themselves have succeeded in establishing an authentic and truly local Chinese Church, as they continue to assume their rightful role as the primary agents of evangelization of their culture and society. As the well respected China historian Jean Paul Wiest has observed, in one sense, “in the end of the missionary era was the beginning of an authentically Chinese Church.” Startling as it may seem, Wiest wrote in 1988: “Communist intervention might have been providential, because it removed the last signs of western influence from the Church of China, which was then forced to chart its own course.” Mission in China in this fifth era is the prerogative of the Chinese local Church itself. For the first time in their history, Chinese Christians have had to become self-sufficient, employ their own initiatives, and choose their own leadership.

In this new missionary context, expatriate or foreign missioners will do well to understand themselves as partners in mission, ready and willing to stand in solidarity with
their Chinese sisters and brothers in the faith. As Sister-Churches in service of the Gospel, all are called to cooperate and collaborate with the local Church wherever possible—always from a posture of mutual respect and sensitivity to the direction set by the leadership of the Chinese Church.

As noted above, over the centuries, Christianity attempted on at least four distinct occasions to take root and flourish in China, but each time it met with limited success. Many consider Mateo Ricci and his Jesuit companions to have been the prototype and ideal China missionaries. Ricci and his Jesuits arrived in China in 1583 and successfully indigenized Christianity for the Chinese culture and the social mores of the time. However, their visionary and creative initiatives foundered on the shoals of the exclusivity and sense of superiority common to both Roman Catholicism and China’s dynastic rulers of the age. After the infamous Chinese Rites Controversy, Pope Clement XI declared that certain Chinese Confucian practices involving the veneration of ancestors amounted to idolatry and were forbidden of believers. In retribution, the Chinese emperor banned Christian missionaries from China. This incident hung as a shadow over the Christian missionary enterprise in China for nearly two centuries. The papal proscriptions against Chinese ancestor veneration, formally rescinded in 1939, were not effectively removed until after Vatican Council II, when Chinese Christians were permitted to observe these traditional rites so central in family relationships.

the modern missionary era

The century from 1842 to 1949 was marked by many achievements of Christianity in China. Re-entering China under the flag of the imperial powers, Christianity was once again free to propagate throughout the entire country. Devout and faithful Christian communities were to be found everywhere, together with an extensive network of churches and a vast array of charitable and social works, educational programs and medical ministries to meet every need. Yet, the Church’s position in China was not secure. Due to its association with the Imperial Powers and the several Unequal Treaties forced upon China by the western powers, Christianity in China remained under a dark cloud of suspicion. Many Chinese, their sense of sovereignty deeply wounded, continued to hinder the Christian missionary enterprise. This animosity continues to present obstacles today in some quarters in China, especially among certain scholars and governmental authorities. For this reason during the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Mateo Ricci in China, the late Pope John Paul II took the occasion to apologize for the mistakes of the missionaries in this and other eras.

During this period, the seeds of Christian Faith were sown deeply and took root in the hearts and souls of the Chinese converts, as later developments would reveal. However, if one applies the criterion that the ultimate goal of the missionary enterprise is to generate a truly authentic, local Catholic church with its own indigenous leadership and culturally appropriate expressions of theology and spirituality, the results in China were very much less than satisfactory. How little actually had been achieved in terms of fostering the emergence of a viable local Catholic Church in China became very evident in the late 1940s, when the Communist Revolution triumphed. In 1949, when almost all of the foreign missionaries were expelled from the country, Chinese Christian communities, particularly Catholics (and to a lesser extent Protestants) were left without pastors and experienced leadership, in what was still a largely rural-based Christianity, comprised for the most part of economically impoverished peasant peoples.

the promise in a renewed Christianity

In the late 1970s, when China initiated its so called Reform and Openness Policy, under Deng Xiao Ping, public exercise of religious beliefs was once again permitted within certain prescribed policies and regulations. Within the Catholic tradition, Christians all over the world discovered to their astonishment that the Church in China, despite having been ruthlessly suppressed along with all other religious expression during the Cultural Revolution of 1960–1976, had not been totally destroyed. On the contrary, the zeal and piety of Chinese Christians had succeeded not only in preserving the Faith, but also in the handing of the faith to succeeding generations. Families in their villages and homes continued to baptize their children, teaching them to pray and imparting the basic tenets of Catholic doctrine. While enduring patiently, with profound trust in God’s providence, they managed to increase the numbers of believers. Whereas estimates in the early 1950s were of some three-and-one-half million Roman Catholics and approximately seven hundred thousand Protestants, initial reports in the mid-1980s indicated

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**A PROFILE OF THE CHINESE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

*(Figures are for both the Registered and Unregistered Catholic Communities)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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</table>

Source: U.S. Catholic China Bureau
there were nearly eight million Catholics and more than one million Protestants in China.

Today, there are conservative estimates of twelve to fifteen million Roman Catholics and even more amazingly, eighteen to twenty million Protestant Christians. These figures are disputable depending on one’s criteria for “counting sheep.” Perhaps the expression “God Only Knows” is never more applicable than for the question of how many Christians there are in China. But no matter how you are counting, the best kept secret in Christendom until very recently has been the growth and flourishing of Christianity in China, not only during the repression and suffering of some three decades but even, some would say, “because of that repression and suffering.” Chinese Christians were tested in the fire and were not found wanting.

growth as a mature Christianity

Although growth in the sheer numbers of baptized Christians is important, this is not the first concern of the Church in China today. In point of fact, given the reality of a population greater than one and a quarter billion people, Chinese Christians of whatever persuasion, together still constitute but a tiny percentage of the population. The historical and cultural mindset alluded to at the beginning of this essay influences the mentality and consciousness of the Chinese people—the vast majority of whom will not likely come to belief in Christianity anytime soon. Charged with the primary task of proclaiming the Gospel in contemporary China, both Chinese Christians and western Christians who would share that mission with them need to be cognizant of the realities in which they seek to witness to the Gospel: a society permeated by rampant materialism and a consumerism unlike anything seen even in China’s most opulent dynasties.

Chinese Christians and western Christians need to be cognizant of the realities in which they seek to witness to the Gospel: a society permeated by rampant materialism and a consumerism unlike anything seen even in China’s most opulent dynasties.

There are also the barricades of deeply entrenched Marxist philosophy and fragments of an atheistic ideology which continue to challenge Christian teachings. Facing this reality, China’s Christians must develop a capacity for dialogue—not only with their co-religionists, but also with those of a much more antithetical mindset. There are still many Chinese who harbor deep seated animosity and prejudice towards Christianity. Exacerbating this situation, some tenacious fundamentalist sects and quasi-religious movements from abroad continue to give Christianity a bad name by attempting to proselytize in China in violation of local religious law and policy.

church and state in a new era

To fully understand the Church in China and its status within the state apparatus, to say nothing of the vacillating religious policies of the Beijing regime, is well beyond the limitations of this essay. Rather here I prefer to focus on the promise of the Church in China—construed to mean the Church as the People of God—and upon the Church’s mission to be a witness, sign, and instrument of the Gospel message in the same full measure as every other local church. Based on my encounters with Christians—especially Catholics—in China over the past fifteen years, the theological concept of the Church as the People of God seems most suitably to portray the irrepressible and largely uncountable millions of Christians living in China today. They are themselves Living Temples, sisters and brothers in the Lord, whose enduring witness to the Gospel sets before us all a model of fidelity and an enduring witness to God’s providential love and care for the universal Church. As such, the Church in China has been and remains today an integral and essential component of the still emerging World Church.

In an essay written in 1981, at a time when few believed there was any trace of Christianity left in China, the famous theologian Karl Rahner wrote of the gradual transition then underway in the West towards a World Church, which he observed was “present to a varying extent in all parts of the world and everywhere becoming a genuine element of all cultures and nations.” Rahner astutely added the caveat, that we ought “not forget nor assume that we can leave unanswered the obscure question of . . . China,” a Nation which, then as now, comprised one fourth of the world’s people. At that very time, the Church in China was on the brink of a virtual “resurrection” as Christians all over the country courageously began the process of recovering and renewing their churches and reconstituting their communities of Faith—earnestly bent on renewing and restoring bonds of communion with the Universal Church.

In the more than two astonishing decades since, Christian believers in China have struggled to re-invigorate and extend these communities of Faith, to restore and rebuild not only churches, but seminaries and programs for formation of religious women and training of new generations of lay leadership, and to establish programs for social and medical ministries. All this has been achieved with only the barest of resources, but with vast stores of enduring courage and commitment.

As the Church in China continues its journey in this third Christian millennium, it faces new challenges to move beyond the sanctuary and engage in the public square.
Chinese Christians have the immense task of giving prophetic witness and service to the rapidly developing and radically changing society that is China. If its present trajectory continues, China certainly will, in due course, come to exercise the global power and leadership it has long sought and is already exercising in the Asian region. Unfortunately, political regimes and the media in the West tend to view China as an adversary or competitor for their own economic and social prestige. It may seem an exaggeration to suggest that Christianity in China has the potential to broker the peaceful emergence of China within the global community of states. But in this regard, Daniel Bays, an historian of Chinese Christianity, some time ago suggested that Chinese Christians could ease China’s entry into the global community by making significant contributions to the development of civil society in China. Bays’s view is grounded in the potential for Chinese Christians, in particular the new and more educated entrepreneurs in urban settings to broker this transition. Bays cited reports of rapidly growing numbers of Protestant Christians as “a significant sub-set of the emergent middle class” who could become catalysts in the country’s transition to a new transnational civilization.

Christianity as prophetic servant

Looking at the Church in China today, and reflecting on its call to prophetic servanthood for the common good and well-being of the Chinese people, there are several possible avenues through which it might fulfill this call. Among these, one could cite the Chinese peoples’ desire to live in a world of harmony and peace, to see that justice be mediated to weaker members of society, and to preserve right relationships among peoples that foster mutual respect, tolerance, and accommodation of diversity. With more than fifty-some ethnic minority peoples living within its borders, there is much that could be learned from traditional Chinese social organization.

In the Chinese language, the ideogram for the term Crisis contains two inherently contrasting meanings: one signifying opportunity—the other risk (or danger). This offers a useful paradigm to help us grasp the complexity involved as China weathered the crisis of radically restructuring its economic, social, and political systems (albeit the latter is as yet held under tight control). It also helps to appreciate implications in the relationship between religion and state in China. In this regard, it is necessary to keep in mind that although the PRC government officially encourages atheism, many millions of Chinese people are permitted to exercise their religious beliefs in one of the five major religions officially sanctioned in China today: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and a bifurcated Christianity that the authorities in China persist in giving two names, Catholicism and [Protestant] Christianity. Officially, seventy million Chinese people are reported to have some religious belief. However, these state statistics are belied by vastly larger numbers of adherents claimed by each of these traditions.

Some historians of Christianity in China make reference to the fact that the genius of Mateo Ricci in dealing with the Qing [Ching] Emperor in the early seventeenth century was to exploit creatively all the opportunities and openings he encountered, albeit doing so within a very limited legal framework and under the strict protocols prevailing in that era. For the first time since the suppression of all foreign missionary activity and engagement with Chinese culture and society in the 1950s, such opportunities are once more open not only to Chinese Christians but to those of us who wish to support and serve with them in this new and challenging missionary moment. More to the point, we must accept that we can support them only in a way radically different from the traditional missionary mode with which most Americans are familiar. The exercise of religious belief in China continues to be circumscribed by rules, regulations, and protocols imposed by the ruling regime, which often hinder the Church’s growth and development. But then again, Ricci and the early Jesuits at the Beijing Court were also circumscribed by the protocols and proscriptions of their time, yet they creatively found a viable modus operandi that led to the acceptance of and approbation for Christianity by the Emperors themselves.

Benoit Vermander, Director of the Ricci Institute in Taipei, Taiwan, and a contemporary Jesuit scholar who walks in the footsteps of Mateo Ricci, helpfully has elucidated the challenge and opportunity for Christianity in China today in terms of “presenting Christianity as a living interlocutor with Chinese culture.” Christianity can contribute to a cultural redefinition that both the Chinese leadership and the people require in order to reinterpret their history and ultimately to rid themselves of the disappointments and disillusionments of their past attempts to become a modern nation state. In this way, the Chinese people will be empowered to assume roles of influence and authority appropriate to their civilization and culture—rich with gifts and insights essential for the achievement of prosperity, justice, and peace for themselves and the global community.

The new China, of the Peoples Republic of China, already on the threshold of the second half of its first century of existence, urgently requires a creative re-invention of its traditional value system and moral categories. In Vermander’s terms, it needs to “employ new interpretive models by which to make sense of the past, find common ground in the present, and develop a sense of shared purpose and meaning for the future.” On a mutually acceptable basis of equality, reciprocity, and respect, Christianity has much to offer the Chinese people in their quest for a “new spiritual civilization,” a term frequently used even by the Chinese regime, as it seeks to galvanize the masses under the rubric of the “United Front.” This new spiritual civilization is perhaps another way of
describing Mao's visionary ideal from the early years of the Communist revolution—a vision which the Chinese people tragically failed to realize due to Mao's degeneration into a brutal dictator.

the quest for reconciliation and unity

After some twenty years of the so-called "Reform and Openness" policies, China still stands in need of a second generation of transformation. China can become a vibrant civilization at once consistent with traditional Chinese culture, the best of Confucian virtues and evangelically imbued with Gospel values. In order to achieve this ideal, Chinese Christians, as well as other religious believers are challenged to avoid conflict and confrontation with political power and authorities. In one of his earliest communiques to the Chinese people, Pope John Paul II stated unequivocally that "there should be no opposition or incom­patibility in being at once truly Christian and authentically Chinese." On numerous other occasions, John Paul expressed this same hope "to overcome all the obstacles and find an appropriate way and adequate structures to resume dialogue and keep it constantly open."

This remains a formidable challenge while the leaders of the PRC regime continue to have an almost "sacral sense" of themselves as the final arbiters of China's political and legal culture, not unlike the emperors of the dynasties of old. For their part, Chinese Christians must creatively devise new ways to put into practice Christian creeds and teachings which stress forgiveness, reconciliation, harmony, and peace. Stances of confrontation and dissidence, even if justified and grounded in human and natural rights, need to be held in tension with the priority of finding pathways to reconciliation and healing.

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what is needed is a new discourse of forgiveness and reconciliation, which, while telling the story of the trials and tribulations, the sufferings and survival, and of the fears and hopes of Chinese Christians for the past fifty years, does so in a narrative of forbearance and compassion that will foster an environment in which Christian charity, love, and unity will flourish. It will require partners willing to listen and discern with sensitivity and respect; partners able to tolerate frustrations and the ambiguities of living with constraints and limitations; partners with a capacity to risk difficulties and misunderstandings—all in the quest to seize and exploit the many opportunities that actually exist to proclaim and witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in China.

partnership in mission

In approaching China, it is always necessary to keep open minds and hearts, freeing ourselves to listen, so as to understand in new ways. It is necessary to go beyond the headlines and sound bites of the media. The lived reality for many Chinese Christians today is a far cry from what is extrapolated from given events or incidents by the media or those with their own agendas for China. Standing in solidarity with China's Christians means embarking on a spiritual voyage into their lives and their faith experiences; risking to share all that they have suffered and continue to suffer with enduring patience, vibrant hope, and courage.
There are numerous ways to partner with Christians in China in service of the Gospel. The easiest and most important is to pray for the Church in China. For those willing and qualified, there are actually many areas of service open to expatriates—especially in the field of education among China’s very youthful population. For those willing and able to teach in seminaries and bible schools; material resources are needed to subsidize the education and formation of Chinese clergy, religious and laity. Both human and financial resources are needed to subsidize Church sponsored social and medical ministries in China, an area in the public domain where religiously affiliated groups are increasingly welcomed. HIV/AIDS is a rampant and growing problem in China, one vastly under-acknowledged by the authorities. Many young Sisters currently are being trained and equipped to respond both medically and spiritually to this widespread tragedy already of crisis proportions in China.

In our own country, parishes, faith-based organizations, and institutions can welcome Chinese students and scholars, invite and host exchanges with leadership in local communities, organize visits and study groups to China to meet and engage with Chinese Christians in a myriad of ways that will support their efforts to serve the people and witness to the Gospel in their daily lives. In so doing, however, it is imperative to refrain from judging and criticizing Chinese Christians and their leaders for choices they make to sustain a vibrant Christianity, expressed through a viable local Chinese Church that provides a relevant witness to contemporary Chinese society, despite the difficult and challenging political climate.

To be friends of the Chinese people requires humility and respect. It takes a capacity for living with ambiguity and uncertainty, abiding within the legal framework prescribed for the work of Christian ministry and witness in China today. Those of such good will and courageous and creative imagination will find multiple opportunities to serve and partner with Chinese Christians in an enduring witness to the Gospel—as they find their own prophetic voice to call into being a new China and a renewed people, transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and dedicated to work for justice, prosperity, and peace for the peoples of the earth.

Janet Carroll is a Maryknoll Missioner who spent sixteen years in pastoral and social ministry in Taiwan. From 1989 to 2003, she served as the founding Executive Director of the U.S. Catholic China Bureau. In this capacity she regularly visited China, and led eight Religious Study Tours there. In these years she also served as editor of the China Church Quarterly and annually organized the National Catholic China Conferences in various places in the U.S.

**BETRAYAL**

When night opened its black mouth
To swallow me, I thought of Jonah,
And the whale, that liquid dark
Blooming like a Venus Flytrap to suck
Him into the belly of such deep despair:
Death, surely, Jonah must have thought,
Until the whale spit him out, and he saw,
As if for the first time, dawn rising bright
To lick sharp waves. As I, still trapped
In this bleak womb, sometimes glimpse
Through tender teeth, light shimmer
On a seabird’s wing.

Sarah Rossiter
IN 1941, FAMED DETECTIVE FICTION NOVELIST DOROTHY L. Sayers published a quirky little book presenting her theory of creativity. Called The Mind of the Maker, the book is still quoted today—not by art theorists but by theologians. This is because Sayers based her idea on an ancient theological paradigm, the *imago Dei*, suggested by Genesis 1:26: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.’” Just as the author of Genesis embedded the *imago Dei* in the creation account, Sayers embedded the *imago Dei* in human creativity, arguing that we are most like the Creator God when we exercise creativity. Furthermore, the plural construction of “our image” in the Genesis account resonated with Sayers’s Anglo-Catholic assumption that God is plural: a trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Acts of creativity are therefore Trinitarian as well, confirmed by Sayers’s own experiences as novelist and playwright. For her, the material form of a creative work is the “Energy” or “Activity” that proceeds from the “Idea” of the Creator-Author, generating “Power” through the response of the beholder-reader. On the simplest level, Idea corresponds to a “Book-as-Thought,” Energy to a “Book-as-Written,” and Power to the “Book-as-Read.” However, elsewhere in *The Mind of the Maker* Sayers establishes that Idea, Energy, and Power are dialogically interdependent—like the persons of the Godhead—rather than chronologically linear: “The Idea, that is, cannot be said to precede the Energy in time, because (so far as that act of creation is concerned) it is the Energy that creates the time-process. . . . The writer cannot even be conscious of his Idea except by the working of the Energy which formulates it to himself.” In other words, the Energy of a written work is begotten, not made.

Sayers experienced begotten Energy with her most famous creation, the hero of her detective fiction, Lord Peter Wimsey. When, in 1936, she published for her fans “How I Came to Invent the Character of Lord Peter,” Sayers described him as an autonomous individual rather than a literary invention: “My impression is that I was thinking about writing a detective story, and that he walked in, complete with spats, and applied in an airy don’t-care-if-I-get-it-way for the job of hero.” The author’s relation to her creation therefore echoes the paradox of free will and determinism: “the complete independence of the creature, combined with its willing cooperation in his purpose in conformity with the law of its nature.” Sayers thus provides a theological riff on what many successful novelists have reported: that fictive characters start acting in ways that their creators had not anticipated—even as they are being written—and that their effect on readers sometimes gives them a Power independent of the author’s creative Idea.

The Power of an audience to participate in the creative act is easily demonstrated in the movie industry. Within a decade after its release, for example, audiences had made The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975) into a cult film, their addition of rites and rituals during midnight showings turning the film’s Energy into a new kind of Power. And in the 1990s, The Wizard of Oz (1939) was still receiving Power from theater audiences who attended viewings dressed up as their favorite characters.

The complex interrelationship of maker, movie, and moviegoer—Idea, Energy, and Power—has been explored by screenwriter Andrew Niccol, whose The Truman Show (1998), under the direction of Peter Weir, garnered significant attention. Almost unseen, however, is a similar film that Niccol not only wrote but also directed and produced: Simone (2002). Both films, though cleverly written and stunningly executed, were dismissed by many critics—perhaps because the intelligent scripts made fun of them: members of the viewing audience. Nevertheless, these films deserve to be seen, not only to shine light on Sayers’s Trinitarian aesthetic, but also to get viewers to reflect on their own complicity with Hollywood creations. Since much more ink has been spilled on The Truman Show and its theological implications—especially the relationship between free will and determinism—I will focus my attention on the largely overlooked Simone.

LIKE THE TRUMAN SHOW, SIMONE IS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A DIRECTOR AND A FICTIVE CREATION THAT STARTS TO TAKE ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN, AIDED AND ABETTED BY THE VIEWING AUDIENCE. WHEN WE FIRST SEE THE DIRECTOR IN SIMONE, PLAYED WITH DEBONAIR DESPERATION BY AL PACINO, HE IS MADLY FISHING OUT RED CANDIES FROM A BOWL OF “MIKE & IKES.” WE SOON FIGURE OUT WHY WHEN WE SEE THE STAR OF HIS CURRENT PRODUCTION THROW A HISSY FIT OVER THE SIZE OF HER TRAILER. PLAYED WITH SHREWISH ABANDON BY WINONA RYDER, THIS PRIMA DONNA, WHO NOT ONLY DEMANDS “MIKE & IKES” WITH NO RED CANDIES BUT ALSO SEVEN PACKS OF CIGARETTES IN HER DRESSING ROOM EVERY MORNING—THREE OF THEM ALREADY OPENED—WALKS OUT OF THE FILM BEFORE IT IS FINISHED, AND
Viktor, the director, is therefore fired by the studio head, his former wife Elaine. At this low point of his career, perhaps of his life, Viktor is accosted by a one-eyed man, Hank, who has developed a computer program that can digitally insert an actor, controlled by the computer programmer, into film stock. When Hank dies, Viktor inherits his program for a gorgeous digitized blonde, and he proceeds to insert the image into his unfinished film, calling the image Simone, a contraction for “Simulation One.”

The name is telling. Not only is Simone Viktor’s first digitized simulation, she is also One with him. She has no being apart from him, for he controls her movements through computer codes and her language by speaking her lines, programming his voice to sound female when the words come from her mouth. Niccol, in fact, provides a mirror motif to reinforce their relationship. After Simone’s digitally-inserted image turns Viktor’s art film into a hit, we see Viktor speaking lines for Simone while looking at her projected image on a huge mirror-like screen. Reflecting Viktor’s movements and words, Simone says, simultaneously with Viktor, “We both know I was nothing without you.” And, of course, this is true for them both: Simone has no existence apart from Viktor, but he was “nothing”—a washed up director—before her creation.

Viktor’s Idea, then, takes Energy as Simone appears on the movie screen, and viewers give her Power by regarding her as a flesh and blood celebrity. As Simone “tells” Viktor from her place on his computer monitor, “A Star is Digitized”: an ironic allusion to the famous film A Star is Born (1937) and its simulations (1954, 1976)—an allusion foreshadowed when the phrase “9 months later” appears on our screen immediately after Viktor inherits the computer code. Simone’s star status, of course, creates a problem for Viktor, who must invent tales about why she refuses to meet her adoring fans. At one point he sets up a ruse that Simone has checked into a hotel; he cuts hairs from a blonde wig into the sink, drapes intimate apparel on chairs, ruffles the bed, and parades a Barbie doll in front of a light to make it appear as though Simone is walking back and forth in front of the closed curtains: a simulation of a simulation.

With the ooohs and ahhs of Simone’s fans watching from outside the hotel, Niccol’s film comments on the Power of audiences to turn Barbie-doll actors into substantive personalities. As Viktor “tells” Simone, “What’s real anymore? Most actors these days have digital work done to them.” Celebrities, often as plastic as the surgery that molds their faces, gain their status not by their own abilities but by the scripts and camera angles that writers and directors give them. As a result, the creativity of auteur directors like Viktor gets lost in the simulations performed by their stars. Losing sight of creativity, the Hollywood celebrity system therefore becomes more and more about money. As Elaine tells Viktor before she fires him, “It is about investment and returns.” This, in fact, is what keeps Viktor committed to the Simone illusion, for without throwing hissy fits or demanding unreasonable perks, she successfully ventrilo-quizes Viktor’s artistic belief that “the real truth is the work.” In off-site television interviews that Viktor controls, Simone states “Let the work speak for itself.” It’s as though Viktor read Sayers’s The Mind of the Maker, which repeatedly appeals to “the integrity of the work.”

However, because “the work” is Trinitarian, Viktor does not have complete control over the Energy of Simone due to the Power of her fans. Soon after Viktor tells a reporter that “Simone only appears when I want her to appear,” Elaine, the studio head, argues the reverse: “This woman controls your destiny.” Simone no longer mirrors Viktor alone, implied when we are repeatedly given images of two worshipful fans mirrored in a polished table whenever they talk about her: she becomes as much a mirror of their creativity as of Viktor’s, reinforced when they publish an article about her childhood.

As Viktor loses control of Simone, he becomes all the more emphatic about his power over her, making Simone “tell” him, “You did create me,” despite the fact that he got her computer program from someone else. He even tells Elaine that Simone is a computer code in order to establish his own God-like status: “I have done the impossible: I have recreated the infinite nuances of a human being, a human soul; I have taken nothing and made it something. I have breathed life into a machine. I made a miracle.” Thus, like the director in The Truman Show (significantly named “Christof”), Viktor desires victory over both “his creation” and the audience’s response to it. As he tells Simone, “[My] films are speaking to the human condition; people need to believe you are real.” He therefore sets up an “appearance” by Simone at a sports stadium, projecting a hologram onto a smoky stage—literalizing her status as the result of smoke and mirrors. As thousands of fans scream in adoration, Viktor assumes that he finally has control over them, mumbling at his computer controls, “It’s easier to make one hundred thousand to believe than just one.” Significantly, at her stadium performance the hologram of Simone sings—both to Viktor and to her fans—Carole King’s popular song “You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman,” ending the performance stating, “Never stop believing.”

In Hollywood, however, the Power of fan belief often renders creative Idea and Energy defunct, displacing a Trinitarian aesthetic with star cults. Simone’s significance is in the eye of the beholder, a point Niccol reinforces with an explicit eye motif. Early in the film, while Viktor talks to Hank, the one-eyed computer programmer, a huge painted eye floats from left to right over Hank’s shoulder in the distant background of the studio lot—presumably a prop carried by unseen stage hands. It’s as though Hank’s lost eye is being transferred elsewhere; indeed, he tells Viktor, “You have something that I don’t have—an eye for performance.
...You're the only director with the artistic ability to realize my vision.” Significantly, after Viktor realizes Hank's vision by completing Simone's first film, we see him standing in front of the screen before the test audience, Simone’s eye hovering over his shoulder in the exact same place we saw an eye appear over Hank's shoulder. Then, after the success of this film, Viktor repeatedly employs images of vision as he explains to Simone, “This is a classic case of technology in search of an artist: someone with integrity, someone with vision, someone who can see beyond this irrational allegiance to flesh and blood, someone who can see that with the rise in the price of a real actor and the fall in price of a fake that the scales have tipped naturally in favor of the fake; someone who can see that if a performance is genuine it doesn’t matter if the actor is real or not.”

Viktor's vision, his “eye for performance,” cannot control the eyes of others, however. Niccol signals this problem by giving a key role to Jay Nohr, an actor known for the way his eyes quiver in their sockets. As Max, an editor for a celebrity magazine, Nohr stalks the elusive Simone, entering the hotel room where Viktor has created the illusion of her presence. Max proceeds to roll in the sheets, tenderly finger the toilet seat, and lovingly kiss a toothbrush (accidentally dropped by Viktor in the toilet), treating all as totems of Simone's presence. The shifting eyes of Max, the paradigmatic worshipful fan (who palms his hands in prayer at Simone's concert), symbolize the shifting back and forth from the director's idea to the viewer’s power in the creation of Simone—until, finally, the “vision” is no longer Viktor's. He thus ends up mirroring the one-eyed Hank—literalized when we see Viktor at Hank’s grave site, his image reflected in the shiny surface of Hank's granite tombstone. Just as the creation of Simone killed Hank—through computer-generated eye cancer—so the creation of Simone killed Viktor’s victory. The film makes the mirroring explicit when Viktor speaks to the epitaph: “She killed you; now she’s killing me. She’s taken on a life of her own.”

Viktor even becomes displaced by Simone in his relationships. A stand-in actress responds to his embrace by panting “Call me Simone,” causing him to pull away in dismay, saying, “You’re with me so you can be closer to her?” And when Viktor later tries to kiss Elaine, she draws back assuming he and Simone are lovers, saying “I can’t betray Simone!” As Viktor’s daughter recognizes, “It used to be all about the work, but now it’s all about her... She’s taken advantage of you.”

Viktor therefore decides he must destroy Simone. He produces a horrible film, I Am Pig, under the illusion that Simone directed it, but audiences love it because it is hers. He makes her disheveled, burping image express offensive and inane opinions during a television interview, but fans are impressed with her honesty: “she speaks her mind.” Simone’s star-status seems to cover a multitude of sins. The problem, of course, is not with Simone but with her fans; as Viktor tells her before he destroys her image with a computer virus, “You are more authentic than all these people worshipping you.” And he realizes that she, “the work,” is more authentic even than he: “You’re looking at the real fraud,” he continues. “I told myself this was all about the work, but if that were the truth it wouldn’t matter to me that you get all the attention. And it does... Here I was trying to convince the whole world you existed, but what I was really trying to do was convince them I exist. It’s not that you aren’t human; it’s that I am.” Those words reveal the limits of the imago Dei: unlike Simone, it is constituted in “flesh and blood.”

Ironically, Viktor gets charged with murder after the dis-appearance (quite literally) of Simone, as though she were flesh and blood. Significantly, Viktor’s lawyer tells him “You killed an icon.” An “icon” in Hollywood-speak, of course, refers to a film star whose Power has been generated by worshipful fans. Indeed, Niccol repeatedly places iconic images of past cinematic stars into the mise-en-scene. We see Viktor consulting photographs of Audrey Hepburn, Lauren Bacall, Meryl Streep, and the like, to help him determine what features to give Simone. And on the wall behind his desk appear black and white blow-ups of classic Hollywood “icons.”

In computer-speak, however, an “icon” refers to an image on a computer screen: like those used, we presume, to bring Energy to the Idea of Simone. Niccol, in fact, puns with computer-speak throughout his film. When Viktor sets up a script-reading for his next “Simone film,” actors introduce themselves to the “reclusive” icon on a speaker-phone, their names all related to the computer industry: Lotus, Claris, Mac, Corel, Hewlett, Dell, and Hal (referring, I assume, to the computer in 2001: A Space Odyssey). When Simone is nominated for an Oscar, her fellow nominees are named “Clarisa Apple” and “Lisa Packard.” Then, at the end of the film, when Viktor resurrects his incarnation by returning Simone to the screen, he has her explain on camera that she was absent giving birth to their son “Chip.”

But Niccol is up to something more. His reference to “an icon” alludes, I would suggest, to the original meaning of “icon”: a sacred image painted on wood. Significantly, Niccol gives Viktor the surname Taransky, reminding us of the famous Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky (1932–1986), whose most well-respected film Andrei Rublev (1966) focuses upon a fifteenth-century creator of icons.

Of course, within Andrei Rublev’s Russian Orthodox tradition, icons deserve veneration because they participate in the truth to which they refer. In The Church of the Eastern Christians, a book highly valued by Dorothy Sayers, the Russian Orthodox Nicolas Zernov compares
the power of an icon to the energy an artist gives to inert materials:

A piece of rough marble and the statue made from it, though materially identical, are not the same thing; the creative genius of man makes the stone into the vehicle of a new spiritual power capable of profoundly influencing other persons. If so much can be done by an artist, the prayer of the Church, the action of divine grace, the response of a Saint, can affect the matter even more profoundly and transform an ikon into a source of help and inspiration for those Christians who come into contact with it; this is how miracles are performed.

Zernov’s analogy reminds us of Viktor Taransky, who artistically transforms a computer icon into the vehicle of spiritual power capable of profoundly influencing other persons. “She’s a miracle!” effuses Viktor’s daughter after seeing Simone on film. Not long after, Simone has become such a source of help and inspiration that even the prima donna played by Winona Ryder is chastened, telling Viktor that Simone “inspired me” to change. Finally, fascination with Simone becomes the medium of reconciliation between Elaine and Viktor—to their daughter’s obvious joy.

As this type of icon, then, Simone manifests the perfect balance of Idea, Energy, and Power. However, as Sayers makes clear in *The Mind of the Maker*, perfect balance is hard to maintain. Between the controlling megalomania of authors/directors and the fanatical idolatry of readers/viewers, the Energy of the image is often corrupted. Niccol’s film, with repeated references to the eye, implies that the integrity of art is dependent upon the interdependent perception of both creator and receiver. As Dorothy Sayers puts it at the end of *The Mind of the Maker*, “That the eyes of all workers should behold the integrity of the work is the sole means to make that work good in itself and so good for mankind.”


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**EARLY MORNING**

Just outside, the helicopter lands again on the hospital roof. You sleep through the wash of the rotor,

pulling up breath through thickened lungs, past the narrow feeding tube, impediments.

Let me not disturb you, Mother, just as you

would let me curl in cribs on darkened afternoons.

Love bears it out by many a bedside in this place, and why not ours?

Why not this slow and steady breathing, this watching over you by dawn, this waking to familiar clouds.

Paul Willis
JAMES A. BROKAW, WHOM WRITING ON J. S. BACH HAS APPEARED IN THESE PAGES, HAS NOTED THAT ALL SCHOLARLY WORK ON BACH DERIVES FROM TWO CENTRAL QUESTIONS: “WHAT DID BACH WRITE, AND WHEN DID HE WRITE IT?” REPORTS IN EARLY SUMMER THAT A NEW WORK OF BACH HAS BEEN DISCOVERED IN WEIMAR BY SCHOLAR MICHAEL MAUL OF THE BACH ARCHIVE IN LEIPZIG HAVE PROVEN THAT INDEED THE QUESTIONS OF “WHAT” AND “WHEN” REMAIN LIVELY AND ESSENTIAL.

AFTER BACH’S DEATH IN 1750, HIS SON CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL PREPARED AN OBITUARY WHICH HAS SERVED AS THE STARTING POINT FOR MOST ACCOUNTS OF HIS LIFE AND WORK. EVENTUALLY PUBLISHED IN 1754, IT INCLUDES THE FIRST LISTING OF THE PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED WORKS, BUT WITH NO CLAIM TO COMPLETENESS. J. S. BACH’S WORKS WERE, AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH, CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE HOPELESSLY OUT OF DATE.

BACH’S MUSIC WAS NOT UNKNOWN IN THE LATER EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—HIS COUNTERPOINT SERVED AS A MODEL FOR MOZART AND BEETHOVEN AND MANY OTHERS—but IT WAS NOT IN ACTIVE REPertoire BREADY LEIPZIG, NOR WAS ANY HISTORIC MUSIC IN AN AGE WHEN COMPOSERS ASSUMED A MUCH MORE LIMITED SHELF-LIFE FOR THEIR WRITINGS, MOSTLY TIED TO OCCASION AND PATRONAGE.


LINDA C. FERGUSON

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY HAD ITS SHARE OF BACH DISCOVERIES AND CORRELATIVE SCHOLARSHIP, INCLUDING THE 1934 DISCOVERY IN FRANKENMUTH, MICHIGAN, OF BACH’S HAND-GLOSSED COPY OF THE THREE-VOLUME LUTHERAN BIBLE WITH COMMENTARIES BY THEOLOGIAN ABRAHAM CALOV (1681–1682). AND IN 1935, A PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN CANTATA WITH THE TEXT “BEKENNEN WILL ICH SEINEN NAMEN” WAS FOUND, NOW CATALOGUED AS BWV 200 IN THE BACH-WERKE VERZEICHNIS, THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY CATALOGING SYSTEM OF BACH’S WORKS DEVISED BY WOLFGANG SCHMIEDER. IN 1975 A PUBLISHED COPY OF BACH’S GOLDBERG VARIATIONS FOR HARPSCHORD, BWV 988, WAS DISCOVERED TO CONTAIN HAND ANNOTATIONS AND ADDITIONAL MUSIC BY BACH, A REMARKABLE RECORD OF THE COMPOSER’S AFTERTHOUGHTS OF A WORK ALREADY MADE PUBLIC. THE DISCOVERY OF ADDITIONAL CANONIC PIECES IN THE COMPOSER’S HAND, ATTACHED TO THE PUBLISHED WORK, PERMITTED SCHOLARS TO UNDERSTAND NEW LINKAGES BETWEEN THIS WORK AND HIS MUSICAL OFFERING BWV 1079, AS CHRISTOPH WOLFF HAS NOTED. AND IN 1984, PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN ORGAN PRELUDES DATING FROM 1705–1710, NOW CATALOGUED BWV 1090–1120, SURFaced AT YALE UNIVERSITY PROVIDING NEW PROBLEMS FOR AUTHENTICATION—IN THIS CASE PRIMARILY BASED ON COMPARISON OF STYLE WITH KNOWN BACH WORKS—and NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR UNDERSTANDING BACH’S COMPOSITIONAL PRACTICES AT AN EARLY STAGE. BY CONTRAST, RECENT SCHOLARSHIP HAS SOMETIMES REVEALED WHAT BACH DID NOT WRITE, AS IN DANIEL MELAMED’S WORK ON BACH DE-ATTRIBUTIONS, WHICH HE SHARED WITH VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY MUSIC HISTORY STUDENTS AT LAST YEAR’S BACH INSTITUTE SYMPOSIUM, FOCUSING ON BWV 15, A CANTATA FORMERLY ATTRIBUTED TO J. S. BACH BUT NOW BELIEVED TO BE BY HIS COUSIN JOHANN LUDWIG.

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THE LATEST DISCOVERY—A TWO-PAGE MANUSCRIPT FOR SOPRANO VOICE WITH STRINGS AND CONTINUO ACCOMPANIMENT—IS NOT A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE REPERTOIRE. ITS NEWS-WORTHINESS, HOWEVER, RESTS ON SEVERAL KEY POINTS. FIRST OF ALL, ITS AUTHENTICATION BY THE BACH-ARCHIV LEIPZIG SUGGESTS THAT WHILE WE NOW HAVE A MORE COMPLETE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION “WHAT DID BACH WRITE?” WE CANNOT BE CERTAIN, EVEN WITH THIS NEW DISCOVERY, TO HAVE ANSWERED THE QUESTION “WHAT ALL DID BACH WRITE?” SECOND, THE DISCOVERY IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORK ITSELF. ITS FORM IS A STROPHIC AIR, A SOLO SONG IN WHICH THE SAME MUSIC IS USED FOR EACH STANZA OF TEXT. A STRING RITORNELLO (I.E. RECURRING INSTRUMENTAL PASSAGE) FOLLOWS EACH STROPH. THE INSTRUMENTAL RITORNELLO WAS A MAINSTAY OF THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN ARIAS, AND HAD, BY BACH’S TIME, BECOME AN ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE IN THE INSTRUMENTAL CONCERTO FORMS ASSOCIATED WITH VIVALDI. IT IS OFTEN NOTED THAT BACH COMPOSED IN ALL THE MAJOR GENRES OF HIS TIME WITH THE EXCEP-
tion of opera, and even so, masterfully integrated the expressive devices of operatic writing of his time into the vocal solos in his cantatas and large concerted works. Yet the strophic aria, a well-established and somewhat old-fashioned form by the early eighteenth century, had not formerly been included in the list of forms Bach employed.

The new work, now catalogued as BWV 1127, begins with the phrase “Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn’ ihn” (“All with God and nothing without him”), the motto of Duke Wilhelm Ernst of Saxe-Weimar, in whose employ Bach had served as court organist since 1708. The sacred text, by Johann Anton Mylius, was set in honor of the Duke’s fifty-second birthday, and was discovered among a collection of birthday cards in the Duchess Anna Amalia Library. The manuscript dates from October 1713, and here lies a third point of significance of this discovery: its clear dating provides a reliable point of reference in seeking a clearer understanding of Bach’s output in terms of chronology (i.e. “When did he write it?). Throughout his life he is known to have been intensely interested in all musical influences available to him, and his extraordinary ability to synthesize and transform all influences makes it inappropriate to speak in terms of compositional phases of the kind one can observe in the music of, say, Beethoven. The year 1713 has been seen as a point of significant stylistic shift in Bach’s writing, due to more direct exposure to the Italianate concerto instrumental style in favor at the Weimar court. Further, 1713 marked the year in which Bach was offered, and initially accepted, a new position in Halle. He re-considered the terms and negotiated for better ones, well-documented, with an outcome of being promoted not to a better position in Halle, but a better position in Weimar, where, early in 1714, Duke Wilhelm named him Concertmaster, with a significant raise in salary.

The “new” aria has just been recorded under the direction of English conductor John Eliot Gardiner and the score is being published by Bärenreiter-Verlag. A facsimile of the opening passage and a brief audio sample have been available on NPR’s website since the story broke in June. The Valparaiso premiere of this aria is planned for 9 October 2005 in the Chapel of the Resurrection, in a program presented by the Bach Institute of Valparaiso University which will include other works of the year 1713. This event serves as a prologue to the Bach Institute’s primary theme of the year: “1714: the Making of a Composer,” with a weekend of performances, classes, and lectures planned for January 2006.

New findings, whether manuscripts or evidence for re-interpreting known ones, keep scholars engaged, and historians happy. Undergraduate music history students assume that their texts appear in ever new and improved (and more expensive) editions because as we move into the future there are chapters to add at the end. There are. But the earlier chapters expand also. It is not Bach who grows, but our progress in grasping the magnitude of his genius.

James R. Gaines’s recent inventive account of Bach’s life and outlook (Evening in the Palace of Reason, Harper Collins 2005), set against the story of Frederick the Great, marks yet another kind of discovery: that excitement about Bach can be generated among general readers, not only among scholars, classical musicians, and Lutherans. And it does not hurt to have a breaking story on CNN from time to time.

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HISTORIANS LOVE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT HISTORICAL films—most of which they usually can't help from referring to as “so-called” historical films, or if they don’t, probably want to. The response from screenwriters, or those who love films that historians hate, is usually the *argumentum ad fictitio, viz.*, “it's only a story.”

What particularly irritates me about this response—other than that while true it is insufficient—is invariably that the same Hollywood personality will spend a great deal of time boasting about the great pains taken to get all of the “details” right. By details they never mean word usage, diction, motivation, and worldview. Michael Mann in publicity interviews for *The Last of the Mohicans* might proudly tout the verisimilitude of all the gear shown before the camera; he might boast of the accuracies of the faux Fort William Henry seen besieged by the French; and Daniel Day Lewis might have acquired through painstaking practice the ability to load a flintlock rifle while running flat-out. Yet I would have gladly forgone the prowess with eighteenth-century weapons to hear just three or four sentences in a row of convincing period speech; and I would have happily missed the entire siege of Fort William Henry if it meant that someone had written Clara Munro's character (played by Madeleine Stowe) so that she wasn’t a 1990s woman in petticoats.

Few movies trample as lustily over both the language and ideas of a period than *Braveheart*. I am a vague acquaintance of Randall Wallace, the screenwriter of *Braveheart*, and even that acquaintance can’t stop me from wincing dramatically through large chunks of his script. The absolute worst part is when William Wallace gives his “Freedom!” speech, now greatly beloved by just about every undergraduate I ever have met. Myself, I imagine in my head what would have happened had Wallace made such a speech to his crowd of assembled Jocks in the 1290s, with apologies to and inspiration from George MacDonald Fraser.

“Freedom!”

[Silence. Shifting of the feet, staring dubiously at one another. Finally one Private Forbes pipes up.]

Forbes: “Eh, Wulliam, this ‘fraidom’...that’s a right Rousseauan concept, know what I mean? We won’t be needing sich eighteenth-century fripperies this side of the border, but.”

Randall Wallace doesn’t really care, mind you. He got the idea for *Braveheart* when he heard the legend of how Robert the Bruce became King of Scotland after having quite possibly betrayed William Wallace to Edward I of England. This led Randall to muse upon the richness of a story that involved a man who was, as Randall puts it, both Judas and Simon Peter. The history was but a stage for that idea; it was the archetype of the story that appealed to Randall. Story trumped history; and trampled on it, as well.

To my mind the best history films are those that are not based too closely on a historical event, but are fables from second-hand or stories set in an impeccably realized worldview of the past. As exemplars of what historical films can be, I nominate *True Grit* and *Rob Roy*. *True Grit* is my favorite of all Westerns not just for John Wayne’s impeccable performance as Rooster Cogburn, a courageous Falstaff, but for the beautiful language and the character’s behavior that renders the world of the American West crystalline and intelligible, yet nevertheless removed from us, and other. This is heard not only in
Rooster’s challenge to Ned Pepper (Robert Duvall) to “Fill your hand, you son of a bitch!” It is in Maddie’s (Kim Darby) dispute with the horse trader over the behavior of the true Christian. And it is in Maddie’s offer to Rooster, when he visits her in the final minutes of the film, to reserve a plot for him in her family cemetery. This is incomprehensible and macabre behavior for most modern viewers. They are unaware, probably, of the common Southern practice of burying family members not in a churchyard but in a plot on the family’s land, probably within view of the house, with some cedars planted around it. Maddie offers Rooster that plot in the knowledge that he has no family, and never will; and that he probably will die violently. Her offer to him is one of stability and belonging, at least in death—not a difficult sentiment for a modern audience to understand, but couched in language, terms and sensibilities that are somewhat opaque. Yet the screenwriter and director kept them in rather than reach out to modern sensibility in some simpler yet less historically accurate way.

But perhaps the most perfect historical film to my mind, from the point of view of its determination to be properly rooted in the age it depicts, is Rob Roy. On its initial release, some reviews found it to be a thoroughly bizarre film, since the entire plot of the movie is based on the title character’s determination to redeem his honor, a concept that reviewers apparently felt was an insufficient basis to do much of anything, let alone something so important as drive a movie’s narrative.

Yet of course Rob Roy Macgregor would have regarded his honor as something precious and important and would have made extraordinary efforts to preserve a vision of himself as an honorable man—so did George Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette, Nathanael Greene, Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and a host of other characters in early American history. The concept of honor might be difficult to comprehend, yet it was nevertheless of overwhelming importance to interpreting the actions of eighteenth-century gentlemen—and their ladies, whose thirst for their husband or beau’s honor sometimes seems to have been greater than that of a number of the men.

Yet it is not only the tenacity with which Rob Roy holds to honor as the driving force of the plot that makes it such a beautiful window into the eighteenth century. It is the utterly skilled way in which it demonstrates how all the characters of the drama are bound and controlled by their concept of honor. Thus my favorite scene, quite possibly my favorite scene in any historical movie, is when the Marquis of Montrose (a typically arch John Hurt) speaks with over-familiarity to the Duke of Argyll (portrayed by the great character actor Andrew Keir). Montrose is one of the wealthiest men in Scotland, but Argyll is not only a great landowner, he is head of the Campbells and the most powerful man in the realm of Scotland, particularly given his stalwart support of the Protestant monarchy against the Roman Catholics of the House of Stuart. Keir puts violent anger into Argyll’s rebuke to Montrose’s familiarity, and Hurt displays marvelously intermingled chagrin, embarrassment, and fury as Montrose is put into his place by one of the few men who are his superior. Even though we cannot quite understand honor and hierarchy as did the original characters of the drama, thanks to inspired acting we can feel the affront provided by one’s social inferior, and the bitterness at being given the cut by someone who we must grudgingly admit to be our superior. For a moment we are given a clear window not into a past made real by perfectly constructed props and elegantly designed costumes, but by beautifully realized emotions and passions. We exist in another place, under a subtly different sky and within a far-removed code of conduct and behavior, and yet we understand.

Al Zambone lives deep in the heart of Virginia.
Spring is the season in Mary Oliver's poem by the same title. In "Spring," a black bear rises from sleep and comes down the mountain. The bear's rising, her tongue touching first grass and then cold water: these prompt the poem's speaker to assert, "There is only one question: how to love this world."

Fall is the season when scholars—both students and their teachers—rise from our summer occupations and come back to school. Even if all the warm weeks were spent in our offices, we come back to school as a place of teaching and learning together. Whether we rested on the beach or labored on a fishing boat, whether we read books or wrote them, in the fall we come back to learning and asking important questions.

Perhaps the poem's question is not the only question; still it is a vital one. Perhaps the question of how to love this world should be embedded in all the questions we ask. Perhaps teachers should urge our advisees, freshly emerging from adolescence, to approach their reading assignments asking what can be learned from this author about how to love this world? And to ask of their new friends, how do you love this world? And to consider their actions by asking, how am I loving this world? Perhaps we teachers, tasting ideas and interpretations once again, should practice what we urge upon our students and ask what will this assignment teach us about how to love this world? And ask one another, how do you love this world? And to consider our actions by asking, how am I loving this world?

Many colleges, of many sorts, assert their mission to develop their students' ability to ask good questions and their willingness to serve others. More and more colleges are talking about this service in the language of vocation, responsiveness to the needs of the neighbor. Discerning those needs and responding to them responsibly and well requires learning to ask questions about one's self as well as about the neighbor and society, about the world and God. The effort to discern and respond includes thinking carefully about loving this world. Indeed, obedient listening to God's call often involves reflection upon the agape love required by Jesus' new commandment. At colleges informed by that command we urge our students to put their gifts to work for the benefit of others and to participate in seeking justice, even to pray for the culmination of God's rule which will surpass justice with mercy and divine love. All of this careful thinking, asking questions, and doing good works is certainly a way of loving this world.

But I am not sure that responding to the neighbor's needs with disinterested agape love is the only way to love this world. The bear does not love this world by doing something useful for it but rather by being in it. I wonder if loving by responding to needs is to love this world as God loves it. I wonder if it is enough. Yes, God sees our ordinary daily needs and feeds us; yes, God sees our deepest wounds and heals us; yes, God saw our captivity to sin and freed us. All of that is true. It is also true that by loving what is unloved, even unlovable, God calls forth loveliness. This re-creative love is what turns us toward our neighbor in the first place, but it is not the whole of God's love for this world or for us.

God's love also takes delight in what is good, what is beautiful, and what is a pleasure. If God expressed satisfaction at the creation of fish, and birds, and plants, surely a shimmering rainbow trout, or a bright flamingo, or a bush heavy with ripe berries evokes similar satisfaction even in 2005. If the psalmist proclaimed the good, pleasantness of Jesus pointed to the splendor of the lilies to assure his listeners of God's concern for them and offered a magnificent meal as the image of God's will for the world fulfilled, surely the splendor of a dazzling bouquet and a sumptuous meal on a well appointed table can delight those who share it. If we are to love this ordinary, temporal world as God loves it and us, surely we will love with pleasure and engagement, noticing goodness and beauty as well as wounds and needs.

Such an assertion about how to love this world may seem out of step with the current emphasis upon vocation and Christianity's persistent cultivation of agape. Those schooled by Luther may be among the fiercest in our insistence that going to school should involve asking, how can what I learn be put to use to serve others? Luther himself advocated schools for just this purpose and wrote sermons still used to support establishing schools and keeping children in them. But right in the middle of such an argument he made a surprising admission: "I will say nothing here about the pure pleasure a man gets from having studied, even though he never holds an office of any
kind, how at home by himself he can read all kinds of things, talk and associate with educated people, and travel and do business in foreign lands; for there are perhaps very few people who are moved by this pleasure."

This reading is not for the purpose of discerning the neighbor’s need, or preparing to serve it by holding any office. This study is not in order to give today’s lecture or to pass tomorrow’s exam or to inform a vote about public school funding or college curriculum. It is not useful. This study is pure pleasure. The reader is moved by it. Perhaps this reading is something like the bear “coming/ down the mountain,/ breathing and tasting” : what the poet describes as “perfect love.” If this sort of reading is a way of loving this world, it is a way of loving that seems closer to eros than to agape.

The bear breathed the air of early spring in the mountains: fresh, sharp, scented with conifers. The bear tasted the tender grass and the water: cold, clear, full of fish. Luther read books of all kinds. What else can be loved in this way? What else is part of this world? Neighbors, religious ceremonies, and the world’s beauty and order: these three Simone Weil explores as providing ways to love God indirectly. Persons, relationships, ritual and other cultural artifacts, nature: all these may move us to delight, give us pleasure, and evoke our perfect love.

Luther introduces his admission of being thus moved by declaring that he will say little about it and even suggests that few people have this response to reading. Even if few people are so moved by reading, many are similarly moved to love something in this way. Still it is not unimportant that Luther mentions his pleasure in response to reading. Words, after all, are central to Christians’ ways of knowing God: Jesus, the Word made flesh; the Bible, God’s word for us. Luther himself distinguished between God’s Word and God’s works, such as nature. While both convey God’s love, the works do so less directly. So it may be that Luther would agree with Weil’s notion that by loving such things we love God veiled. Luther might have said that we love God hidden by these masks, but a mask and a veil have much in common.

To say that when we love this world, we love God, does not negate our love for what God gives us. To be grateful to the host or to the cook, does not eliminate our enjoyment of the party and the meal. Nor does loving this world with such pleasure and delight plunge us into sentimentality; at least it will not if our way of loving is like God’s. For even when God loves in this way, God still notices our hunger and feeds us, still responds to our wounds with healing, still hears our cries and answers us.

If there is only one question, its answer is twofold. To love this world we must take pure pleasure from being in it without concern for its usefulness and we must take notice of its needs in order to respond to them. This is how God loves both this world and us. In every season, as we scholars—teachers and students alike—go about our work of reading and asking questions may we join the poet in thinking of the bear—”the dazzling darkness/ coming/ down the mountain”—and then urge one another to love this world in both ways.

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Faithe-based higher education is a danger zone. Unlike public and secular private institutions, ours make bold claims of educating not only the mind and body, but also the heart and soul. This is dangerous not only because we will be dismissed out of hand by many in the larger academy but also, and more seriously, because we will always be too Catholic (or Baptist, or Lutheran, or Mennonite) or not Catholic (or—you fill in the blank) enough to please certain members within our own denomination, faculty, staff, student, alumni, or donor base. The chancellor of a public university has crushing responsibilities, I will grant you, but the one he need never fear is a phone call from an angry parent or a watchdog group, concerned that one of his faculty or staff members has run afoul of the spirit or the letter of the “law” or laws of the sponsoring church in question (pick your own papal document, governing body, synod, etc.).

Let it be noted that such complaints come very rarely from proper church officials or serious academics, but rather from lay vigilantes, the “Minutemen” of our ideological borders. So it is not surprising that we generally do not hesitate to dismiss them as mutatis mutandem, reactionaries, radicals or, quite simply, as monomaniacal kooks. And the sad truth is that dialogue, a word conspicuous throughout John Paul II’s Ex Corde Ecclesiae, is something that little interests those who lay claim to the entire, unmediated truths of the faith. How do we explain to those unwilling to wrestle with the subtleties of John Paul II’s Fides et Ratio that there is both one eternal Truth and, simultaneously and always expanding, the multifaceted search for truth across the academic disciplines? How do we explain that the academy is not guilty of the scourge of relativism, formulas, laws will not do here [in fiction]. We have to have stories.” Almost half a century later, André Dubus noted that “[w]e talk abstractly with people whose love or affection or respect we don’t want, so we...do not tell them any of the stories that are a part of the collection of stories that is our earthly lives.” The sacramentality of everyday life, about which Dubus wrote so poignantly (see especially “On Charon’s Wharf,” where the realization that “we are all terminally ill” provides the context for our heightened participation in the sacraments of eating, drinking, loving, and above all, the sacrament of the Eucharist) manifests itself in the touch of flesh without which “God is a monologue, an idea, a philosophy.”

It follows that these stories have a purpose beyond mere entertainment or formal experimentation. Without indulging in pious moralizing or attempting to lift up the hearts of weary readers, the Catholic writer will, to use G. K. Chesterton’s words, seek to examine “the way in which...
ordinary affairs are affected by our [Catholic] view of life, and how it is also a view of death, a view of sex, a view of social decencies, and so on. When people understand the light that shines for us upon all these facts, they would no longer be surprised to find it shining in our fictions." It is not surprising then, that François Mauriac, at the zenith of Modernism, takes to task André Gide for the latter’s view that “anything written to prove a point or be of use is disqualified from the realm of art.” O’Connor’s memorable designation of the hero of modern fiction is of one “alienated from any kind of community based on common tastes and interests” whose country’s borders “are the sides of his skull.”

It would be a serious mistake, however, to believe that just because Catholic writers break with the “modernist heresy” of the artist as God it then follows that they view themselves as champions of orthodoxy in fiction, or that they welcome the censorship of self-appointed judges of good taste and morality. O’Connor flatly rejects the imposition of orthodoxy on fiction, believing instead that “you can deepen your own orthodoxy by reading if you are not afraid of strange visions. Our sense of what is contained in our faith is deepened less by abstractions than by an encounter with mystery in what is human and often perverse.” In this third and most important point are subsumed the first two: to tell the truth one must avoid abstractions and focus on the concrete, which at its most human mingles betrayal, suffering, and death. While the abstracted “empty” cross of Protestant traditions points beyond the passion and death to the resurrection, the Catholic crucifix presents the imaginative power of the embodiment of those fundamental human experiences. Moreover, for a story to gesture beyond itself, it must be anchored in the physical, emotional, and psychological truth, no matter how unpleasant.

In “Truth and Fiction,” Sigrid Undset urges the Catholic writer to “tell the truths you have to. Even if they are grim, preposterous, shocking. After all, we Catholics ought to acknowledge what a shocking business human life is. Our race has been revolting against its Creator since the beginning of time.” And in “The Role of the Catholic Writer” Bernanos concludes:

And above all, though we do not see morality and religion as in any way alien to us, being a moralist or a theologian does not seem to be a sufficient qualification to judge artistic questions. Mediocre art is a scandal, and even more of a scandal when it claims to be edifying.

It is this final point, the “scandal” of mediocrity, that brings us back to the question of higher education. In a lecture delivered to the Lilly Fellows Program’s National Network Conference and published two years ago in The Cresset, Fr. James Heft notes that, in the face of our dismissal by the secular academy, Christian colleges would do well “not to complain but to produce better work.” Nothing dooms the Christian academy to irrelevancy more quickly than pious mediocrity. By promoting excellence in teaching and scholarship, in the proper contexts of their respective traditions—or, to borrow that memorable phrase from Chesterton, “the light that shines upon us”—church-related institutions offer an appealing alternative to the mainstream academy, just as the twentieth-century Catholic authors advocated and indeed created a fictional universe in opposition to the despair, anomie, solipsism, and relativism of modernism and postmodernism. But again, and this is perhaps the most critical point, that fictional universe is made up of neither hagiography nor consolingly pious literature. Rather, it is a literature that breathes the same air, partakes of the same humanity, and uses the same language and genres as all other great works of literature. The Catholic writer avails himself, in the words of Bernanos, of “the most precious of human rights, that of responding to God’s call, of carrying out one’s task, of being faithful to one’s vocation—vocatus, called…”

In the same way, we academics in church-related universities and colleges are at once part of the broader academy and larger society, and at the same time called to be other. If we are assimilated entirely into the secular academy we lose our souls; if we become a mere means of indoctrination we cease to embody our very reason for existing. My own college was founded by Benedictine monks in 1876, not as a seminary, but as a “literary institution.” And so we continue our precarious balancing acts, one day responding to faculty concerns about our overzealous “hiring for mission,” and the next to a phone call about a book, film, or lecture that someone, somewhere, does not, for some reason, deem appropriate. Like the Catholic literary enterprise, faith-based higher education is a dangerous or, perhaps more accurately, untidy business. Of course, it is a gloriously human business, as John Paul II did not fail to point out:

For the things of the earth and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. A vital interaction of two distinct levels of coming to know the one truth leads to a greater love for truth itself, and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of human life and of the purpose of God’s creation.

In reminding our fellow academics of our belief in God, let us not forget to remind our fellow believers that one of God’s great gifts is the academy. And vice versa.

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GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY GROWS INTO MORE OF A REALITY every day. Its advent is apparent in the work of religious studies prognosticators like Philip Jenkins, who sees the center of Christianity shifting to the southern hemisphere in the next fifty years. And we can see it in the Anglican Communion as its political center moves towards the more conservative bishops of Africa. Harder to see, however, is that even apart from academic and institutional dialogue in the Church, the global Church is coming home to our congregations here in the United States.

Small community congregations historically have been disconnected from the global dimension of the church. Even though the Church always has envisioned itself as an entity with a worldwide identity and mission, the closest that many American congregations used to come to this truth was a small phrase in the Eucharistic prayer asking that God join their “prayers with those of your servants of every time and place.” They likely never gave much thought to what would happen if God answered those prayers in a very tangible way. During most of the Church’s history, many, if not all, Christians have seen the global aspect of the Church’s identity as beautiful and wonderful doctrine, but as a mystical ideal more than a lived reality. Though congregations and national church bodies might send out missionaries or host visiting leaders from global partners, global mission still appeared to happen “out there” somewhere. Connections between Christians across the globe, even of the same denomination, occurred mainly through national offices and conferences. Local congregations never felt the full reality of the worldwide Body of Christ. In brief, the global church has been distant from the life of most congregations, with a few exceptions for congregations in larger cities. The emerging globalization of Christianity in America is something to which these congregations in smaller communities, and the American church as a whole, must still adapt.

Ready or not, the global Church increasingly is coming home to average American congregations. It is becoming a reality for congregations as they forge companion relationships with congregations on the other side of the world, and even more so as congregations of Diaspora Christians from throughout the world settle in alongside congregations that have long been a part of the towns, cities, and countryside of the American landscape.

For my home congregation in East Berlin, Pennsylvania, the global Church became more of a reality when I returned from a trip to the Konde Diocese, our synod’s companion in Tanzania. While I of course showed the obligatory slide show of my journey, I also invited my congregation to become companions with the Sinai parish in Mbeya. The companionship ebbs and grows as all relationships do, but every Sunday in the intercessions my congregation remembers the Sinai congregation in prayer, knowing that we also are remembered in their prayers. We even sometimes sing “Silent Night, Holy Night” in Swahili on Christmas Eve, joining our voices with those removed from us by thousands of miles. In our prayers and in our music the Church of every time and place becomes a reality for an average Lutheran church in rural Pennsylvania.

In my home synod, the global Church also becomes a reality through the international counselors that work in the woods of Nawakwa and Kirchenwald, my synod’s church camps, during the summer. For almost ten years, these two camps have hosted as many as three international counselors each summer. These counselors were not foreign dignitaries sent to represent another church body, but average Christians from Poland, Indonesia, and Tanzania sharing their faith in all its fullness. Campers and their parents no longer smiled and nodded at the global Church as a nice ideal of Church doctrine, but embraced it as it came to life in the face of a treasured counselor and friend. Martin, Mwakisimba, Rafal, and Scotti are friends and neighbors to staff and campers alike. The presence of an international Christian on the staff is no longer even all that surprising.

IF YOU NEED FURTHER EXAMPLES, TAKE A DRIVE AROUND York, Pennsylvania, and its surrounding countryside.

You will find congregations of many non-western Christian immigrants, testifying to the integration of global Christianity in America. Among its many old German Lutheran and Reformed churches, south central Pennsylvania hosts Korean Presbyterian churches, a Vietnamese Alliance congregation, and a variety of Latino congregations. Casting a wider vision beyond Pennsylvania, you will find church buildings once home to Lutherans of European descent now occupied by Lutheran immigrant congregations from Indonesia and Ethiopia. Sometimes, the fellowship is even ecumenical. A Christian and Missionary Alliance congregation of Hmong
Christians meet in a Lutheran church building in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Brothers and sisters in Christ who were always “out there” somewhere in the mission field are now neighbors to our congregations.

Although my congregation, my synod, and my church-body are now well aware of the global flavor of Christianity in our neighborhoods, it is still a struggle to find out what that means for our life together. How will we keep Christian neighbors throughout the world in our prayers, and how will we commend ourselves to their prayers? How will we welcome Diaspora Christians into our congregations and buildings? How will we join them in nurturing the church in America and throughout the world? How will we continue to live into the promised reality of one Church throughout the world that joins together in one song to its crucified and risen Savior?

Many congregations wrestle with and live out the answers to these questions right now. There is a glimmer of an answer in a graveyard not far from my home congregation in East Berlin. The gravestones in the cemetery behind the church building bear names like Smith, Tanner, Hair, and Miller, but the church’s sign reads “Iglesia Evangelica de Santidad, Lirio del Valle.” The building was once home to another congregation, likely a Mennonite fellowship, now defunct for a number of years, but the church building remains occupied by a congregation of Latino Christians, many of them immigrants from Central America. The new congregation cares for the old Mennonite graves, tending the memories of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

That graveyard is symbolic of how the Spirit is helping older western congregations and newer non-western congregations to live together. Existing congregations learn to share the history of their place on earth and to trust new neighbors to become part of that story and heirs of that same history. Existing church-bodies must honor the fact that new non-Western Christian immigrants will have to make their own way into the American landscape. It was not so long ago after all that Lutheranism in North America was composed of predominantly ethnic synods that found their own ways of integrating into the American culture. The newer neighbors need space and freedom to work out their own identity as part of American Christianity. Above all, as the global Church comes home for our congregations, we must strive to nurture hospitality of the heart towards our non-western brothers and sisters in Christ, trusting them with the Gospel, our shared history, and even with our graves. And more than that, we trust that it is God who blends the prayers and songs of every time and place together into one hymn of praise to the crucified and risen Savior. So we trust God to be at work among us as we learn to welcome the global Church to our home.

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making the country safe for amnesty

In January of 2004, President Bush proposed substantial reforms in immigration policy, of which a new guest worker program was the most ambitious. Initial reactions to the proposal were critical, and the administration quickly backed off. But politicians of both parties have come to view our continued failure to stem the tide of illegal immigrants—of whom over ten million are now estimated to reside within the United States—as an unacceptable threat to national security in the terrorist age. This widespread concern has put immigration reform back on the front burner, with two major immigration bills now before the Senate. Either of the bills—the first sponsored by John McCain (R-AZ) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA), the second by John Cornyn (R-TX) and Jon Kyl (R-AZ)—would constitute the most significant reform of immigration policy in two decades.

Although Cornyn-Kyl is more restrictive, both bills, like the President’s earlier proposal, would institute a new guestworker program aimed at providing labor for jobs unfilled by American workers, and thus at easing pressures for illegal immigration. But the bills differ significantly in their treatment of aliens currently residing illegally within the U.S. The Cornyn-Kyl bill would institute a five-year “mandatory departure” period, during which illegal aliens would be required to leave the country. Those who registered voluntarily for mandatory departure would be eligible to apply for legal readmission after leaving, but would have to go through ordinary channels of applying either for permanent residency or for the new temporary worker program. Cornyn-Kyl thus opens no new channels by which current illegal aliens could become legal permanent residents.

McCain-Kennedy, by contrast, does open new channels to permanent residency. Not only would it (unlike Cornyn-Kyl) permit temporary workers here under the new guest worker program to file for permanent residency. It also would enable aliens currently residing here illegally to regularize their status by applying for legal permanent residency. McCain-Kennedy, in other words, proposes an amnesty.

“Amnesty” is the word used to describe provisions that permit illegal aliens to become legal permanent residents. The United States first offered an amnesty in the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which supposedly combined amnesty for illegal aliens already here with tougher measures to prevent further illegal immigration. (“Supposedly,” because the latter were never seriously enforced.) There have been additional amnesties since then. Whether or not a given bill involves an amnesty can be a matter of debate. Supporters of McCain-Kennedy have claimed that their proposal is not “really” an amnesty because aliens attempting to regularize their status would have to pay hefty fines ($2,000 plus some fees). Hard-liners, by contrast, have argued that even Cornyn-Kyl is an amnesty, because it would permit departed illegal aliens to return through legal channels. Nevertheless, Cornyn-Kyl requires aliens to leave the country and permits them to return only if they take their place in line with other applicants for entry; McCain-Kennedy offers a simple transformation of status.

Ever since IRCA’s nod in the direction of immigration enforcement proved little more than smoke and mirrors, the idea of amnesty has been anathema to immigration restrictionists, most of them conservative Republicans. Amnesties, they point out, reward lawbreaking by benefiting those who have successfully violated our laws. They unfairly let people who have illegally entered this country leapfrog would-be others who have applied for permanent residency through legal channels and patiently waited their turn, often for many years, in their home countries. And, perversely, they attract even more illegal immigrants, who believe that if they can just elude border agents and disappear for a few years, eventually another amnesty will come along.

These are strong arguments. As it happens, I sympathize with the goals of those who make them and count myself among the immigration restrictionists. I believe we could secure the border far more effectively than we do. I would prefer that we lower levels of legal immigration, also. I favor assimilation and believe immigrants should learn to speak English. I support programs that teach immigrants American history, civics, and patriotism. On the issue of amnesty, however, I part ways with most of my fellow restrictionists. For there is a strong moral argument in favor of amnesty.

The case for amnesty is rooted in democracy. At the core of democracy rests one basic idea: that those subject to political power are entitled to share in its exercise. Obviously, this central insight is subject to certain qualifica-
Tourists are subject to the exercise of power in which they have no share. So are children. But tourists are subject only temporarily, and children gain a share in the exercise of power with maturity. Exceptions such as these only underline the fundamental democratic insistence that political power ultimately rests in the hands of "we the people." This helps explain why we would reject a proposal, say, to expel a group of Americans to whom we no longer wished to extend the benefit of citizenship, or to make discretionary the (currently automatic) extension of citizenship to the children of current citizens. Such proposals would be wrong because the right of those affected by them to full membership in the demos is not a matter for our decision. They are already "one of us," empirically so, quite apart from any choice we might have or wish to have in the matter.

But surely the same becomes true, at some point, even of illegal immigrants. I am not sure precisely when that point occurs—I certainly don't intend to argue that we may not deport someone who entered the country illegally last month. But imagine the opposite extreme: someone who entered this country illegally but has now lived here for twenty years; who has married and had children here; who works here, sends his children to school here, attends church here; whose friends live here; whose life, in short, is thoroughly intertwined with that of some American community. Such a person is "one of us," a member of "we the people" in a straightforward empirical sense that depends on no decision or policy of ours. To exercise political power over large numbers of such people without their being entitled to any share in that power—to treat them simply as subjects, with no possibility of becoming fellow citizens—must be problematic for a democracy.

All the more so when our own consistent refusal—due to our self-interested desire for the economic benefits of importing inexpensive fruit pickers, nannies, and gardeners—to enforce the laws against illegal immigration means that we have in effect winked at their coming and colluded in their remaining here. Under such circumstances, when we have said that illegal immigrants were unwelcome while all the while welcoming them, we should hesitate to deport those who have in fact become members of "we the people" while we looked the other way. The precise point at which amnesty becomes necessary is debatable—one or two years is probably not enough, ten or fifteen surely is—but the fundamental rationale for it is compelling.

But what of the claim that amnesty—to focus on what I regard as the most powerful argument against it—only encourages further illegal immigration, by holding out the hope of legal residence down the road for those who can simply hide out long enough? This is no phantom fear. The organization Judicial Watch, in fact, recently reported that an aborted Border Patrol survey of those apprehended trying to cross the border revealed that significant percentages of aliens were encouraged to attempt the crossing by President Bush's guest worker proposal, which they interpreted as offering an eventual amnesty.

We should take this argument very seriously indeed. But it does not show that amnesty is unthinkable. It shows, rather, that any amnesty must be paired with serious border enforcement—of the sort proposed in the Cornyn-Kyl bill—and with determined efforts to find and deport those who have recently crossed the border illegally (and who can not yet plausibly claim to have become, empirically, part of "we the people"). The critics are right that we cannot have a repeat of IRCA, in which an amnesty was traded for phony enforcement efforts. Though I have attempted to make a case for amnesty, we should oppose one unless it is combined with vigorous programs to enhance border security. Indeed, it would be advisable first to institute measures against illegal immigration, and only then to move forward with an amnesty, so that our intention to enforce the immigration laws is clear to those whom an amnesty might otherwise encourage to enter the country illegally.

Done properly, in other words, an amnesty should be a one-time deal, made unnecessary in the future by a crackdown on illegal immigration. Of course, there will always be some who manage to evade detection and remain here illegally. But as long as their numbers are few, no significant policy issue will arise; and if success at entering illegally is sufficiently unlikely, their numbers will be few. Amnesty is only an issue, after all, when immigration laws go unenforced. So we can do the right thing in our immigration policy, by granting an amnesty to those whose claim for one is strong, if we are also willing to do the right thing for our national security, by preventing unauthorized entry into the country.

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 SOME TIME AGO I VISITED A LUTHERAN-RELATED COLLEGE campus where I conducted extensive interviews. I concluded my interviews with a sizeable group of students who were to give me feed-back about a college that was heavily committed to "diversity." I wasn't looking forward to the conversation with them because I thought I would get regular college boilerplate from them. What happened was far different from what I expected.

After a few perfunctory compliments, they launched into an attack on the ideological straight-jacket they thought the faculty had imposed on the college. "Diversity," one student claimed, "means that everyone has to accept homosexuality as good." Another said that he wouldn't dare support the Iraq war in any of the classes he attended; he would be ridiculed by the faculty. Another said that it would take great courage to challenge the "pro-choice" culture of the school.

A bright Jewish student argued that the college wasn't really liberal in the classic sense of the word. Its ideological conformity prevented open discussion of most of the great issues in church and society. The students were angered that there were prescribed answers to these great questions and they were deprived of open debate. Yet the college touted its commitment to diversity.

I was shocked at the vehemence of their response but not surprised by their discovery that our campuses enforce an ideological conformity. I had experienced such conformity years earlier at one of our more liberal Lutheran seminaries where I taught for a considerable time. The "sacred topics of the left" dominated the discussion of the school. After a painful shift in political (but not theological) commitments in the late 1970s, I felt like part of a very small, put-upon minority. There were other conservatives among the faculty and students, but they kept their heads down, recognizing that violating the liberal consensus might bode ill for them.

I felt a great sense of relief when I came to Roanoke College in the early 1980s because there wasn't any enforced ideological conformity. Articulate conservatives along with liberals spoke out on public issues. Faculty generally left their ideological commitments at the faculty meeting room door. The educational square was not politicized. I continue to cherish that quality about our college.

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Robert Benne

Is it true that colleges and universities in general exhibit ideological conformity? Sadly enough, it seems to be true, and even sadder that the more elite the college or university, the more dominated it is by political and social liberalism. The celebrated article in Diversity (September 2002), "The One Party Campus," by Klein, Stern, and Western (who are not conservatives, by the way), compiled the party affiliation of those who belonged to six nationwide social science and humanities associations. They found that eighty percent of the members identified themselves as Democrats; only eight percent pleaded guilty to being Republicans. Sorting these out by disciplines, the authors found that the ratio of Democrats to Republicans in anthropology was 30 to 1, history 9.5 to 1, philosophy 13.5 to 1, political science 6.7 to 1, and sociology an astounding 28 to 1. (Not many conservatives are interested in the mantra of "class, race, and gender.") Only economics came close to balance at 3 to 1. The average of the ratios was 15 to 1. The same authors did a study ("Voter Registration of Berkeley and Stanford Faculty") of those two elite California institutions. The imbalances were even greater in some areas—the humanities ratio was 22 to 1; the social sciences 13.6 to 1. The hard sciences and professional schools fared better with 7.6 to 1 and 8.9 to 1, respectively. Further, the younger faculty tipped even more in a liberal direction than the older. Even if this data is somewhat exaggerated, it seems clear that political liberalism reigns in most sections of academia.

The Democratic Party, especially in its left-wing version favored by academics, holds positions that fit well with the profile of those faculties described above, as well as that of the Lutheran school I described above: virulently anti-Bush, anti-Iraq war, deeply suspicious of American economic and military power, anti-nuclear, pro-choice, pro-affirmative action, pro-homosexual rights, militantly environmentalist, and multiculturalist. "Diversity" is part of the multiculturalist perspective, but it focuses only on racial, ethnic, gender, and international kinds of diversity. It conveniently overlooks diversity in political, economic, and cultural perspectives. One could apply the Marxist analysis of "bad faith" to this situation: the commitment to and enforcement of ideological hegemony is camouflaged by a more superficial commitment to diversity, as long as that diversity doesn't threaten the underlying consensus.

Thus, one could make a compelling argument that the
dominant (but often hidden and disguised) ideology of almost all academic institutions is political and cultural liberalism. It is easy to sense this if one publicly goes against that ideology. Disapproval is palpable if one challenges any of the liberal themes listed above. For younger and more vulnerable members of the academic community, dissent from these themes can be damaging, if not lethal, to their interests as students and faculty alike. Academic institutions by and large are really not very interested in open debate about the great issues before us. Religious constraints at church-related schools pale before the enforcement mechanisms of the liberal academy.

Fortunately, much of the day-to-day life of the academy is not affected by this liberal hegemony. Many classrooms are not politicized. But one does not have to look far for evidence of liberal hegemony. Students complain about the gratuitous political opinions thrown out by faculty, as well as the general atmosphere of repression about which my Lutheran college students complained. The selection of campus speakers is dramatically conditioned by liberal dominance. Courses are sometimes heavily skewed by liberal assumptions. Faculty selection is often distorted by their tendency to select new faculty who share their deepest political and cultural beliefs. Above all, this ideological homogeneity in the academy squelches the genuine discourse on great issues that colleges and universities by their very definition are supposed to foster.

Only now are members of the non-academic sectors of our society becoming aware of this phony diversity. A good deal of research is making the situation clearer. State legislatures are beginning to monitor the public colleges and universities on their territory. Popular pundits lampoon the liberal intelligentsia for their dogmatic liberalism. Wealthy donors are asking questions about the uses to which their gifts will be put. In all, the credibility of the academy is diminishing as people become aware of its refusal to encourage genuine diversity of ideas and ideologies.

* * *

How we got into this situation is too long a story to pursue here. Suffice it to say that such liberal bias has been exercised for a long time, especially at the elite levels of the academy. Since the Second World War it has been fashionable to be liberal in the academic world, and that tendency has been reinforced by the 1960s generation’s current dominance in that world. The radicals of the 1960s have become the liberals of today after their “long march through the institutions.” Like any dominant group, when it consolidates power it does not invite dissent.

What to do about this ideological uniformity under the guise of diversity? Any solution should not involve political intervention into the life of the academy. Nor should it involve affirmative action for conservatives, which would be demeaning to conservatives and liberals alike. Nor should we resort to labeling and bean-counting.

Rather, conservatives themselves have to encourage more of their own persuasion to enter the academic world and then support them when they get there. Already there are some admirable efforts in this direction, such as the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, as well as a number of conservative associations grouped around various disciplines. Once they reach secure positions, conservatives ought to speak up so that the “closet” conservatives among students and faculty alike are encouraged to be more visible and vocal.

Above all, however, colleges and universities themselves have to make a genuine commitment to intellectual diversity, especially in its political and cultural dimensions. At their best, these institutions educate citizens by introducing them to high levels of discourse on the great issues before our civilization. One would think that liberals would recognize that genuine diversity is indispensable in this important task, and in fact, many do. They know that lively discourse on those issues must include conservative voices, especially since a great share of American society is of that persuasion. If liberals are true to the best elements in their own heritage they will encourage genuine, not phony, diversity. Such an engagement with authentic diversity will bring needed credibility and respect to the academy, and, what’s far more important, it will be the right thing to do.

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Ozone—good, bad or both?

Over the course of the twentieth century, humans have altered the chemical composition and distribution of gases within the atmosphere. Many of the same technological advances that have led to dramatic increases in our material standards of living have created chemical byproducts, the effects of which we only come to understand much later. Chlorine molecules from man-made chlorofluorocarbons that helped keep our homes cool and our food fresh have ravaged stratospheric ozone leading to the formation of the ozone hole each spring season over Antarctica. Industrial activity and the proliferation of the automobile have produced air pollution and photochemical smog. To become better stewards of our planet, we must come to appreciate the full-range of consequences that our actions and technologies have on our surroundings. We must learn to assess the costs of things not only in terms of how much money we have to pay for them but in terms of the damage they can do to the environment in which we live.

Although ozone is probably one of the most familiar trace gases in the earth’s atmosphere, we find that at most 1 in 100,000 molecules of the earth’s atmosphere is ozone. Yet ozone is one of the most important gases in the atmosphere, and without its presence, the development of life as we know it would have been altered significantly. Ozone in the atmosphere screens the surface from ultraviolet radiation that is dangerous for surface dwelling species. So, why should we be concerned about technologies that create more ozone? Is ozone a good molecule, protecting us from the sun’s rays, or a dangerous molecule that we need to control? The answer is both.

We need to start with a definition of what ozone is. Ozone is a molecule consisting of three oxygen atoms. Unlike the diatomic oxygen ($O_2$) we breathe, ozone ($O_3$) is highly reactive. Exposure to high levels of ozone leads to damage for crops and plants and causes respiratory problems in human beings.

Recent studies have linked chronic exposures to high levels of ozone with asthma development in children and increased mortality. Nevertheless, ozone is quite efficient at blocking ultra-violet (UV) radiation emitted by the sun from reaching the earth’s surface. Thus, ozone protects us from sunburns and skin cancer.

From this brief list of the positive and negative impacts of ozone, it would appear that the best possible situation would be for the earth’s atmosphere to contain lots of ozone but have very little of it near the surface, where humans live and breath. Fortunately, that is exactly the way it works, most of the time. The majority of the earth’s ozone is found in the ozone layer, 15–30 kilometers above the earth’s surface in the heart of the stratosphere. The stratosphere itself extends from 12–50 kilometers in altitude and owes its very existence to the presence of ozone. Ozone molecules essentially absorb the UV energy from the sun and convert it to thermal energy, warming their surroundings. In the lowest layer of the atmosphere, called the troposphere (where we live and where weather forms), temperatures decrease with altitude. In the stratosphere, however, temperatures increase with altitude due to the warming caused by ozone.

While ozone at any altitude protects us from UV radiation, ozone in the troposphere is clearly “bad” ozone. Ozone is a primary component of photochemical smog—the pollution we normally associate with cities and industrial activity. Near the surface, ozone forms from the reaction of nitrogen compounds called $NO_x$ (gases that form during incomplete combustion) with hydrocarbons (e.g., fossil fuels) including volatile organic compounds (called VOCs, e.g., fumes from paints, pesticides). These reactions free oxygen atoms in the presence of sunlight. These free oxygen atoms are highly reactive and, since twenty percent of all surrounding molecules are $O_2$, they can combine with the $O_3$ molecules, forming ozone.

Ozone pollution tends to be at its worst during the summer in Southern U.S. cities. The high summertime sun increases the intensity of light available to form ozone. Stagnant air also helps with ozone formation. As a result, cities in basins (like Los Angeles) or along the Gulf Coast (like Houston) suffer from our nation’s worst ozone pollution.

The lifetime of an ozone molecule near the surface is typically on the order of a few hours. Thus, during the daytime, ozone is continuously being created and destroyed. After the sun sets, ozone production turns off. Over night, chemical reactions remove most of the ozone from the lowest layer of the troposphere, known as the boundary or mixed layer. By sunrise, ozone levels are at their lowest point of the day, but with the rising sun, ozone production increases and ozone levels peak in the early to mid-afternoon hours.
What can we do about this problem? There are small steps that each of us can take, such as driving less, using hand tools like rakes or reel mowers instead of gas powered lawn tools, and avoiding refueling our automobiles during daylight hours. But a first step toward a comprehensive solution to this problem requires a better understanding of the impact that our various technologies are having on our environment.

The fact is that we really don't know enough about ozone levels in our cities. While ozone levels at the surface are typically well monitored, tropospheric ozone concentrations above the surface are not. Satellite instruments cannot provide much detail on ozone concentrations near the surface, because they are unable to "see" through the ozone layer. Without information about ozone's "vertical distribution," we cannot develop effective solutions to address the problem. Surface measurements alone can only provide a two-dimensional picture. If we had a three-dimensional picture, we would better understand the total amount of ozone pollution being produced locally and even gain an understanding of the amount of ozone that is coming from remote sources.

For example, detecting higher levels of ozone just above the boundary layer rather than in the boundary layer indicates that pollution has been created upwind and transported into the area. To figure out how to control ozone in a particular environment, it is important to be able to identify the sources of that pollution.

Faculty and students at Rice University in Houston, Texas, and at Valparaiso University have started to work on this problem. Over the last two summers, I established an ozone monitoring program at Rice University in Houston that includes an important role for undergraduate student researchers. Houston was identified as the city with the worst air quality in the United States during 2004.

The Houston metropolitan area combines all the ingredients for the development of high levels of ozone pollution. As an epicenter of petrochemical production plants and home to the fourth largest population in the U.S., Houston has concentrated emissions of both hydrocarbons and NO_x.

The Rice University campus is located in the heart of the city, just a few miles south of downtown, providing an ideal site at which to base our research. Our goal was to measure the vertical distribution of ozone using specially equipped weather balloons. The balloon payloads contain instruments known as radiosondes that measure pressure, temperature, and humidity as they ascend through the atmosphere to altitudes of 70,000–100,000 feet (22–30 kilometers).

The data are radioed back to an antenna on the surface to provide real-time profiles of these meteorological variables. In addition, a special instrument is attached that measures ozone. This instrument, known as an ozonesonde, consists of a small air pump with electrochemical cells. The pump sucks air into the instrument, and the ozone molecules react in the cells generating an electrical current. The magnitude of the electrical current is proportional to the number of ozone molecules present, yielding ozone concentration profiles. These data are transmitted back to the surface in real-time along with the meteorological data provided by the radiosondes.

Flights typically last two hours. As the balloon ascends, it expands. Eventually, the material from which the balloon is made can expand no more, and the balloon bursts. On the way back to earth, a parachute slows the descent of the payload. The ascent and descent typically are at a rate of 1,000 feet per minute. Attached to each payload is a notice, identifying the contents of the instrument and providing instructions for returning the instrument in exchange for a small reward. Our experience suggests that about one in four instruments are returned. Returned instruments can be cleaned, reconditioned, and reused.

Initial funding for the study was provided by the Shell Center for Sustainability at Rice University with additional funding provided by NASA. During the first year of the program, we launched thirty ozonesondes. In 2005 the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ) funded a project submitted by Valparaiso University to continue our work in Houston. We launched another forty balloons in 2005 as part of that study and are funded to launch forty more balloons next year.

As an educator, I find that one of the most important aspects of this project is its accessibility to undergraduate students. Scott Hersey, a senior at Rice, has worked on and been involved in every aspect of the project from its inception. He conditions and calibrates the instruments in the laboratory, prepares the instruments for launch, acquires the helium necessary to fill the balloons, coordinates launches, and posts the data to the website.

We have submitted proposals to begin a similar program at Valparaiso University in the near future. VU already has approved the acquisition of the necessary laboratory equipment, and the new Kallay-Christopher Center at Valparaiso University has an automated weather balloon launching facility. Next summer, a VU student will travel to Houston to work with the Rice students on the TCEQ project.

Our understanding of ozone pollution over the last fifty years has advanced substantially. The TCEQ study will help us better understand the development and transport of ozone in and around the Houston metropolitan area and contribute to a better understanding of the impacts of our modern industrial and transportation technologies on the environment. With this kind of information, communities can make better-informed decisions about how to plan
their futures and how to preserve the quality of life. And by taking the opportunity to involve our undergraduate students in projects like this, we help them to develop into responsible scientists and citizens who are sensitive to the impacts—both positive and negative—that technology can have on the world around us. Furthermore, it is part of a Christian calling to be good stewards of God’s creation.

Gary Morris is assistant professor of physics and astronomy at Valparaiso University.

WHERE GOD LIVES

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. Psalm 121

A friend who doesn’t believe in God once said—
If God does exist, he lives in Cordova.

I’ve always thought God lived in whatever mountain I lived under—
  Mt. Tabor, Mt. Katadin
  Mt. Lemon, Mt. Roberts—
I imagine he slings his green hammock between the birch trees in summer or slippers into a branch of soft cedar in winter,

basking in the solitude and sweet smell of his woods listening quietly as all our small prayers float in like white moths, or silver snow, landing softly against his warm skin.

Emily Wall

Roy Anker, in his book, *Catching Light,* has given students of religion and culture a thoughtful, provocative, and beautifully-written work that perceptively and sensitively examines how popular culture, religious ideas, and theological constructions interact in American society. *Catching Light* explores not only film content, but the medium of film as well, and argues that popular film in our culture can communicate religious ideas and in some ways function religiously for both the creators and consumers of movies. The book is an exploration of the complex interactions of faith, culture, theology, and psychology within the context of some of our most enduring cultural texts. And while there are many recent books on religion and film, few are able to bridge the gap between worlds like this one. Anker's book will be useful not only in certain college classrooms but will enliven church study groups and individuals interested in religion and popular culture. *Catching Light* is at once intellectually challenging and accessible to a broad audience; theologically provocative while orthodox; finely crafted and organized and entertaining. These qualities will ensure a broad readership for the book.

Anker begins his book with an appropriate and creative metaphor, "catching light," which both describes the process of creating and viewing films and, for Anker, the religious and theological task of making sense of the divine. *Catching Light* not only makes God can be more effective than textual theologies or sermons. And "the disclosure of the love of God" (17) or Light, or grace often comes packaged in ways not anticipated—through the evils of Vietnam, the sorrows of an alcoholic singer, the lostness of an extraterrestrial, or the surprise, revelatory moments of daily living.

Anker's book is straightforward in its organization and presentation. After the Introduction where he presents his "theology of Light," so to speak, the book proceeds through four sections modeled on Frederick Buechner's three-part book, *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale.* Anker then provides close readings and analyses of films in the categories of tragedy (where evil dominates to veil any presentation of light), comedy (in the literary sense), fairy tale (Anker's "fables of Light," 215), and Anker's added fourth category that emphasizes revelatory surprise or religious search. There are three chapters in each part with the exception of Part Two which contains four chapters. Each chapter focuses usually on one film, with the exception of chapter ten which includes three Spielberg films. I mention this organization because the four part structure with thirteen chapters and an Introduction makes the book ideally suited for a semester-long college or church course. Each part is self contained, and each chapter provides a focused, ideal accompaniment to watching and discussing the films included for examination.

Part One focuses on films that highlight evil or darkness, *The Godfather, Chinatown,* and *The Deer
Hunter. These films trade on the notion of evil as the natural state of human beings, but in Anker’s analyses these films often highlight the flip side of that state by presenting human beings as hopeful creatures seeking the “good.” An example arises in Anker’s treatment of The Deer Hunter. Anker concludes his analysis with the following words, an excerpt that also gives the reader an idea of Anker’s skillful prose: “Against this stark intensification of evil—the ‘blackness of darkness,’ as Melville described the thematic core of Hawthorne’s short stories—The Deer Hunter posits the radical affirmation of the incalculable goodness of life individually and communally...of the immense value and fragility of the exquisite gift of life, friendship, and love, gifts imparted by that mysterious Other whom Michael has belatedly encountered in the high sacred mountains of God” (117).

While all sections are of high quality, it is Part Two where Anker really excels in his treatments of Tender Mercies, Places in the Heart, The Mission, and Babette’s Feast. The section on comedy presupposes that Light is necessary for human wholeness. Readers and viewers might need to revise their understanding of comedy before studying this section. By comedy, Anker “does not primarily mean material that is funny” but rather “a story in which initial dark and tangled circumstances get untangled and events and characters end well....” (119). These films, in Anker’s analyses, do not guarantee happiness for characters but instead allow grace to shine and come to Light. Nowhere in the book is this more clear than in Anker’s superb analysis of Places in the Heart. For Anker, director Robert “Benton places at the center of the story the deep human longing for the repair of what afflicts humankind. ... Places in the Heart ends with nothing less than an exultant vision of the reconciliation and restoration that is the healing of the world” (145). It is with this vision that Anker ends his analysis of the film, providing in my mind one of the best treatments available on the film’s surprising ending.

Part Three focuses on fairy tale, or what Anker likes to call “fables of Light.” Star Wars, Spielberg, and Superman fans will not be disappointed with Anker’s take on the films here. Such fables allow films and their reviewers to experiment with expanded notions of the divine, morality, and other theological precepts such as incarnation. What intrigues me most is Anker’s suggestion that these types of films have become popular in a time when institutional religion has in some ways stumbled or at least tried to restrain the divine. This suggests that religion and culture are dramatically related in our society and that normally secular cultural institutions like Hollywood can and do take over religious functioning from formal religious institutions. This dynamic relationship between sacred functioning and secular life receives further development and treatment in Part Four, “Found.” In Part Four, Anker explores the surprising epiphanies that strike in the midst of mundane life, the sacred breaking into a secular world and taking unsuspecting characters by surprise. In traditional terms, revelation occurs and leads characters to a new place of wholeness. And with Part Four, the book abruptly ends with no Conclusion, reading list, or index.

The strengths of Anker’s book are numerous and easy to spot. It is well-written and organized, accessible to a large audience that is educated and inquisitive. The overall quality of film and story analysis is strong, insightful, and at places, innovative. The book provides filmographies and extended information about films and directors in its helpful sidebars. Anker treats the topic from a Jewish-Christian perspective with numerous biblical and theological references (see page 154 for an example), but he does so in such a way to avoid confessionalism or doctrinal narrowness. The limitations of the book are few and more subtle. One might view the exclusive Jewish-Christian perspective as a limiting and narrowing standard. And indeed, this does narrow the treatment and the selection of films. However, Anker is forthright about his approach, and this is not a weakness as much as it is helpful information to guide readers in their own critical analysis of the book. The book has no index or bibliography which will make it more difficult for students and scholars of religion and film. And perhaps it is my own predilection or need for resolution, but a conclusion would round out the book nicely. But these criticisms are minor and are not meant to take away from what is otherwise an exceptional book about religion and culture.

Roy Anker has written a beautiful book well suited for certain college classrooms and church settings. The book will be important for anyone interested in cultural religion, film studies, and popular culture and religion.

Conrad Ostwalt
In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We're booth-makers, you know. Babbling like Peter, you know. Talking out of our heads, you know. Not knowing what we're saying. No matter the Christmas lesson of the incarnation, that God comes deep into our flesh to work out the mystery of our salvation. No matter the Good Friday lesson of the crucifixion, that God works out the mystery of salvation in the agony of deepest love there on Golgotha. No matter the vivid smudge-marks of Ash Wednesday, dark reminders of the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you will return." No matter. We know better. We know that if God were really to come among us, there'd be all kinds of razzle-dazzle. Why, God would be so full of God-ness that it couldn't be kept inside; it would ooze out here, burst out there—in healings and miracles and revivified corpses and—and you'd just know it was God in our midst, and you'd just know we were somehow transcending our grubby and fleshly and finite humanness. Peter speaks for all of us, drunk with the glimpse of miracle: "Let's build a shrine. Let's hold the miraculous!"

They streamed, by the thousands, to the Yugoslav town of Medjugorje, to catch a glimpse of the claim of the vision, for a report from the young persons who had these repeated visions of the Blessed Virgin and auditions of her advice, her revelations, to them and to their hearers. U.S. media were fascinated, mostly because folks seek to have their lives transformed by contact with what they hold to be the holy, the transcendent, the divine.

There was that weeping icon in the suburban Chicago parish. And the apparition of Mary on a water tank on the Texas plains. And thunderclaps and lightning bolts and swoons for being healed! Always, there is the attraction, the thronging, the yearning, the hoping for something more than is usually there, for something that might be so grandly much more than is usually there that it will transform what is usually there—maybe even for the rest of one's life.

And then there's the whole phenomenon that has come to be called the "new age"—wonderfully promoted by celebrities and pervasively marketed in shops across the land, selling aids for meditation, seminars on channeling, and crystals for... well, for whatever it is that crystals are for. The devotees have turned the new age phenomenon into a multi-million dollar industry. For there is in us this longing, this yearning, this hankering after something to transcend the limits of the ordinary.

We are fascinated with the "more," the "beyond," the transfigured. And we show our fascination by considerable personal investment of time and money and energy and risk. And when we find something that promises to give us that "more," that "beyond," we seem ready to move mountains to get a piece of it. We hanker, one theologian wrote, to be saved out of our humanity, not in it; to be saved by a really divine savior, not one locked in our humanity with us. That's why so many people had such problems dealing rationally with the Scorsese film of Nikos Kazantzakis' novel, The Last Temptation of Christ. For that novel and film presented an utterly human Jesus—nay, in the best sense of the word, a merely human Jesus.

In that process we not only show that we are incorrigibly religious, but that we look for religious experience to transfer us to some realm or dimension beyond the ordinary, beyond the humdrum, beyond the life and the body and the community that are a part of our everyday existence. And so we miss the Savior we actually have, the one from God, deep in our humanity. And Peter speaks and acts for us in this story of an Easter appearance: "It is good to be here"; let's stay, so we can remain in the presence of this "more," this "beyond." What a way to be transported, to be delivered from the ordinary!

And, each in his own way, Jesus' two conversation partners in the vision had the same longing. Moses: I led this people for forty years, God, and all they've done is grumble and moan because there was more meat in the soup back in Egypt. And now you say I'm impatient? that all I get is a look across the river at the promised land? that you're going to let Joshua take over? And for this I've climbed the mountain? Elijah: I've confessed your name, Lord, every time I said my own, Elijah/My God is Yahweh. Do you know what it's like to have a name like that, Lord? Here I am introducing myself to another person at the party; "How do you do?" he says. "My name's Ahab." "Hello," I say, "my God is Yahweh." I've worked hard, God, to keep Israel faithful, and nobody listens. And you say you're going to let Elisha take over? For this I've come to the mountain?

Well, each handed on the prophetic leadership work to a successor whose name was a confession that God was indeed in the rescuing business: Joshua/the LORD will save, Elisha/God is savior; yet the work went on; it wasn't finished.
God's work of salvation needed more than crossing the Jordan River into the promised land. It needed more than identifying those seven thousand faithful left in Israel.

As Luke tells it, it takes another mountain—and then some! "The mountain" he calls it, as if no other mountain could matter. And there God has Moses and Elijah do their pass-it-on routines again. Halos and all, they talk with Jesus (the LORD will save!) about the departure, the exodus that he is about to accomplish (fulfill, really) in Jerusalem. So Jesus plays Joshua to Moses, plays Elisha to Elijah. For God's work of salvation would go all the way, would be fulfilled by this one, by this one of whom the voice from the cloud says, "My son, my chosen one." Salvation will be fulfilled, all the way—all the way to the cross and death and hell. And that will take us to another mountain, Skull Hill, and a Friday that only a Redeeming God could call Good.

In Luke's version of the good news, it is just two paragraphs earlier that he has Jesus saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected, and be killed." That saying is what Moses and Elijah come to ratify. The exodus that will really accomplish salvation is the truth of a divine plan that has the chosen one die, go all the way to death—just like every other one of God's daughters and sons.

So the vision isn't the big deal; it's the clue about what the big deal is. The vision doesn't last. The voice evaporates with the cloud from which it came. The ancient worthies disappear. The tents do not get pitched. And Jesus and the three now wiser men come down from the mountain. Back to the valley. Back to the shadow. Back to the death. Back to what in the next paragraph is another son, another only child—who is possessed by an evil spirit that the disciples cannot exorcise. Jesus frees the boy, and when all are amazed at the majesty of God's salvation, Jesus reminds them: "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of folks who will kill him." Not by power. Not by might. But by surrender and submission and dying. So is the ultimate exodus accomplished—not by escape from humanity, but by utter humanness, by merely human dying. In Luke's unique way of telling the story, Jesus and the followers head on a journey to Jerusalem, a journey on which all the healings, all the teachings, all the forgivings, are a part of the completion of the exodus.

That is the great good news that can accompany us in the valley of the shadow of death that is our Lent. God will accomplish the divine work of salvation, in and by and for our merest humanity. God will be patient even with our impatience; God will bear, in Jesus, the ordinariness that we keep wanting escape from. When like the three we are heavy with sleep, heavy with our own notions of what a worthy salvation would be, God aims to get through to us, to unhook us from our phony fascinations and to hook us back into the cross of the Son, the Chosen One. For on that cross he died a fully human death; and the gospel is that in that dying he did in death, died death to death, and so offers us both a place in God's family and hope in our own valley of the shadow. The Gospel is that for us who by baptism have a share in Jesus' death and resurrection, the last word has already been spoken from the cloud: you, too, are my beloved, my chosen, my own dear one.

So we bid farewell today to Alleluia. Wednesday we begin Lent, begin it with the baptismal cross marked on our forehead, for a few hours more visible than when we see it only by faith. An ashen cross, so we can remember that it is our frail and mortal humanity that is the object of God's intense desire to save. "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." And only there, as dust-in-dust, shall you be saved. Forty days to meditate on our share in that exodus that Jesus accomplished at Jerusalem, forty days to get ready for the celebration of the center of our faith, forty days of repentance and discipline and reflection on the basic elements of the faith, forty days of being in the place once again of the catechumens to learn afresh the mystery of the faith: that God saves us in our ordinary human-ness, in our mere everydayness, here where we live and work and worry and toil, here where we wrestle daily with our mortality, where we face up to our dying—and seek to do so as Christ's faithful ones.

As you receive the Lord's body and blood today, receive it as your share in that exodus/departure he accomplished in Jerusalem. And rejoice that God is so overwhelmingly rich in grace that God does not put us off for our blindness nor abandon us for our impatience with the human ordinariness that is his good creation, but welcomes us, even us, at the Table of the Lord, and deigns to offer us along with Christ, as sharers in his sacrifice.

Armed with that promise and that faith, we come down from the mountains where we would escape from the ordinariness of our life. We come down from the mountains our self-importance builds. We come down from the mountains from which we seek some transfiguring glimpse into a realm beyond the one into which God has placed us. For a time, we bury our "Alleluia!" For a time, we abandon our "Glory to God in the highest!" For a time, we concentrate on the valley. We concentrate on the dying. We study repentance, and submission, and lowliness, and service. We study that wondrous exodus that Jesus accomplished—so that we may learn again our share in it, our share in his dying, and know that it is our death he died, that we might have our life in all its fullness in him.

What gets transformed, transfigured, then, is not that we escape from our humanity. It is that our humanity is now made really mere again, is made utterly human again. Thank God, for that is the place of God's salvation. There, thanks to the Son, the Chosen One, we can really live!

_In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit._
on cover—
The oil painting reproduced on the cover is by Roland D. Osborne (1904-1977), one of the last members of the Richmond Group, a loose collective of Indiana artists mostly active in the 1950's whose membership also included such noted Indiana painters as John Elwood Bundy and Edgar Forkner. Osborne did most of his work between the years of 1935 and 1955, choosing to use primarily oil paint and watercolor. An artist who was mostly self-taught, Osborne focused mainly on the landscape for his subject matter. He displayed his work on five different occasions between 1946 and 1951 at the Annual Exhibitions of the Work of Indiana Artists and Craftsmen at the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis and was one of the last persons to receive the John Herron Award, in 1959. His work is in numerous private collections, as well as in the collections of Indiana University, Depaul University, the Dayton Art Institute, and the Brauer Museum of Art.

We at the Brauer Museum of Art are grateful to Dr. James and Deborah Mathews for donating this fine piece by Osborne. The stylized hills and landscape elements, reminiscent in their appearance of the representational style seen in the art of Grant Wood, offer a view of the rural Indiana landscape that is peaceful and comforting to behold and contemplate.

on reviewers—

Conrad Ostwalt
is Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Appalachian State University and Professor of Religion and Culture. He teaches American religious traditions and has published four books on American religion and culture including his latest book, Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination (Trinity Press International, 2003). He lives and hikes with his wife, Mary, and daughter, Heather, in the North Carolina mountains.

on poets—

Sarah Rossiter
has published her poetry in various journals, including The Christian Century, The Sewanee Review, and The Southern Review.

Emily Wall
lives on a sailboat in the Pacific Northwest. Her poems have appeared in Wisconsin Review, Taproot, and River Oak Review.

Paul Willis
is professor of English at Westmont College. He has recently published How to Get There (Finishing Line Press, 2004) and The Deep and Secret Color of Ice (Small Poetry Press, 2003).
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John Dewey, Robert Maynard Hutchins, and Vocational Education
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The Lutheran University and Social Reform
Samuel Torvend

After Arson
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Tomasz Stanko Quartet
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Christmas Eve Traditions
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Honest Words
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Mark Helprin’s Freddy and Fredericka
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Valparaiso University