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The Practice of Hospitality in the Christian Academic Theater
John Steven Paul

The Lutheran University in the Twenty-First Century
Steven Schroeder

The Porch Roof Walk
Gary Fincke
THE CRESSET
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How Not to Choose a President

SOMETIME IN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, THE Democratic and Republican Parties will decide on their nominees for president. The schedule for this year’s nominating campaign is the earliest ever. The Iowa caucuses will be held on January 3, ten months before the general election. By the end of the first week of February, at least twenty-six states will have held primaries or caucuses, and, in all likelihood, both parties will know their eventually nominees by the morning of February 6.

As recently as the 1960s, the question of who the parties would nominate for president was not settled until the conventions in late summer. After 1968, the parties changed their rules to give more weight to primaries and caucuses, which meant that the matter was settled by the time the last primaries were held in May and June. Before long, states begin to jockey for position, moving their primaries earlier in the year to gain more influence. This meant that nominees in the 1980s and 1990s were determined as early as April or March. Then in 2002, the Democratic Party, worried that a long drawn out nominating campaign might hurt its general election chances, decided to allow states to hold their nominating contests in the first week of February. As more and more states chose to move up their contests, the Republicans decided to go along. The result is “Mega-Tuesday,” February 5, when voters in twenty-two states including California, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York will vote all at once.

This is, of course, utterly ridiculous.

If a cabal of misanthropic political scientists decided to design the worst possible primary election system, they could not have done much worse than the present system. The truth of the matter is that this year, the Republican and Democratic parties will choose their presidential candidates through an electoral process that will unfairly privileges residents in a few states, that will do nothing to blunt the electoral advantage held by candidates with the most name recognition and money, and that will be both too early and too short to engage and inform the voting public.

One of the most common complaints about the nominating system is the unfairness of the extra influence given to voters in Iowa and New Hampshire, but there once were good reasons for letting those two states vote first. If all states voted on the same day, the best-known, best-funded candidate would have won every time. But because the early contests were held in relatively small states where the art of retail politics was still possible, new faces, like Jimmy Carter in 1976, had a chance to break through with an early win. But this year, we are letting Iowa and New Hampshire vote first for no apparent reason. With this year’s compacted schedule, even if a lesser known candidate—for example, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee—breaks through in Iowa, there will not be enough time to raise the money or create the organization necessary to compete five days later in New Hampshire or even a month later on February 5. Mega-Tuesday will function as a de facto national primary, and a candidate who has not raised enough money before Iowa and New Hampshire to compete in it will not have enough time to do so after Iowa and New Hampshire.

Another advantage to the long, drawn-out nominating campaign of the 1970s and 1980s was that voters had much more time to become interested, learn about the candidates, and make up their minds about whom to support. This way, voters in larger, later-voting states would have time to learn something about lesser-known candidates who attracted media attention early in the process. This year, the nominating campaign will begin when no one is paying attention and end only a month later. After that point, both parties’ cam-
campaigns will largely shut down until the nominating convention. So even though this year's election will be longer than ever, most voters probably will end up with less exposure to the candidates and campaigns, and thus with less information on which to base an informed vote.

It is time to start a serious national conversation about fixing this process. I am, perhaps, the last remaining American political scientist with a soft spot for the Electoral College. By dividing our Presidential elections into fifty-one separate but concurrent races, the Electoral College system prevents any single set of issues or interests from dominating the process. And, while I recognize the virtues of a nominating system that creates an opportunity for retail politics and grassroots activism to make a difference, the current system does not do this. Even a direct national primary held in late spring or early summer would be better than the current system. Although a national primary would be dominated by the best-known, best-funded candidates, at least it would treat all voters equally and likely would do a better job at engaging and informing the entire voting public. Since citizens of every state could believe that their votes mattered, more would pay attention in the first place. And a later nominating season would lead directly into the summer conventions and fall campaigns, creating a longer period of sustained campaigning during which voters could learn about the candidates before casting their general election ballots in November.

Even better would be a system similar to that suggested by Harvard political scientist Thomas Patterson (see The Vanishing Voter, 2002). Patterson proposes a series of five single-state nominating contests spaced two-weeks apart and beginning no earlier than mid-April. This two and a half month nominating campaign would conclude with a national primary held in late June in all remaining states. This system still would privilege a few states with early contests, but this slight bias would be justified by the hope that early contests in smaller states and the more leisurely calendar would blunt the effects of money and name recognition as well as give lesser-known candidates a legitimate chance, something they almost certainly will not have in the absurdly frontloaded campaign of 2008.

A few thoughtful leaders from across the political spectrum are trying to fix this mess. Last summer, Senators Joe Lieberman (Independent), Lamar Alexander (Republican), and Amy Klobuchar (Democrat) introduced legislation to require the parties to adopt a series of four regional primaries. Several years ago, the Republican Party thought very seriously about creating a four-step system in which the smallest states would vote first, the next largest states would vote second, and so on. But in the run up to the 2000 election, party leaders and the George W. Bush campaign feared a nasty floor fight over the plan at their nominating convention, so they scrapped it. Neither of these plans was perfect. It is not clear that a lesser known candidate would be able to compete in either a regional primary or in a group of elections held on the same day in states all over the country, but either plan would be better than our current system.

What is missing is not good ideas, but sufficient will among our political and party leaders to carry them out. As is usually the case in American politics, nothing can be done absent the cooperation of a variety of competing interest groups and of multiple levels of government. We have not yet reached the moment when all of those groups will be ready to cooperate and find a better way of doing things. Until we convince our leaders that we will no longer tolerate the status quo, we never will.

—JPO
The Arlin G. Meyer Prize is awarded annually to a full-time faculty member from a college or university in the Lilly Fellows Program National Network whose work exemplifies the practice of the Christian artistic or scholarly vocation in relation to any pertinent subject matter or literary and artistic style. The 2007 Prize has been awarded to the author of a work that emerges from his or her practice of the vocation of the Christian scholar in the humanities, in accord with the principles and ideals of the Lilly Fellows Program. In subsequent years, the Meyer Prize will honor those who practice in the fields of non-fiction, creative fiction, performance art, and music. The $3000 prize honors Arlin G. Meyer, Professor Emeritus of English at Valparaiso University, who served as program director of the Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts from its inception in 1991 until his retirement in 2002.

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By Gilbert Meilaender,
Phyllis and Richard Duesenberg Professor of Christian Ethics, Valparaiso University
Eerdmans, 2006
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Softcover: $16.00

Finalists

Practicing Morality
By Christopher Dusting,
Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy,
College of the Holy Cross, and Joanna Ziegler, Professor in the Department of Visual Art,
College of the Holy Cross
Palgrave Macmillan, 2005
ISBN: 0230600913
Softcover: $24.95

Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel
By Jo-Ann Brant, Chair, Department of Bible, Religion, and Philosophy,
Goshen College
Hendrickson Publishers, 2004
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Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England
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Oxford University Press, 2006
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The Gift of Story: Narrating Hope in a Postmodern World
By Emily Griswold, Professor of English, Azusa Pacific University, and Mark Eaton, Professor of English, Azusa Pacific University
Baylor University Press, 2006
ISBN: 1932792473
Softcover: $39.95

“Women, Religion, and Insanity in Mary Lamb’s ‘The Young Mahometan’”
By Julie Straight,
Assistant Professor of English,
Northwest Nazarene University
The Practice of Hospitality in the Christian Academic Theater

Though our word “hospitality,” the welcoming of strangers, is rooted in Old French and Latin, the custom can be traced to the earliest recorded history. In the Odyssey, Telemachus, Odysseus’ son, seeking the whereabouts of his father is welcomed as a stranger into the homes of the Greek kings Nestor and Menelaus. Welcome to stranger was such an important part of the Greek social code that it was said to be protected by the Father God Zeus, patron and protector of hosts and guests. For hosts to welcome guests and guests to respect their hosts was to honor the god. Conversely, for a guest to violate his host, the way the Trojan guest Paris did his Greek host Menelaus, was to invite disastrous divine retribution.

The landscape that gave birth to the three great monotheistic religions produced in their adherents a great emphasis on the virtue of hospitality. In the Koran as in the Hebrew and Christian bibles, the mistreatment of strangers is a sure way to incur divine wrath (Schulman and Barkouki). In successive stories of hospitality in Genesis 18–19, Abraham welcomes three strangers and gives them a lavish feast. The Lord God is among them, and he promises that Sarah will bear Abraham a son. When two of the three strangers go down to Sodom, Abraham’s nephew Lot urges them to stay with him in his house where he protects them from the predatory Sodomites. In response, the strangers, who are revealed as angels of the Lord, save Lot and his family from the destruction of Sodom. In both of these stories, the strangers who are welcomed reciprocate with benefices and in Sodom, Lot protects his guests from harm.

New Testament writers portrayed Jesus as a gracious host welcoming undesirables who were unlikely to receive welcome from others in their own towns, but Jesus was also “a vulnerable and needy stranger... a homeless infant, a child refugee, an adult with no place to lay his head, a despised convict” (Pohl 17). When the travelers on the road to Emmaus welcomed the stranger into their home for a meal, he opened their eyes and they recognized him as the Messiah. (Luke 24: 30–31)

In her 1999 book entitled Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, Christine Pohl writes that “hospitality to needy strangers distinguished the early church from its surrounding environment... but after the first centuries... grand hospitality became an important means for extending power and influence in the church, the monastery, and lay society. Hospitality was often deliberately connected to the host’s ambition and advantage (Pohl 33–34). Pohl goes on to say that for a number of reasons, the ancient idea of welcoming the stranger as a normative (moral) practice “got lost” in the eighteenth century and public institutions—hospitals, inns, asylums—on the one hand, and individual homes, on the other took on the functions of hospitality, while the church became less involved.

In Pohl’s view, the term “hospitality” has, by now, lost its moral dimension and, in the process, most Christians have lost touch with the amazingly rich and complex tradition of hospitality. When we think of hospitality, we think about welcoming friends or members of our family into our home for good food and pleasant conversation. Or we think of the “hospitality industry” of hotels and restaurants which are open to strangers if they have money or credit cards. Perhaps larger churches come to mind with their ‘hospitality committees’ that coordinate the coffee hour, greet visitors, or help with the parking” (4).

Pohl (and Ana Maria Pineda in Practicing Our Faith) writes in terms of recovering the practice of Christian hospitality, looking back to the early church, when hospitality to the least, without expectation of benefit or repayment, remained the normative commitment (Pohl 35, Pineda 42).
Hospitality in the Theater

Hospitality in the world of the theater is, essentially, actors welcoming people, many if not all of whom are strangers, into a place of performance. The ancient Greeks honored their god Dionysus through this practice of hospitality and, perhaps, other gods have been honored by theatrical events as well. Of course, actors also welcome strangers, because without audiences there would be no theater event. Actors, designers, technicians, and directors need audiences to complete their art. And, the artists of the theater want spectators not only to come, but they also want them to come back, again and again. Insofar as actors need audiences, perhaps we are not talking here about hospitality at all. At least we must allow that being hospitable to theater audiences is a self-interested practice.

Most people work hard and effectively to be hospitable to the equivalent of what Christine Pohl identifies as the most common recipients of contemporary hospitality: family, friends, and influential contacts. Those of us involved with theater use the language of home and family when talking about our theaters. The theater is our home, we live here—whether we like it or not—and when we are not working on a show we feel almost homeless. The theater community is like our family. It is natural, therefore, for us to welcome people (many of them strangers) to the theater as if we were welcoming them to our home to be with our family, to entertain them, and to serve them a delightful and nourishing artistic “meal,” if you will. We seek to make friends of some of our audience member who may even help us in time of financial need or special projects. At Valparaiso University we had, for a long time, a group called “The Friends of Theatre.” We count the university faculty, active and emeritus, as “friends,” as well.

Actors also welcome strangers, because without audiences there would be no theater event. Actors, designers, technicians, and directors need audiences to complete their art. And, the artists of the theater want spectators not only to come, but they also want them to come back, again and again.

And I also will confess to being deeply gratified when an influential contact like a member of the board of directors, the mayor, or a prominent alumnus is in our audience.

The visible expressions of hospitality in our academic theater programs are numerous. They include the little things like providing a place for an audience member to hang up her coat and the big things like building a theater facility with a commodious lobby, nearby parking, ample, comfortable restrooms, and good seating for the physically disabled. They may be as simple as choosing reader friendly colors of ink and type sizes for the theater program (or season brochure) or as complicated as arranging pre-show seminars and post-show discussions. They may be as humane as friendly and competent ushers or as technical as a public address system that is loud and clear or signs that direct people to the appropriate entrance to the auditorium. They may be as non-debatable as whether or not to heat the theater in winter and air condition it in summer or as controversial as choosing plays with potentially offensive language, situations, or subject matter.

Such efforts at hospitality as these are very important and, arguably, theater people know how to do them better than others. Indeed, we are specialists, experts in the art of hospitality, and we have much to teach other event planners. But if Calvin College or Wheaton College or Valparaiso University dedicates time, energy, and resources to these expressions of hospitality, so, certainly, do Western Michigan University, Northern Illinois University, and Purdue University. In other words, there is nothing particularly Christian about these expressions of hospitality.

What would it mean for us as Christian theater professors to practice, consciously and
intentionally, “Christian hospitality?” Recall that Christine Pohl distinguishes that practice of Christian hospitality as that extended to the poor and neediest, the ones who could not return the favor” (6). I submit that to practice Christian hospitality in our theaters would 1) link our programs more closely to the missions of our Christian colleges; 2) truly distinguish our programs from state and secular private colleges and universities; and 3) open up new avenues of artistic and pedagogical programming.

It would be naïve to suggest that simply because we produce theater in Christian colleges and universities we live out the Christian practices of hospitality. Can we say with confidence that we practice Christian hospitality; i.e. that we are welcoming the poor and needy to our theater homes and giving them sustenance with no thought of reciprocation? The answer to this question depends on how we define “poor and needy.” The vast majority of audiences at the Valparaiso University do not qualify as poor and needy, in the economic sense. About forty percent of our audiences are comprised of students who pay, depending on financial aid packages, between $15,000 and $35,000 per year to attend the university. Another thirty-five percent of our audience is university faculty and their families. They are, for the most part, not poor either, but, just in case, we give them free tickets. The remainder of the audience is made up of community folk and visitors. It is rare when any of them appear to be poor and needy.

Nevertheless, I would submit further that though Christian hospitality practiced in a church, a convent, or a monastery cannot be wholly appropriated and expected to function in a theater and that theater art may in some ways be anti-hospitable, there are ways of thinking about and doing theater in the spirit of Christian hospitality that accord with artistic integrity or artistic mission that will honor our God and respond to the words of Jesus: when you did it to the least of these members of my family, you did it to me.

Two Complicating Truths

Before I address the question of whether we can practice Christian hospitality in the Christian academic theater, let me introduce two truths about the theater that I know. First, acting is by definition an inhospitable art form. It has been said that theater is as much about hiding as it is about showing; that is, actors work hard to control audiences’ access to them (Goldman 35 ff). Consider, for a moment, the elaborate rigging systems of drops, wings, legs, grad drapes, teasers, and tormenters, all designed to protect the actor from casual visibility. Or consider the vocabulary we have for showing space and hiding space: “on stage,” “off stage,” “back stage,” “front-of house.” At our theater we tape out the sightlines on the stage floor, we open the house only when everyone is hidden off stage, we forbid the actors to socialize with the audience while they are in costume.

The convention of the “fourth wall,” the invisible wall separating the audience from the actors, is largely out of fashion now, but we live and work in its legacy, especially when we mount realistic plays. Playing directly to the audience, including them in the world of the play, is still thought to be wrong in productions of Ibsen, Chekhov, O’Neill and the long line of their Realistic successors. It was Constantin Stanislavski who raised conscious, unbroken communion among actors on stage to the level of cardinal principle, and thanks to the Actors Studio the idea became the rule for American actors and acting teachers. Even in the anti-illusionistic or presentational theater of the twentieth century, the principle of the ensemble reigns. Being a member of the cast, the company, the troupe brings with it the privilege of inclusion and the right to exclude. The ensemble knows, has faith in, and believes in certain “scenic” truths that the rest of us can only wonder about. As audience, we are admitted to the world of the play at the actors’ pleasure.

Actors are the opposite of good hosts. Indeed, the power of the actor lies in his strangeness. “Is it not monstrous,” asks Hamlet, “that this player here, / But in a fiction, in a dream of passion / Could force his soul so to his own conceit?” (II.ii). Michael Goldman attributes to the actor a kind of uncanniness about acting, akin to the uncanniness of the mask—a mingling of the animate and the inanimate, a projection of human energy beyond normal bounds, as in mediumship or ventriloquism” (9). David Cole compares the actor to a shaman who goes to the realm of the gods and returns possessed to play for his mesmerized audience. In the theatrical transaction, we might ask who is host
and who is stranger. Is it the audience/host who lets the actor/stranger in and gives him shelter?

This question of who is guest and who is host points to the second truth that complicates our efforts to be hospitable. Sorting out the question of who is host and who is guest in the theater is hard to do. For college theater professors who produce theater, it seems obvious that the audiences are our guests. We play the role of hosts who have invited our audience-guests to our theater-home where we entertain them in as much comfort as we can muster.

But theater costs money to produce. In the commercial theater, the audience pays enough money in tickets to give the actors the wherewithal to perform. Now who is the host? In the case of resident theaters such as the Guthrie in Minneapolis or the Goodman in Chicago, the audience pays only part of the cost with the balance made up by corporations, foundations, and government entities. Who is the host and who the guest in that arrangement?

Who is the host and who the guest in the college theater? The college certainly owns the theater facility and pays for the production, including the salaries of the faculty artists. Are not the audiences, then, the college’s guests? What are the college’s responsibilities regarding hospitality toward its guests?

Does the college in some sense play host to the theater, its faculty, staff, and operation? Does the college in the persons of its administrators bear the responsibility for welcoming theater artists—faculty and students—and protecting them?

And, at my university, we are often reminded that our donors ultimately make all the university’s operations possible. In this sense, are the donors hosts and all of us their guests? Until they come into the theater and then they are our guests and... well, you get an idea of how complicated this is.

The incomplete series of permutations listed above illustrates the interdependence of college constituencies: donors, faculty, guarantors, parents, students, and members of the community(ies). In this circumstance, hospitality is not a line from host to guest, but a matrix of hosts and guests with any given individual being at once guest and host. Commitment to Christian hospitality is a commitment on the part of the entire college community to welcome one another into life-giving and life-sustaining networks of relations.

**Christian Hospitality in the Christian Academic Theater**

Now let us address directly the question of whether the practice of Christian hospitality really fits in the context of the Christian College Theater. In *Making Room*, Christine Pohl lists the qualities, the requirements if you will, of Christian hospitality.

When we offer hospitality to strangers, we welcome them into a place to which we are somehow connected—a space that has meaning and value to us. This is often our home, but it also includes church, community, nation, and various other institutions. In hospitality, the stranger is welcomed into a safe, personal, and comfortable place of respect and acceptance and friendship. Even if only briefly, the stranger is included in a life-giving and life-sustaining network of relations. Such welcome involves attentive listening and a mutual sharing of lives and life stories. It requires an openness of heart, a willingness to make one’s life visible to others, and a generosity of time and resources. (13)

Do our theaters “qualify” as one of Christine Pohl’s “other institutions” who offer Christian hospitality to strangers? If we were to abstract from this package a checklist by which we could evaluate our theaters as centers of or opportunities for Christian hospitality, certainly we could check off the box marked “welcome strangers into a place to
which we are somehow connected, a space that has meaning and value to us.”

But are our theaters,

1. safe, personal, and comfortable places of respect and acceptance and friendship?

2. places where our audiences are welcomed into life-giving and life-sustaining networks of relations?

3. places where there are opportunities for attentive listening, on our parts, and mutual sharing of lives and life stories?

4. places that manifest an openness of heart, a willingness to make one's life visible to others, and a generosity of time and resources?

Such a list should give us pause. How does what the theater offers to strangers compare with Christine Pohl's constituents of Christian hospitality? Do the hospitable practices of the Christian college theater accord with the practice of Christian hospitality? Do such expressions of Christian hospitality fit with a theater program’s mission? Not in every case.

But it would be an interesting exercise and useful heuristic device to conceive our theaters as places of Christian hospitality according to this list. If we did this, I believe we would find that each of Pohl's assertions would have to be re-imagined in the context of the theater. Some would align comfortably with theater practice; others would exist in tension with the pedagogical and artistic commitments of our theater programs.

For example, is a theater, Christian or not, a safe, personal, and comfortable place of respect and acceptance and friendship? We could spend a day or so just unpacking the phrase safe, personal, and comfortable. If we were welcoming needy strangers to our homes—travelers whose car had broken down in the middle of the night, neighbors previously unknown to us whose house had been ravaged by storm or flood, children suddenly bereft of their parents—we would make a safe and comfortable place for them and extend them personal care. But what does it mean to be safe in a theater? We can make people physically safe, from fire, for example, but must we always make them psychically safe, intellectually and emotionally safe as well? We can invest in comfortable theater seats, but are not certain plays composed to discomfit audiences? By ensuring the safety and comfort of strangers do we risk shutting the door against ideas that we or our friends might find strange: revolutionary political ideas, morally ambiguous ideas, anti-or non-Christian religious ideas, or the ever strange “alternative lifestyle.”

Some of us are not free to choose plays for production that are by someone's definition “unsafe” or “uncomfortable.” Those of us who have the freedom to choose plays and who desire to make our theaters safe, personal, and comfortable places of respect and acceptance and friendship have the opportunity to respect our audience's sensibilities, accept our audiences for who they are, and to befriend them. We may not always choose safe and comfortable plays, but we must never underestimate the power of the theater, and what Michael Goldman calls the terrific power of actors (Goldman 7), to frighten, offend, or appall as well as charm and delight. As hospitable friends, we at least will prepare our audiences for what they are about to see and discuss what they have seen with them afterward. In this way, we will be hospitable to our art and our audience.

The Mission of the Academic Theater

Does the theater—commercial, not-for-profit, academic, or Christian academic—fit into Pohl's list of “other” institutions, “home . . . church, community, nation, and various other institutions,” that can, as part of their mission, practice hospitality and, beyond that, Christian hospitality? As institutions, theaters are fundamentally different from “homes, churches, religious communities.” We have our eyes open to the possibility that when and if we adopt practices of Christian hospitality, we could become confused about what the theater is and uncritically appropriate practices better fitted to other kinds of institutions.

At the same time, the college theater is not the same as the Goodman or the Steppenwolf Theatre or the local profit-seeking dinner theater, or, for that
matter, the local community theater, all of whom are committed to artistic integrity to some degree, but whose missions are different from ours.

Before we can adopt practices of Christian hospitality, we must clarify and articulate the pedagogical and artistic missions from which our commitments, including our commitment to Christian hospitality will proceed. Many theater professionals are linked to institutions whose primary mission is the education of undergraduate students. These undergraduates, most of whom are eighteen to twenty-two years of age, act on our stages, attend our classes, studios, and laboratories, work in our craft shops, and, I earnestly hope, make up the largest portion of our theater audiences. And, it is the nature of our profession that 1) we meet them for the first time as strangers, 2) our association with the great majority of them during the time that they are at our colleges is as strangers, and, 3) again for the majority, when they move on as graduates, or transfers, or simply having changed their minds, we will never relate to them again. These you young people are strangers on the road from somewhere to some place. And, they are needy. I would even say they are hungry.

For what do they hunger? In his essay “The Holy Theatre,” Peter Brook reports on a tiny attic in a Düsseldorf ruined by Allied bombs where “fifty people crammed together while in the inches of remaining space a handful of the best actors resolutely continued to practise their art... in Germany that winter, as in London a few years before, the theatre was responding to a hunger” (44). In his book The Actor’s Freedom, Michael Goldman writes that “drama exists to satisfy a profound and largely unexplored human appetite, the appetite for acting—and to satisfy it means to make what goes beyond actor and audience deeper, more sustained, more exciting and complete. [...] I see the joint activity of actor and audience as a means by which man [sic] attempts to complete his relation to the world, especially to everything in the world that strikes him as dangerous and strange” (3).

Is theater food? Are these strangers hungry? Are we in the theater feeding hungry strangers? I worry that we are in the comparatively comfortable realm of simile and analogy. Can we claim that our audiences are made up of needy strangers?

What do they need, these strangers? For what, in Peter Brook’s words, do they hunger? At first—you know this from your own experiences—they are in need of welcome. Despite our various attempts at orientation, they are strangers in a strange place perhaps sharing a small room, for the first time in their life, with another stranger. Then, they are in need of opportunities to survey the world and its people; to think about what others have thought and said and written; to see what others have painted and sculpted, and acted, and danced, and played; and to try these things for themselves. They need initiation into disciplines, rituals, and practices. They, desperately, need imagination to free them from the shackles of the world as it is (so often glamorized and celebrated in popular culture) and to see the world as it could be. It is their need for welcome, opportunity, initiation, and imagination that the college theater is well-equipped to serve.

There is much more that could be said about Christian hospitality and the Christian academy. We should, for example, not always equate “place” with a building or even a location. Theater people know how to create places anywhere: on gymnasium floors, in churches, in prisons, on the street—think of the Commedia dell’Arte!—and can extend hospitality from any of those places.

In closing, let me remind you, that we are blessed to have the Word of the Lord to command and guide our hospitable practice:

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited
you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matt 25).

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Notes

1. Telemachus’s meetings with the two kings also allow Homer to explore the idea of xenia, or hospitality. The social code of ancient Greece demanded that one show kindness to strangers in unfamiliar regions by welcoming them into one’s home. This social expectation of hospitality was so culturally important that it was believed to be enforced by Zeus, the king of the gods. Here, both Nestor and Menelaus offer their guest a warm welcome even before they learn Telemachus’s identity. Homer also emphasizes how impressed Menelaus is with his guest’s discretion and tact (“Not even an older man could speak and do as well” [4.228]). This piety and respect for the social norms enforced by the gods contrasts sharply with the suitors’ careless plundering of Telemachus’s home in Ithaca in Books 1 and 2. While Telemachus strictly observes every divine law, the suitors carouse with wanton abandon, uninvited, in his home. While Telemachus impresses his hosts, the suitors plot to murder theirs. This exploration of the idea of hospitality thus provides a background against which the contrast between the suitors and Telemachus is sharpened, a contrast already emphasized by the frequent repetition of the story of Agamemnon.


3. Much later, Macbeth would reference his responsibility to King Duncan in similar words:

   He’s here in double trust;
   First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
   Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
   Who should against his murderer shut the door,
   Not bear the knife myself.
4. In *The Seven Ages of the Theatre*, Richard Southern seeks the essence of the theater by “stripping the onion.” According to Southern, the most recent accretion is scenery, then the auditorium, next the stage platform, then costume and mask. “Remove these and there will probably fall apart two separate pieces, leaving nothing inside; those two pieces would be the Player and the Audience. Take these apart and you can have no theatre” (21).

5. Peter Brook wrote, “The only thing that all forms of theatre have in common is the need for an audience.” (127).

6. This is to say nothing of the situation in the commercial theater, where the actors’ livelihood depends on paying patrons attending and returning.

7. See “Communion” in Constantin Stanislavski, *The Actor Prepares* (1936). It is interesting to compare the idea of “communion” in the theater with the idea of communion in the church. In certain church bodies there is an enforceable difference between “communicant” and “non-communicant.”

8. Cf. the mirror exercises of Viola Spolin.

9. Think of Edward Albee’s *The Goat* or Euripides’ *The Bacchae*.

**BAKER**

The bus releases you beside the bakery at 5 AM. His light’s on. You can smell the secret life of bread — its russet brawny shoulders rising in the pan, yeast swelling, yearning to be croissants, pretzels, braided rounds of challah. You give the baker money, he gives you a loaf. Neither of you say the mystery you share like lovers. You shyly nod and bear your emptiness to work in empty hands. Whatever it is, you can’t explain the only thing that matters. You break his bread at noon and fling it toward frozen ducks on the millpond. So insufficient — what you have been. You want to be bread broken.

Jeanne Murray Walker
Nothing Lutheran is Our Subject Matter
The Lutheran University in the Twenty-First Century

At its heart, Lutheran theology is a servant theology, a theology of the cross grounded on the confession that God entered into human form and died. This theology proclaims what Thomas Sheehan terms “the absolute absence of God,” the paradoxically good news that God has wholly disappeared into humanity. This has special significance for the university as a place of openness rather than a factory in which to reproduce culture, a museum in which to preserve it, or a fortress from which to protect it. In this regard, repeating what was said by Luther, Melanchthon, or other architects of the Lutheran Reformation (and hence the Lutheran university) would leave the university as little more than a sixteenth century curiosity. This approach would be suitable, perhaps, for a museum piece, but hardly is an appropriate guide for a Lutheran university in the twenty-first century. Repeating what they did, however, may be another matter.

I. A Practice, Not an Idea

Discussions of the Lutheran university routinely underplay a key dimension of the history of Lutheranism as a social movement: the movement started with a public academic exercise in the context of a catholic university situated in a local community. When we locate the beginning of Lutheranism, we turn to the public posting of academic theses, not to sermons, trials, excommunications, creeds—and not to the theses themselves. Sermons, trials, excommunications, and creeds are all derivative from the academic act—an important piece of information if we are to think of a “Lutheran” academy and, more importantly, if we propose to be one. Lutheranism is creeded, but it is also deedied. Deed and creed are rooted in academic practice that is public, not private, catholic, not sectarian.

In the spirit of Luther’s academic act, I offer five theses for public debate. Academic theses acquire their edges at intersections of description and prescription, observation and action, as imperatives under the form of declaratives. They are little confessions—not simple description in a distorted world but also not the imposition of order by an act of will. This leads to a cautionary note about Lutheranism and secularism. Strictly speaking, Lutheranism is not Lutheran, nor is secularism secular. Secularism is religious, and Lutheranism is idolatrous. Lutheran practice—which is cheerfully, thoroughly, and unapologetically secular—rejects both, partly via the academic act referenced earlier, which is also implicated in both.

Departing from tradition in what could be construed as two typically postmodern breaches of etiquette, I will not assign these theses to a graduate student for defense, and I will intersperse comments that are fragments of an essay which anticipates response rather than waiting for it. My justification for this method is that I have entered into the middle of a conversation, as a student not a master. Though they invite debate, these theses are not intended to start so much as to join. Hence, the theses are composed by a student, not a master; rebuttal may appear prior to refutation; and the cart may appear before the horse—all directional artifacts that can be creatively addressed by turning around.

One of the chief obstacles to conversation about Lutheran universities is that we have no idea what a university is. To qualify something about which we have no idea as “Lutheran” is to identify nothing Lutheran as our subject matter. That may not be a bad thing. With due respect to Cardinal Newman, it is not an “idea” we need but a practice.

II. Five Theses

1. A college is a community of scholars. This means that if we are to speak of a college, we will need to attend to the meaning of “community” and
what it means to be a “scholar.” The term “scholar” too often has been associated with elitism and exclusion, and communities too often have been defined by literal or figurative walls, including walls erected by language. Though these associations bear the mark of historical convention, they are often treated as historical necessities.

2. A university is a college of colleges. This runs counter to historical development, in which universities came first, but the constitution of universities as colleges of colleges by forming colleges within public institutions is instructive. It represents formation of communities in an act of recognition that is also an act of transformation: old institutions are made new.

3. The term “Lutheran,” as a modifier, denotes a disciplined rhythm of freedom and obligation. It has not, of course, always been used this way. I take it as deriving most authentically from the paradox near the beginning of Luther’s essay on the freedom of a Christian: the Christian is a perfectly free lord, subject to none; the Christian is a perfectly bound slave, subject to all. A community characterized by disciplined rhythm of freedom and obligation is “Lutheran,” and such a community is quintessentially academic: academic freedom depends on disciplined practice.

4. To be characterized by disciplined rhythm of freedom and obligation, a community must be engaged in the world. This is to assert that obligation arises in relation to other people—and that the same may be said, though less self-evidently, of freedom. Where other people exist (and as Frank Zappa noted, we are the other people), freedom and obligation—along with their disciplined rhythm—become possible. Without a world of other people, they do not. To say “we” is to enter into the world, and, though it is not my purpose to make the argument here, it is not possible fully and truly to say “I” without also saying “we.” (On this point, cf. Agnes Heller, who notes that the “we” is that through which “I” am.) A Lutheran community, therefore, must be engaged in the world. In the traditional sense of the term, this means that a Lutheran community is “secular” by definition. It abandons the monastery understood as an enclosed place separate from the world, but it does not abandon community or discipline. It is not merely coincidental that universities emerged out of schools formed at intersections of monasteries with the world (an intersection that arose because the monastery as an institution denied the separation by the fact of its location) or that their emergence coincided with definitions of academic discipline with which we still live in universities, though not always comfortably. This is an example of a creative boundary, and it locates the Lutheran church in the same movement that gave rise to the friars, preaching orders constituted in engagement with, not separation from, the world. Friars took the gospel on the road and formed universities by walking from the monastery toward the city. At their best, they took their orders with them as they plunged into unruly crowds and initiated a process in which the rigid distinction between “sacred” and “secular” was obliterated. Out of the grandstand, as Luther suggested, into the arena.

5. As a result, Lutheran community is not “secular” in the traditional sense so much as it is incognito in the way Kierkegaard deployed the term. As God disappears into humanity, the Lutheran community disappears into the world, not by abandoning faith but by practicing it. To be set apart would require abandoning faith in favor of religiosity, replacing a theology of the cross with a theology of glory. Jesus, you will recall, did not come down and save himself when invited to do so.

III. Here Comes Everybody

To disappear into the world by practicing faith rather than losing it is to relinquish control, not discipline. To illustrate, I direct your attention to compositional/performative processes identified with John Cage’s musicircus.

Responding to a proposal by the Stanford Humanities Center to sponsor a performance of his music, Cage suggested a musicircus along lines defined in many performances since the first such performance at the University of Illinois in 1967. In this case, he described the musicircus as “as much music as can be played by all those who are willing to perform without being paid. No entrance ticket or payments. Loud and soft. Serious and popular. Young and old. Student recitals. Church choirs. Athletics or dance…” (Junkerman, 40). In his discussion of the musicircus, Charles Junker-
man follows Cage's lead and takes it up as a model of "new forms of living together." As Junkerman describes the Stanford performance, all the space in the large building where it was staged was used. Neither beginning nor ending was marked, except by a three-hour time limit imposed at Cage's suggestion, based on his wish to perform a piece called Muoyce, which is about two hours long, during the circus. Referring to the particular performance in question (but, more generally, to the genre as a whole), Junkerman notes that "the Musicircus was... a work of art collectively performed according to broadly acknowledged, if unobtrusive, formal and generic rules; everyone who came knew how to behave to achieve the desired effect of formlessness." (41). Junkerman's point, and my reason for directing your attention to his commentary and description, is that rules function in this performance as a "via negativa" and "take us into unexplored territory, into that experiential space where Cage believes we find 'new forms of living together'" (42)—something that we do not already know and that we do not understand.

Most generally, only two rules are imposed: the performance takes place in a space that is artificially delimited, and there is a time limit. Flyers advertising the event described it as filling the space (with "wall-to-wall music" and "ceiling-to-floor sound") and as being continuous—but the invitation is to come (and presumably to go) "when you like." Though the whole performance takes place within a defined space and time, individual audience members determine when to show up, as well as when and where to go. That Cage himself was performing "during" the circus created a "center" of sorts that Norman O. Brown criticized as a "star performance," a celebration of decenteredness "on what is fundamentally a very centered occasion" (Junkerman, 51). Cage delighted in paradox, so a centered occasion for celebration of decenteredness is not such a surprising thing. Isn't that one way to think of a performance—or a class? But those who showed up to hear Cage hardly "knew how to behave to achieve the desired effect of formlessness." They did not have to, and that is the beauty of Cage's circus. If the rules work, the effect is achieved whether participants are conscious of them or not—and without a single center of control. A single center of control, in fact, would positively subvert the performance (hence Brown's criticism, which would not be a criticism otherwise). Junkerman understands the centered celebration of decenteredness as a kind of koan, and he notes the blend of confusion, rapt attention, and enlightenment that is typical of audience response to performance of Cage's compositions. Where a center forms or threatens to form, one function of the performer is to shatter it.

For my purposes here, it is most important to note that the delimitation of space and time, and the gathering of diverse participants into delimited space and time, function as disciplines, even without the imposition of further rules.

"We need a plan," Cage suggested in a symposium on biology and the history of the future, "that will leave us free to do what we are capable of doing." In his life's work, this led to relentless experimentation with disciplines to assist him in getting his ego out of the way so that he could participate in a set larger than the one he alone comprised. As he put it more than once, what interested him in music was something that he did not understand. That interest drove him to shatter boundaries presumed to exist between performer and audience, composer and performer, composer and audience. His work enlisted—even, paradoxically, conscripted—audiences and bystanders into processes of performance and composition (more famously, perhaps, in a piece like 4'33", than in the musicircus).
Cage developed a sort of music that could not be interrupted, and that is an intriguing theological/pedagogical model of inclusion.

Cage's aesthetic was informed by Buddhism, not Lutheranism. But there is a common kenotic center formed by the insistence that neither our will nor our work alone is free, and there is a common attention to the hard discipline of shattering the confidence with which we seek to make them so. Luther's crucified God is not the nothing of Zen, nor is Paul's *kenosis*; but Cage's confidence in the music of the world and his construction of disciplines with which to let it sing are instructive if we would understand how a crucified God might inform practices of liberal education. Liberal education is education for freedom, and the "arts" with which it has come to be associated are disciplines that empower us to practice freedom where grasping after it has rendered it unrecognizable. Cage was criticized by some activists when, at the height of the anti-Vietnam War movement, he said, "Don't try to change the world: you'll only make it worse." Significantly, Thich Nhat Hanh, widely recognized as a leader of the peace movement in Vietnam, was saying something remarkably similar at the time. Luther's intellectual offspring have struggled continuously with quietism and accusations of quietism as they have sought to implement an ethic that denies the power of work to save while it insists on the absolute necessity of a faith that works.

IV. Nothing at the Core

The conversation about centered occasions for the celebration of decenteredness is most relevant to the ongoing discussion of "core" requirements and "general" education at liberal arts institutions, including Lutheran ones. We make a wrong turn in our quest for "new forms of living together" when we seek to center educational practice on a core defined by generality or content—or both. The question is not what every liberally educated graduate should know, but whether we can find the *via negativa* that will enable us not to.

Long before Luther and the Reformation, Scholastic theologians began appending the formula "with the understanding that it could be otherwise" to their academic pronouncements. At its best, this was not an expression of uncertainty but an affirmation of possibility. At its worst, scholastic education silenced the formula, followed a script, and pronounced one sentence after another. To the extent that Luther's reform flowed out of renaissance humanism, it responded to the resulting dogmatism. For those confronted with sentences uttered as though they could not be otherwise, the university provided a (not always comfortable) place in which to insist with confidence that they could.

My intention is not to obscure the extent to which European universities functioned as vocational schools. They prepared priests (and, to a lesser extent, doctors and attorneys), and they did this by ensuring that sentences were pronounced in unison by teachers and graduates. There are spectacular examples of critical teachers and students who paid a price for suggesting otherwise—Heloise comes to mind, and, with her, Abelard. There is overwhelming evidence that universities have functioned efficiently as enforcers of orthodoxy in a remarkable variety of times and places.

Nor is my intention to suggest that Luther or Lutherans have been exemplars of liberal-mindedness. That we have been otherwise with appalling consistency is one of the most important arguments for a characteristically Lutheran contribution to the broad stream of humanist education. That contribution can be formulated as a modification of the Scholastic formula cited above. Not only might it be otherwise, it must be. This is also a paraphrase of Luther's description of the paradoxical freedom of the Christian. The "must" affirms our human fallenness. We are always, as Kierkegaard noted, in the wrong vis-à-vis God. The "might" affirms our human possibility, by a gift of God's grace, we are (also) always in the right.

The "Lutheran" challenge for liberal education is to locate education for liberation right in the middle of the sentence. If education for freedom happens, it happens in an unfree context where containment, not liberation, is the order of the day.

And this is why I look for a university that is a variation on Cage's circus—a house full of music that lets us hear the world sing.

That may seem like an overly exuberant background for recapitulation of liberal arts formulated in large part more than two thousand years ago.
But these arts contain possibility, and it would be a shame to abandon them. Cage's compositions routinely employ facilitators to keep performers moving through densely complex scores. The liberal arts play a similar role in even more densely complex worlds that have not been scored.

In the formulation that was traditional by Luther's time, there were seven liberal arts, divided into a group of three and a group of four. The group of three (trivium) was foundational: grammar, logic, rhetoric. The group of four (quadrivium) was erected on their foundation: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. The foundational trivium most clearly identifies "arts" that are put into play in what, to modern eyes, look (with the exception of music) like the "sciences" of the quadrivium. The arts of the trivium are concerned with language and communication, while the sciences of the quadrivium take up the matter of structure and organization—or, more properly, the construction of matter in motion—in the physical worlds we inhabit. Together, these arts equip us to find our ways in linguistic/symbolic worlds on the one hand and physical worlds on the other. It is worth noting the fine line between finding our ways and knowing our place. That line marks a critical difference between education for freedom and education as a mechanism of control. Being able to find our way is essential if we are to resist simply being put in our place.

Being able to find our ways in the places where we find ourselves is a worthy goal for liberal education, a goal in which nothing is distinctively Lutheran.

Which means, in the end, that we have nothing to say and we are saying it. And that, if we say it clearly, is Lutheran.

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SCHATZ, THE LAST DAY
December 5, 2006

Stunned, we huddled in the hall to breathe.
Beyond the glass, you must have heard.
Not her words nor our response precisely, but
something unfamiliar in the voices. Grief or
fear? Our resignation?

All I remember is such
trembling need to make your face and
that last day indelible.

And all at once we were alone in that white room.
Beth and George had gone to start the calls. The nurses
understood. So only I, with winter sun hung high behind the
curtains, witnessed your confusion.

Surprised—surprised as we—you turned your head
almost imperceptibly and whispered, each word formed exactly
“Am I dying?”

Schatz! Oh, Schatzie!
What could I say? I didn’t know for sure.
The experts did, but, unaware how often you’d
come back before, repaired again, transcending pain
to serve, to fully live, to celebrate all over,
they could merely “give it straight.”

I couldn’t lie. Not to you. Ever.

Instead, while more and more parked down the street
and phoned the rest to hurry, we agreed, our
heads together: THE LORD WAS WITH US. Both.
Eternally. And kissed, our hands still clasping
as you closed your eyes to wait.

Through our weeping, praying, singing. Through
cushioned din of friends come by the score to say goodbye.
You waited. All day long. So patiently. So strangely still.
A first for you. Your trademark grin replaced by peace,
internalized, I guessed, to greet Another.

Another WHO?
Another stronger, wiser, kinder than that crew
in love with you, choking on “Our Father”?
Another, sweeter than “Amazing Grace” Susannah soloed
before all of us joined, bravely?

Did you find
already then beyond that septic space, a sudden light?
The Savior’s face? Or even rise up from your sheets,
unnoticed, as our circle grew and tightened?

Oh, how fiercely first we watched the monitor,
then your fragile breath, then the screen again,
while all the world outside was one black sea,
your room an island we had clung to, praying.

A fourth “Our Father” before Becky led into
“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.” We only knew
verse one but sang it twice to keep you with us
one hour more and begged you,

Schatz hang on. Let
Fat and Mark arrive in time to touch your face.
To wrap their arms with ours around you.

But it was done.
Before our eyes, The Father called. And all at once
you sighed. A little gasp, I think it was, that doused
the light. Your soft goodbye. Your spirit’s echo. Leaving us
surprised again, which was, you’d always said in better times,

A sign of life.

A sign of life.

Lois Reiner
The Porch Roof Walk

T

his year when I drive my father to the cemetery to visit my mother’s grave, he uses a cane, and even that doesn’t seem adequate on the uneven ground. I park where I always do and take his free hand, letting him lead while I balance a small water bottle and the daffodils he’s cut in the crook of my other arm. It’s a long time covering the distance down the slight grade, but when he stops, I can see that the name on the marker is not my mother’s.

He studies the lettering, and I let his hand drop, giving him time. I drift to the right, doing what I can to examine nearby markers without announcing that I know he’s confused.

He hobble to the left, taking in the names one by one. I look back up at the car, gauging the distance and direction against my memory of infrequent visits. “Something’s not right,” he finally says, and I nod in order not to agree out loud.

“Oh hell,” he says, using his strongest oath.

We search for another two minutes before he loops back toward me from farther down the hillside. “Here,” he says then, pointing with the cane, and I relax, bringing him the flowers.

He gives me directions, starting with removing the pine boughs and tossing them among the nearby trees. There’s an order to all this—pouring the water halfway up the vase, inserting the daffodil stems, spreading them until he says “yes.” After that, he grips my hand, and we stand together for a minute.

Neither of us mentions the search for the grave. Not then, and not on the twelve-mile drive to his house.

The night before, when I called from two hundred miles away to tell him what time to expect me, he told me a big tree had blown into his yard. “That wind storm a few nights back was something,” he said. “To move a tree like that is amazing. I can’t imagine where it came from.”

“How big?” I finally said.

“Big. Half the length of the yard, there it sits right up to the back door so nobody can go in or out. A sycamore.”

I tried to remember the types of trees from his yard, but except for names like “pine” and “crabapple,” their shapes or fruit giving them away, I couldn’t distinguish. “A tree that size isn’t likely to blow very far,” I managed to say.

There was a pause. I could hear his television playing in the background, a late-season basketball game turned up so loud I learned the score while I waited. “Isn’t that something,” he said at last. “A tree that size ending up right against my back door. It fills up half the yard.” Before I could answer, he said, “A sycamore. I never had a sycamore. That’s how I know it’s somebody else’s tree.”

It was my turn to talk. The storm, I knew from the news, had carried wind gusts up to fifty miles per hour in the part of Pennsylvania where he lives. “I’ll take a look when I get there tomorrow,” I said.

“I already did,” my father said. “I worked my way around from the other side of the yard. There’s a stump over by the edge of the property. I must have lost a tree too.”

Now, back in the house, my father points his cane toward the living room window. “You can look as long as you want now,” he says. “We have all day.”

“At least until dinner at Judy’s,” I say, reminding him of the plans my sister had made with him for my visit.

“She’s having us over?” he asks.

“Yes.”

The tree has fallen nearly parallel to the house. Its upper branches are resting against the window to which he’s pointed. A moment later, from the

Gary Fincke
kitchen window, I can look down at the trunk as it thickens toward the stump twenty feet from the corner of the house where my father's bedroom sits. Any sharper angle and the thing would have damaged the house. A direct hit would have taken it through the roof over where my father sleeps.

"A sycamore," my father says. "I never had a sycamore in the yard. You wonder how something so big could blow so far." When I turn to face him, I see a sign taped to the kitchen stove. "DO NOT TURN STOVE ON," it says, all of the letters traced several times so they look to be bolded.

Later, my father tells me he's had one of his assisted living caregivers haul the old picture of the Titanic sinking from the basement. He's dusted it off and offered it to my sister, who's refused it. My guess is that the painting was popular once. I know someone whose parents own it as well. Disembodied faces peer up from the water. It doesn't look anything like fine art, like something an expert on Antique Roadshow would appraise for thousands of dollars. Before he can offer it to me, I tell him to put his coat on so I can show him something.

YEARS AFTER I FIRST WALKED GREISMERE Street, where my father grew up, after I learned the cliff side would be blasted down to widen the highway, that the entire side of the street across from where my father's bakery had stood would be leveled and reconstructed as additional lanes for traffic, I drive my father up into the old neighborhood because, after years of delays, the work has begun. My father, eighty-eight now and so forgetful he has notes tacked up around his house to remind himself what to do each day, names the families who lived in each house on the street. He gazes up at the third floor where he shared a bedroom in the attic with his three brothers. We work our car to where the street turns sharply to the right and steeply upward, and here is where the hillside has been blasted back to. Right up to the pavement. Always three or four feet to the left, that sheer drop to where Route 8 is being widened follows the curve of the one-lane street. Above his old house, the telephone pole where my cousin and I shot a basketball for hours still leans slightly over the broken asphalt. The reshaping of the cliff makes me certain that an air ball from the right side of the hoop could take one hop and plummet more than a hundred feet straight down to bring astonishment and damage to a passing driver.

The narrow street turns even thinner and steeper. My father says nothing, but I begin to question my judgment. Snow flurries swirl around us. The steep down slope has picked up a thin glaze. I concentrate on not riding the brake as we slide down, turn right, miss every parked car that narrows the street even further, and get back to Kittanning Street, "the real road" back down to Etna.

We have to pull out. The turn I remember with anxiety because it's at the base of a curve on Kittanning, only a few feet from being totally blind. There's a mirror on the telephone pole across from us that wasn't there when we visited as I was growing up. I stare at the reflection longer than I need to, not trusting the image. Finally, my father says, "It's clear," and I take two breaths, then a third, to allow enough time to go by so that I'm not following his directions. I look again and pull out.

"In the old days, you had to be careful there," he says.

In another part of Etna, we drive up Dewey Street so he can show me the house where he lived as a small child. I try to imagine five children in what looks to be a four-room house, and the only arrangement is all of them sleeping together in one bedroom until necessity drove the family to Greismere Street, which must have seemed palatial with its five large rooms and an attic divided into two makeshift bedrooms.

"Red Dog lived there," he says, pointing to the house next door.

"Red Dog?" The name sounds like a pirate's.

"He was something. Always drunk," my father says. He doesn't elaborate.

We drive to Angle Alley, where we lived in three rented upstairs rooms until I was seven, and now things look so shabby, I wonder if my father notices. I don't chance the enormous pot holes of the alley, but as soon as we turn into the next side street, that surface, too, is so pocked and rutted it threatens to lurch us into the cars jammed bumper to bumper on both sides. We drive at continuous speed-bump pace, maybe ten miles per hour. When we turn again where this street whose name I've forgotten crosses the end of Angle Alley, there
is barely enough room to squeeze past untended, overgrown shrubbery and a decaying cement wall.

I feel the word “escape” surface. There are hundreds of worse neighborhoods, I tell myself, and yet the houses and the streets themselves could only be called “awful,” as in “Who, by choice, would live here?”

We leave Etna again by Route 8, the weeks-old sheer cliff towering up to where we stood fifteen minutes ago. A half mile passes before my father says, without prompting, “There’s what’s left of the house where I was born.”

“When I talk to my sister an hour later, she tells me our grandmother’s house has just been sold, at a sheriff’s sale, for five thousand dollars.

The house where our mother’s mother lived sits in another section of Etna that I’d shown my father a year ago. It has seven rooms on two floors, all but one of them spacious. “Five thousand dollars?” I say. “That can’t be right.” The figure is absurd.

The enormous machinery of road construction sits a hundred yards away. Before too long, most likely within days, those steps will be gone as well, but right now they nearly shimmer with presence. Another quarter mile and we turn up Middle Road toward his house. Every place he ever lived is within three miles of each other.

It reminds me that he walked to get where he wanted to be until he was thirty-one years old and bought a pickup truck, that until then, when I was nearly five, I walked everywhere as well.

“You two kids never asked for anything,” he says, including my sister as if she’s in the car. It’s what he repeats about once each hour that I visit. His version of a compliment. If I told him that I still don’t, that not asking for help has stuck all these years, he’d be pleased. “You made do with what you had,” he adds, and I’m certain he’s being accurate.

When I head toward my sister’s house instead of turning up Middle Road, he says, “You forget where I live?”
lived up there all the time we were open,” my father said, and I nodded remembering the short, cigar-smoking, bald guy who watched television on a twelve-inch set he carried out onto the landing just large enough for one chair at the top of those stairs.

“Godfrey put out that fire you started way back when,” my father said. “You thought you’d burned us out that Saturday.”

I looked at the tangle of knee-high weeds and could still see how a flutter of flaming paper from the burn barrel I was tending had settled onto the hillside and caught the dry grass on fire. It was October, dry and windy, and I was ten, old enough to believe I could watch trash burn for half an hour without having a problem.

That fire had raced up the hillside toward the back of the bakery, and I’d panicked, scrambling up the path to the back door and shouting for my father as I ran into the store room where he was working. By the time we got outside, Walter Godfrey was using a hose to soak down the high grass a few feet from the back wall of the bakery. “Your boy about burned you down,” he said, and I went back inside and left the discussion to Godfrey and my father.

“Godfrey said he was watching you the whole time that afternoon,” my father said as we sat in my idling car. “He knew what wind could do with fire. He had his hose ready even before it got away from you.”

“I never wanted to see him outside after that,” I said. “I was embarrassed.”

My father looked up that small hill as if he expected to see the bakery restored. “It’s hard finding out you need help,” he said. “Having to be saved is sometimes harder to handle than the problem you had.”

After dinner, while my sister readies berries and shortcake, my father asks if I know the Gettysburg Address. “Sure, I offer, but he says, “Know it, all the words,” and I shrug and try “Of the people, by the people, for the people,” hoping that I’ve put those phrases in the original sequence.

“Ok then,” he says, and when he draws himself up in his chair, my brother-in-law sighs so deeply my father, nearly deaf, notices and snaps, “You listen,” staring down the table for a moment before he begins to recite.

He’s marvelous. When he arrives at the end, not hesitating, not once, I trust that he’s delivered every word in the proper order. “There,” he says, glaring at my brother-in-law as my sister returns, entering to that exclamation point as if she hasn’t heard this showcase for our father’s fear. We settle into blueberries and whipped cream and shortcake, my father racing like his speech, pushing his crumbs onto his fork with hooked fingers before he says “None of you can do that” as if we’re children who might press our plates against our mouths to lick the sweetness clean.

When I drive him home, he has me carry the Titanic painting to the door. “Prop it up there so you don’t forget it when you leave,” he says, and I turn it lengthwise so the ship looks as if it might flip backwards into the night sky. We sit for a few minutes before he asks me if I’m wearing a watch. “Yes,” I say.

“Good. You tell me when to start and keep track.”

It’s the Gettysburg Address again. He tells me it took Lincoln two minutes and five seconds to deliver it, that he’s practiced to get the timing just right, and let’s see if he can duplicate it. “Ok,” I acquiesce, and I wait for the second hand to reach twelve before I shout “Go!”

He’s slower now than at dinner, concentrating on nuances as if he’s listened to a recording by Lincoln, but when he reaches one minute and forty seconds, he stops after “… died in vain” and looks triumphantly at me. “How close?” he says, and I know enough from listening earlier that he’s left off the famous parallel structure.

“1:55,” I say, and he nods, satisfied to be that close.

“Still too fast,” he says. “I’ll get it just right for next time. I have lots of time to practice.”

“Sure,” I answer, and that promise of rehearsal makes me think of the story my father has told me four times this day, the one about how my sister, put down for a nap when she was very young, climbed out the window onto the porch roof.

My sister, because she was barely three that afternoon, doesn’t remember being on that roof, but he tells the story exactly the same each time, the words so identical he might have memorized them the way he has the Gettysburg Address or
the words to the poem I wrote about my mother’s death that hangs like a poster on his living room wall. A neighbor across the street noticed my sister on the roof, and because we didn’t have a phone, she called a closer neighbor who ran upstairs and told my mother, who woke my father.

“There she was,” he says each time, “walking in the gutter. I told her to just stand there and wait for me to come get her, and she did.” I remember how high that porch roof was on the side above Angle Alley. A child falling there would likely die. “It’s amazing it all worked out,” I say each time he finishes, and he says, “A miracle,” as if the word is an exclamation point.

And each time he begins that story again, I wonder if there is a tale about me that precedes my memory that he repeats to my sister. Is it a story about his boy in danger? Does he rescue me?

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MESSAGES

You never know if this hurricane was stirred when someone waved goodbye in China. Heartbreak here can move the ocean there. A red bloom in England may define a bloody sunset in Japan. Some days seeing how wind is ruffling leaves, I turn there and find joy. I scan for messages. I sing the songs I draw from prescient air.

Yesterday I had a root canal that someone must have noticed. The doctor sank his bit straight through my feet, the floor, the soil, earth’s core, and up. I picture the drill making its point to sleepy Buddhist monks as it split the calm of their reflecting pool.

Jeanne Murray Walker
It is puzzling that the American film industry took so long to address our nation's disastrous misadventure in Vietnam, especially given that Lyndon Johnson and Robert McNamara were able to extract Congressional authorization for expanding America's operations there only through the trumped up allegation of a North Vietnamese attack on a US naval vessel in the Gulf of Tonkin. John Wayne sought to defend the Vietnam War with *The Green Berets* in 1968, but with the exception of Robert Altman's *M*A*S*H* in 1970, which, though set in Korea, offered a withering critique of Vietnam, filmmakers largely steered clear of the subject while the war still raged. The great Vietnam films, Hal Ashby's *Coming Home* in 1978, Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* that same year, and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* in 1979 appeared well after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Oliver Stone's *Platoon* wasn't released until 1986.

I think we can account for this delay as a product of the slow dissolution of America's Cold War consensus. The Vietnam War was promoted to the American public as a required democratic defense against world-wide monolithic communist expansionism. Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev had famously sneered "We will bury you" and put missiles in Cuba only ninety miles from American soil. The enemy was real, belligerent, and indisputably powerful. And better to fight him, we were assured, in the jungles of Vietnam than on the beaches of California. It took a long time for us to see the folly of sending soldiers into harm's way on the basis of shallow platitudes.

Our cultural response to the Bush administration's War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan has come about much more rapidly and while our military men and women are still in the field. Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* attacked our operations in Iraq little more than a year after they'd begun. Since then, filmmakers have addressed our Middle East policies in a variety of ways both direct and indirect. We couldn't help but think of troubling analogues to Iraq as we watched *The Fog of War*, Errol Morris's documentary about Robert McNamara. Jonathan Demme's remake of *The Manchurian Candidate* is set during Gulf War I, as is Sam Mendes's *Jarhead*, but both with pointed implications for our current Middle East War. As does Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Stephen Gaghan's *Syriana* worries extensively that the Bush administration's preoccupation with oil marched us to a war we should have avoided. In *Gunner Palace*, documentary filmmakers Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein take a look at current Iraq War soldiers in their daily duties, mixing hours of boredom with minutes of blood-curdling terror. And Paul Haggis's searing *In the Valley of Elah* looks at the war's enduring impact on those asked to fight it. Hereunder we will look at three other Iraq-War-era films that offer reflections pertinent to what our leaders put in motion when they declared a campaign of "Shock and Awe" in March of 2003.

**Blood Begets Blood**

While watching Steven Spielberg's brilliantly honest and searching *Munich*, one cannot help but reach for proverbs. "An eye for an eye," of course, "a tooth for a tooth." But much more: "Blood begets blood." And though we hear no plea for divine intervention, we nonetheless think of "Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord." Perhaps best, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the earth." And though it dramatizes events from three decades ago, *Munich* could not be more relevant for our own day. Over and over again, American activities in Iraq provoke the dismay, the indignation, and the fury of the people we are ostensibly there to help. Blackwater guards shoot down innocent people. An air strike targeting an insurgent leader's hiding place instead kills a
Muslim family, including its women and children. Our soldiers humiliate and torture the inmates at Abu Ghraib prison. A war that President Bush justified because of the weapons of mass destruction it turned out Saddam Hussein did not have, he now justifies as essential to his broader War on Terror. Yet even inside the Bush administration, many authorities believe the war in Iraq has created more terrorists than it has eliminated. Such issues are the very ones with which Munich grapples.

Written for the screen by Tony Kushner and Eric Roth, Munich is the story of the hostage-taking and murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics by a Palestinian organization calling itself Black September and the subsequent pursuit of eleven individuals who planned, supported, and financed this landmark terrorist operation. The goal of the responsive retribution campaign is clear: track down the eleven targets and assassinate them. Teach those who would shed innocent Israeli blood that they will pay with their own lives.

For reasons not made entirely clear, the Israeli government of Prime Minister Golda Meir (Lynn Cohen) decides to stage its campaign of vengeance under a cloak of deniability. To lead the operation, Meir selects a young Mossad agent named Avner (Eric Bana) who once served as her bodyguard. But elaborate precautions are undertaken to conceal Avner's role as a government operative. He is outfitted with false identification and denied contact with visible Mossad officials. On rare occasions, he receives information and directives from a handler called Ephraim (Geoffrey Rush), but mostly he is on his own. His team consists of only four other men. Steve (Daniel Craig) is a dedicated soldier and true believer whose job is to assist Avner with direct killings. But Avner's charge is to use explosives whenever possible because they attract so much more attention than knifings or shootings. The mission's objective is to be noticed. None of the deaths should be mistaken for anything other than assassinations. So Robert (Mathieu Kassovitz) has been assigned to the operation as a bomb maker. A sensitive toy designer by profession, Robert was trained in the Israeli army to defuse bombs, but his skills as an explosives expert are less than ideal. The other two team members are the philosophical Carl (Ciarán Hands), who acts as cleaner, and the cynical Hans (Hanns Zischler), who forges documents and identification papers.

In structure Munich plays as a straightforward thriller. Avner's assassination squad zeroes in on a target, develops a careful plan to execute their hit, and improvises on the fly when complications develop. But from the very beginning, Spielberg delivers a discomfitting twist. He refuses to treat the men Avner is assigned to kill as unalloyed villains. In fact, viewed outside any political context, the men on Avner's hit list seem normal, peaceful, decent, likable, and even admirable. The first man Avner is to kill is a scholar who has translated The Arabian Nights into modern Italian. Living in Rome, giving public readings and lectures to small, appreciative audiences, this seemingly gentle intellectual appears unlikely to have plotted the murder of innocent athletes. Probably he is guilty, but maybe a mistake has been made. We never learn for sure. But together with Steve, Avner does his duty and guns the man down, shooting him through a bag of groceries as he waits for the elevator in the foyer of his apartment.

Avner's second target is a middle-class businessman running a company from the apartment he shares with his family. Robert plants a bomb in the family phone. But this operation has to be aborted on breathtakingly short notice when the man's beautiful eight-year-old daughter answers the phone instead of her father. Avner actually engages in a friendly conversation with his third
target, a polite, ironic, and self-deprecating man who seems lonely and emotionally vulnerable. Robert succeeds in planting a bomb underneath this man’s mattress and kills him instantly when the man gets into bed. But the bomb is so powerful, it blows out three hotel rooms, seriously wounding and perhaps blinding a honeymooning couple we have seen earlier on their balcony in a giddily happy moment of passion.

Spielberg’s point is that this business of righteous murder is complicated and fraught with danger for any innocent in the vicinity of the target. He drives his concern home in the next sequence when Avner’s team attacks three targets at once, loses control of the situation, and ends up killing one target’s wife by accident. Avner clearly has endeavored to spare innocent life in his pursuit of the guilty, but the more he kills, the more hardened to killing and the less concerned with the lives of bystanders he becomes. This is the price, he thinks, of dealing with a ruthless enemy.

As Avner and his men work their way down their target list, they read of other attacks by Arab terrorist organizations, the hijacking of an airplane, the murder of tourists. “We have their attention,” Carl observes. “They are talking back to us.” At first glance this seems good news because it means that the terrorists recognize they are being hunted, that they will not be allowed to kill Jews with impunity. But first Carl, then Robert, and ultimately even Avner realize they perhaps have played into the terrorists’ hands. As they kill the men on their list, other, more violent men arise in their place to commit still new acts of horror on a new array of innocents.

The netherworld into which Avner has been cast by his assignment as the agent of vengeance requires him to do business with people of appalling amorality. Spending up to $200,000 per name, he purchases the locations of his targets and secures safe houses from which to operate from a Frenchman named Louis (Mathieu Amalric) and his father (Michael Lonsdale), a former hero of the World War II French resistance, now an anarchist. In a scene rife with symbolic implications, Avner and his men end up sharing a house for a time with other clients of Louis. Avner might have been asked to bunk with someone from the IRA or members of a left-wing European revolutionary cell, but on this night he is housed with an Arab terrorist, another man with fierce feelings about his cause, another man with blood on his hands.

Because this film so openly worries about the strategy Israel has taken in dealing with a violent and resolute enemy, Spielberg has been criticized as naïve or even hostile to the interests of Israel. But he is very careful in this regard. Israel was created as a state in direct response to the Holocaust. Israel was designed for a people who long ago had been driven from their homeland, rounded up in the communities where they alit and their descendants put down roots, crowded into concentration camps, and heartlessly murdered. Israel provided a place of refuge for the survivors. And Spielberg gives Avner’s mother (Gila Almagor) the occasion to state the importance of Israel with succinct power: “In Israel we have a place on earth at last.” Moreover, Spielberg makes clear that Muslim terrorism is a cruel and unrelenting enemy. In replaying the events at the Munich Olympics, he emphasizes that the athletes were slaughtered after the mission to secure the release of so-called political prisoners clearly had failed as had any possibility of escape. The gunman who kills them knows he has but seconds to live, knows that the athletes are individually innocent, and kills them anyway because the strategy of terrorism implores him to do so.

In the years since 1972, the situation in the Middle East has gotten worse yet. Palestinian (and other Muslim) fanatics have convinced their young people to act as suicide bombers. And in response, for the most part, Israel has tried to meet force with force, repay blood with blood. A Palestinian girl blows herself up on a bus and a score of innocent Israeli riders die. Thus the Israeli military tries to identify the leader who sent the suicide bomber and fires a missile into a Gaza apartment trying to kill him, in the process killing innocent people who lived in the complex around him. Three decades pass, and the cycle goes round and round. And Spielberg asks if the time has not come for a different strategy. In Munich, Robert wonders if in becoming the agent of vengeance he hasn’t sacrificed his soul. Avner becomes so disillusioned he abandons Israel entirely and turns away from that for which he previously was prepared to give his life.
The human instinct for vengeance is so strong. It is hard to control and can tempt even someone in other ways as wise as Golda Meir. But recent world history has suggested that even those with the most entrenched grudges can make peace if one side will not seek its deserved vengeance. The politics of Apartheid kept Nelson Mandela in prison for advocating civil rights for his nation's black majority. His enemies slew his friends and robbed him of his youth. But when he came to power, he dared to reconcile with those who did not deserve his embrace. Spielberg does not point to Mandela as a model, but throughout, what Munich is saying is that surely the time has come to give peace a chance.

To tell this tale, Ferguson has assembled a lineup of witnesses who not only supported the idea of the invasion but served the Bush administration in trying to make it work. Conservative, Republican, and/or career military, the stars of No End in Sight are an imposing lot.

Arrogance and Ignorance
Unfortunately, achieving a sustainable peace is no easy matter. And, remarkable as the proposition seems, peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians might actually be easier to orchestrate than peace between the warring factions in Iraq. Territorial issues in Israel are gradually clarifying themselves, and the exhausted antagonists may sooner agree that a stalemated peace, a resolution to coexist, is superior to endless hostilities. Iraq's Sunnis and Shiites may be years and much bloodshed from a comparable situation. The violent animosity between these two groups is a millennium and more old. But the situation in which they find themselves at each other's throats at the moment proceeds directly from policies developed by the Bush administration.

And as President George W. Bush's current low standing in national opinion polls attests, opposition to the Iraq War is no longer a partisan issue. The war is a horrifying mess. The people of Iraq are miserable. And the brave men and women of our military are being asked to sacrifice their lives and their limbs for a murky, always ill-defined cause that appears lost long ago. That is the exact point of Charles Ferguson's No End in Sight, an almost despairing documentary about disastrous mismanagement.

A former fellow at the Brookings Institute, Ferguson started out as a proponent of the Iraq invasion but gradually has withdrawn his support because of how the Bush administration has conducted the war. A more liberal documentarian, like Michael Moore, for instance, might focus on the shifting justifications that have been advanced for launching the invasion: the missing weapons of mass destruction, the purported link between Sadam and al-Qaeda that has been widely debunked, etc. But Ferguson barely brings up these troubling issues. His attitude toward the war is closer to that of New York Times writer Thomas L. Friedman and Newsweek's Fareed Zakaria, who, though ambivalent about a strategy of "preemptive" invasion, both openly expressed hopes that a functioning, democratic Iraq could become a stabilizing force at the heart of the Middle East. The opposite, of course, is what has come about.

To tell this tale, Ferguson has assembled a lineup of witnesses who not only supported the idea of the invasion but served the Bush administration in trying to make it work. Conservative, Republican, and/or career military, the stars of No End in Sight are an imposing lot. They were the initial people on the ground after Baghdad fell. And they were the first to discover that whereas Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had a clear enough grasp of what kind of force the United States military would require to take Iraq, he and his advisors hadn't the foggiest idea what it would need to hold and rule Iraq while some kind of indigenous, democratic, pluralistic government was installed. As footage in the film establishes, while Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki testified before Congress that several hundred thousand troops would be
necessary to control a religiously divided Iraq after Saddam Hussein was deposed, Rumsfeld thought he could do the job with 90,000 or fewer. He ultimately dispatched 140,000 only after being pressured to do so by Secretary of State Colin Powell, who had grave private misgivings about the Iraq invasion from the beginning.

Rumsfeld’s profound miscalculation led him further to direct that American troops stand aside when the country erupted into widespread looting. No End in Sight replays footage of Rumsfeld sneering at press concerns about the tolerated lawlessness, claiming that television exaggerated what was going on by showing the same footage repeatedly. “Are there really that many vases to be stolen in Baghdad?” he jibed notoriously. But at the end of the riot, Iraq’s national library and museum, the latter housing priceless antiquities dating back 2,500 years, were both almost totally destroyed. Our flagrant indifference to this desecration quickly corroded the confidence of the Iraqi people that they were in the hands of liberators.

Career diplomat Barbara Bodine, who was dispatched to Baghdad after service as Ambassador to Yemen, complains that she arrived in Iraq with general instructions to lead a recovery but was housed in offices without computers or even telephones. The longer she was on the ground, the more she realized that no true plan for an occupation was ever drawn up. The US army was instructed to guard Iraq’s oil fields but not its armories where insurgents helped themselves to the weapons and the explosives that are still killing our troops to this day. General Jay Garner, who was in charge on the ground in the immediate aftermath of Saddam’s flight, quickly developed a strategy to reconstitute law and order by reconstituting the Iraq army. But then Garner was replaced by Paul Bremer who countermanded Garner’s plans, disbanded the army, and instituted deBathification, which purged the country of its teachers, technocrats, and bureaucrats. The result was the pandemonium that we have yet to get under control.

The consequences of the Bush administration’s confidence that it could conquer a complicated country quickly and on the cheap are nauseating. The number of American dead is approaching 4,000, and the number of American wounded is nearing 30,000. Three million Iraqis have fled their homes in terror. Estimates suggest as many as one million civilians have died. Why? Ferguson doesn’t venture a guess. A president and those around him thought they could do what they wanted in a part of the world about which they remained stubbornly uninformed. And with the blood of our children and $10 billion a month in our tax dollars, the rest of us are paying the price for his deadly combination of arrogance and ignorance.

Speaking of the War on Terror

President Bush has responded to the outrageous failure of the decision for which he will be known as long as American histories are written by, finally, firing Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, replacing general after general, and vaguely conceding at press conferences with a notably missing first person pronoun that “mistakes have been made.” In recent months, the administration unleashed a “surge” and sent in 30,000 additional troops. Since then, military press releases repeatedly pronounce that the “surge” is working. But the dying, of course, by Americans and Iraqis both, has hardly stopped. So it is hardly unreasonable to wonder if the “surge” is more wishful thinking than long-term promising strategy.

And though calling it something else entirely, that is exactly what director Robert Redford wonders in Lions for Lambs. Redford takes his title from an observation that German soldiers are said to have made about the British during World War I. The lions were the grunts in the trenches across from them whom the Germans admired very much. The lambs were the British commanders forever sending their men “over the top” into withering machinegun fire that cut them to ribbons. Bravery in the service of folly. That is how Redford would typify the “War on Terror.” Brave men and women displaying their patriotism in the sticky, deadly morass of Bush’s folly.

Written by Matthew Michael Carnahan, Lions for Lambs intertwines three stories taking place simultaneously. In Washington, veteran television reporter Janine Roth (Meryl Streep) interviews rising Republican star Senator Jasper Irving (Tom Cruise), a West Point graduate who has captured President Bush’s ear on military policy. Across the country on a leafy California college campus, Political Science Professor Stephen Malley
(Redford) confronts undergraduate Todd Hayes (Andrew Garfield) for lackadaisical academic performance. And halfway around the world, two American soldiers, former Malley students Ernest Rodriguez (Michael Pena) and Arian Finch (Derek Luke), fight for their lives against the Taliban on an icy Afghanistan mountain peak.

The narrative gradually reveals the connection between these three events. Though he denies it, Irving is gearing up for a presidential run based on a prospective victory in Afghanistan resulting from a new strategy he has convinced the Bush administration to deploy immediately. Because Roth has given Irving favorable coverage in the past, he reveals the broad outlines of his new military plan to her, in hopes that she will make it a top network story. Though visibly at the edge of professional exhaustion—she's obviously heard a lot of political posturing in her career—Roth doesn't buy Irving's plan for a second and openly compares it to a comparable strategy in Vietnam that was supposed to lure the Vietcong into firefights they couldn't win, but did.

Rodriguez and Finch, it turns out, are in the spearhead of Irving's strategy, and things begin to go wrong before the plan even gets underway. Rodriguez and Finch, an Hispanic and an African-American, and as such emblematic of the disproportionate number of minorities in the military, fight valiantly for their country and more immediately for each other. But they are mere pawns in the service of an idea that is not their own. And they are doomed.

*Lions for Lambs* is talkier than most moviegoers can tolerate. Rodriguez and Finch function better as symbols than as characters. And the windy exchanges between Malley and Hayes remain vexingly vague as to either narrative or thematic intent. But exchanges between Irving and Roth are executed with considerable skill and at least a feint in the direction of balance. Irving is charismatic and passionate. Unlike the unholy trinity of Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld, he is willing to admit the many mistakes America has made since the terrorist attacks on 9/11. And with infectious zeal, he presses the idea that victory can still be snatched from defeat jaws dripping with the blood of our conceit and incompetence. He concedes that we have created a thorny mess in Afghanistan and Iraq. But no clear path out presents itself that doesn't also deliver a worrisome blow to America's international stature and influence, and result in sustained bloodshed between the opposing indigenous factions. Victory, he argues, is our only option. And one can easily imagine his appeal to people urgent to believe that an appalling mistake can still be erased with bold action. But, through the plight of Rodriguez and Finch, the film submits that—like all the strategies that have so far been employed in the Middle East—victory strategies are more easily proclaimed than are victorious missions genuinely accomplished.

I wish I believed that all we need do is give peace a chance. I wish I believed that we could awaken from the nightmare in Iraq by simply electing a new President. I wish we could, as Vermont Senator George Aiken suggested about Vietnam, “Declare victory and go home.” But like a lot of Americans deeply offended by this war, I am not sure we are within our moral rights to withdraw now. Colin Powell is said to have warned President Bush about Iraq that “if you break it, you own it.” We broke it, so it seems now we own it. And the cost of this kind of quagmire in blood and money and national character is incalculable, daunting, and dispiriting and may haunt us for years to come.

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rereading old books

The Minister’s Wooing by Harriet Beecher Stowe

Most everyone has either read Uncle Tom’s Cabin, or understands that if they are to have a well-rounded view of American literature, they should read it. For much of the twentieth century, this was not the case. Uncle Tom’s Cabin once had been relegated to the ash heap of literary history by most teachers and scholars of American literature, mostly because the novel was written by a woman for other women, and, as such, it was considered to be saturated with a sentimentality that was beyond the pale of sophisticated society. Furthermore, as the Civil Rights movement began to emerge in the 1950s and later, certain black leaders, perhaps most famously James Baldwin, criticized the novel’s admittedly problematic caricatures of African Americans. The novel’s stereotypes were influenced by Stowe’s embrace of the race theories of the antebellum period, and they are still a major issue when the novel is read and discussed. Finally, the novel is shot through with Stowe’s vision of a Christian America and of the power of God’s Kingdom as ultimately the solution for American society, a vision that was not plausible for most modern academic readers in the 1960s and is perhaps even less so today, for obvious political reasons.

But a funny thing began to happen in the 1970s and 80s. A massive recovery of the works of “forgotten” women writers of the nineteenth century was undertaken, not surprisingly by mostly feminist critics. Jane Tompkins famously addressed the “sensational designs” and the “sentimental power” that were the motivation and the effect of a novel like Uncle Tom’s Cabin. As a result, some twenty years after the important and in many ways overemotional “canon wars” of that period, Stowe is today recognized as a writer approaching the stature of the seven or eight other major American authors of that century (only one of whom, Emily Dickinson, was a woman), and Uncle Tom’s Cabin now is widely taught and written about in scholarly works. All of this is rightly so. The novel, it turns out, is a virtual encyclopedia of rhetoric and argumentation of the culture at the time of its production, the early 1850s, which was one of the most interesting and influential cultural eras in American literary history. As such, Uncle Tom’s Cabin is now commonly spoken of in the same breath with other masterpieces of that amazing half-decade, such as Walden, The Scarlet Letter, Moby-Dick, and Leaves of Grass. Its comeback is not unprecedented, of course, even for this group of books. Moby-Dick was largely forgotten until its own fortunate “rediscovery” in the 1920s. Still, it is quite a turnaround for a novel that many critics dismissed as melodramatic drivel as recently as forty or fifty years ago.

It appears that phase two of the recovery of Harriet Beecher Stowe is now gaining steam. Granted, much of her voluminous writing over many decades is not particularly noteworthy. But some of the work she produced is quite intriguing, especially the fictions written during what we might term the major period of her achievement, roughly from the publication of Uncle Tom’s Cabin in 1852 through about 1869, after which the quality began tailing off. Among the most popular titles now receiving increased attention are Dred (1856), a long novel about a slave insurrection headed by a feisty, revolutionary black leader, and two detailed studies of New England rural communities, The Pearl of Orr’s Island (1862) and Old Town Folks (1869), that constitute significant early entries into the emerging genre of realism that came to be known as local color. These latter two novels exemplify the charming and domestic Stowe. Filled with sentiment and good cooking, they imagine a world imbued with the peacefulness and aromatic delights of women, especially mothers.

But of all the novels that Stowe produced after Uncle Tom’s Cabin, the best is surely The Minister’s
Wooing (1859). It is an historical novel, set in the 1790s in Rhode Island, and it features several famous historical figures with whom readers of the antebellum period would have been quite familiar. Among these figures are Samuel Hopkins, famous theologian and former student of Jonathan Edwards, and Aaron Burr, grandson of Edwards but well known as a philanderer, a perpetrator of political intrigue, and the man who shot and killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. Hopkins and Burr vie for the hand of the pure and beautiful Mary Scudder, whose betrothed fiancé James Marvyn has evidently been lost at sea in a shipwreck. Even more dire than his drowning at sea, it seems, is the fact that he probably died without an acceptable level of faith in the saving power of the gospel.

The novel brings up any number of cultural issues of the time period, but many of the most interesting are those that document the changing face of New England religion. The imprints of Calvinism, with its emphasis on God’s sovereignty, the total depravity of mankind, and its dedication to ensuring that all areas of life glorify God, were still dominant in the 1850s when Stowe wrote the novel, even in an age of liberalization of American Protestantism and when an emphasis on free will and social reform were having a profound impact. Stowe, like some of her contemporaries (especially Hawthorne), was interested in exposing the “dark” side of Calvinism. This dark version of Calvinism included an emphasis on the monstrousness of a deity who allows the undeserved suffering of the innocent and who shows his love by wrath, the visceral conviction that the mass of men are irredeemably predestined to destruction, the gross popular abandonment of belief in miracles and special providences, and the final bind that man is responsible for his actions even though not free to determine them. The darkness of Puritan New England as depicted in the novel also included slavery, which was still very much a part of the culture in the 1790s, with Providence a major port of entry for the trade.

In The Minister’s Wooing, the implications of the dark side of Calvinist theology become most relevant due to the disappearance of James, presumably dead at sea, whose eternal status remains unclear to his mother and to Mary, his fiancé. As such, this novel centers much of its attention upon bereavement, particularly maternal grief, and on how Christians are to understand God in the face of the loss of loved ones who may not have been “elect” at the time of their demise. Stowe stresses that these were matters of the utmost concern for her characters: “In no other country were the soul and the spiritual life ever such intense realities, and everything contemplated so much (to use a current New England phrase) ‘in reference to eternity’” (50–51).

Sadly, Stowe herself was acquainted with the loss of children, including her infant son Charley who died in Cincinnati in 1849 during a massive cholera outbreak, and later the much older Henry, who died in 1857. Henry’s tragic death by drowning, while sporting with his college classmates at Dartmouth, led directly to the penning of The Minister’s Wooing, a fact we know from letters and other personal documents. In the novel, James’s mother is depicted as suffering extreme religious doubt and melancholy, and the institutional forms of Christianity in the novel are unable to bring any relief. James bears a striking resemblance to Henry, both in age and in religious sensibilities. Thus, an inspiring way of understanding The Minister’s Wooing is to read it as Stowe’s heartfelt advice to grieving parents (and, partly, to herself) about how one can navigate the choppy waters of the loss of children. Clergymen are chastised for their coldly logical treatment of mothers in particular, who are urged to embrace God’s will and accept with humility that their dead child has been assigned
to hell. The Reverend Hopkins illustrates the basic premise of much Calvinist thinking on the destiny of the deceased: he “recognizes the fact, that the greater part of the human race, up to this time, had been eternally lost” (195). God reveals his power by strengthening the bodies of the damned to withstand “torments which otherwise would be intolerable” (195). Calvinist preaching on God’s judgment often amounts to a “refined poetry of torture,” but it is a highly unsatisfactory poetry that forces the motherly heart to one particular question: “is God not a God of mercy?” (195–96).

By way of contrast, in The Minister’s Wooing, Stowe substitutes warm-hearted human feelings for academic theology, showing how a “feminized” version of ministry for the bereaved is far superior to the cold and drafty logic of the patriarchs. In the middle of the nineteenth century, mourning the loss of children was considered to be not merely one of life’s greatest challenges. It also was viewed more and more as one of life’s great spiritual opportunities for advancing the work of the human soul. Moreover, the death of a loved one might lead to a greater redemptive work than would have been achieved had the dead person continued on in this world. Such a mystery could quite convincingly be attributed to the superintending work of God’s Providence and design. In short, as historian Karen Haltunnen has put it, “mourning was regarded as the most sacred of social feelings because the heart softened by affliction turned with greater love not only to the departed loved one, but to all living members of the family, and finally to all mankind.”

To illustrate these concerns, Stowe offers the wisdom of Candace—a slave at the story’s inception who is freed during the course of the narrative—who speaks of the love of Jesus and presents the suffering mothers of the world with sympathy and gentle consolations. “Why, de Lord a’nt like what ye tink,—He loves ye honey! Why, jes’ feel how I loves ye,—poor ole black Candace.... He died for Mass’r Jim,—loved him and died for him,—jes’ give up his sweet, precious body and soul for him on de cross! Laws, jes’ leave him in Jesus’s hands!... Look right at Jesus. Tell ye, honey, ye can’t live no other way now. Don’t ye ‘member how He looked on His mother, when she stood faintin’ an’ tremblin’ under de cross, jes’ like you? He knows all about mothers’ hearts” (201-2). Stowe biographer Joan Hedrick sums up the novel’s ambition this way: “In her advice to troubled and grieving women, Stowe’s efforts were repeatedly focused on removing from their shoulders the added burden of feeling that they should not feel the way they did, a burden that was largely the result of Calvinist preaching by male ministers.... Women turned to Stowe for relief from a particular kind of religious scruple that they would not have been able to express to their ministers.”

Similarly, the female characters of the novel often turn to Candace for her pietistic sympathy and her cracker-barrel wisdom, which often flies in the face of the learning of the male ministers who ostensibly preside over the town. As such, The Minister’s Wooing is an overt effort by Stowe both to call into question religious teaching about the grief process and to help grieving parents find ways to survive the horrific experiences of which she had intimate knowledge herself. It attempts to help parents therapeutically with the loss of their children, appearing just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, which would greatly multiply the numbers of grieving mothers and drastically alter the terrain of American religion. Finally, Candace is funny at times and speaks in native dialect, two features that might remind us of the fact that Stowe lived for almost twenty years next door to Mark Twain and family (indeed, it might come as a surprise to many readers how clever is Stowe’s humor, which perhaps is one of her most charming and underrated abilities). For these reasons, Candace is one of the most interesting and progressive black characters in all of Stowe’s fiction, though as with most of Stowe’s characters, the taint of romantic racialism is at work in her depiction of this intriguing woman.

More generally, The Minister’s Wooing is a remarkable document illustrating other major changes in the evangelical culture of Stowe’s lifetime. For example, Stowe agreed with the emerging religious sentiment of the times that social wrongs, including chattel slavery, would disappear entirely when enough people had been converted to Christianity and rededicated to right conduct. Here again, the slave Candace is an important mouthpiece of this view, as well as for an openness to charismatic and enthusiastic
forms of Christianity. As reflected in Candace's enthusiasm, Stowe adhered to aspects of the doctrine of Christian Holiness, including consent to the concept of the Wesleyan “second blessing.” She was obviously sympathetic to the charismatic elements of the various African American autobiographies she was familiar with, as the following passage from *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853) demonstrates: “We are not surprised to find almost constantly, in the narrations of their religious histories, accounts of visions, of heavenly voices, of mysterious sympathies and transmissions of knowledge from heart to heart without the intervention of the senses, or what Quakers call being ‘baptized into the spirit’ of those who are distant.” In *The Minister's Wooing* and other fictions, Stowe foreshadows the Pentecostal explosion that would emerge in American and worldwide Christianity within several decades of her death in 1896.

For these and other reasons, *The Minister's Wooing* exemplifies what Ann Douglass identified as the “feminization of American culture,” including most obviously of the religious sentiments of those times. And besides illustrating those sweeping changes, one might even argue that Stowe helped foster them as well. It is often forgotten these days how influential and popular was this little lady who wrote the epic novel that mythically started the great war. As the recovery of her impressive talent proceeds, as it should, our literary culture ought to recognize another work to stand with her masterpiece as a “major” achievement. That work, I would argue, is *The Minister's Wooing*, the other great novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

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NEARNESS

Our simple nearness seemed, right from the start,  
A stamp with which all life should be embossed;  
Could two sustain true resonance of heart  
If press of sweet proximity were lost?  
Though some will undertake to risk it, Dear,  
I've not one wish to study a reply,  
Until death's cold necessity draws near  
And parting is in season and “goodbye.”  
Remember that May night so delicate  
Under the freshly budding apple tree—  
We kissed, until you said “more intimate,”  
And pressed your ear up to the heart of me?  
Just such a sweetly stethoscopic nearness  
Equips us for the sustenance of dearness.

Harlan Bjornstad
Before movie stars and rock stars, there were opera stars. The performance genre we know as opera emerged around the turn of the seventeenth century, developing from the deliberate efforts of Florentine poets and musicians to revive the lofty spirit, if not the practice, of ancient Greek tragedy. An early advocate was Marco da Gagliano, court composer to the Medici, writing in 1609, of "how well singing was suited to the expression of every sort of affection... [affording] no tediousness... but indeed incredible delight." In particular he cited the singing of fellow composer Jacopo Peri: "so forcefully does he impress on the listener the affection of these words, that we must needs either cry or be cheered as he pleases."

The power of song conjoined with the potential for dramatic excess was not lost on a new class of celebrities who developed their voices specifically to exhibit and amplify the feelings of the intense new dramatic form. And a new constituency of fans formed to adore the new class of vocal stars. The excesses and vanities of the opera world that ensued were bewailed by composer-author Benedetto Marcello in his satirical treatise *Il teatro alla moda* of 1720. Marcello's "advice" to opera composers includes the direction to "quicken or retard the tempo of the arias to suit the genius of the virtuosi, covering up whatever bad judgment they show" and cautions that "in walking with singers... the composer will always place himself at their left and keep one step behind, hat in hand..." The virtuosi, he notes, need constant cues from the conductor to enter correctly "which they will never know of themselves," and must be accommodated with flattery, "saying to each one that the opera owes its success to her talent." The best arias, of course, were assigned to the prima donna, a term originally intended to specify a role rather than a temperament, and all the first lady's solos, according to Marcello, must be retained at all costs, even if other entire scenes essential to the plot must be cut to meet production budget.

Composer Christoph Gluck (1714–1787) is credited with introducing, through a series of collaborations with his Italian librettist Ranieri Calzabigi, serious attempts to reform and reclaim opera as a serious and viable artistic genre. In *Alceste* (Vienna, 1769), Gluck prefaced the score with an essay explaining his "enlightened" intentions to once again take opera seriously as a musical and dramatic form: "I determined to divest it entirely of all those abuses (introduced either by the uncomprehending vanity of the singers or by the Composers' excessive wish to please) which have so long disfigured the Italian Opera and have made of the grandest and loveliest of all spectacles the silliest and the most tedious." His principles included: that the music should serve and fit the drama; that useless ornamentation and vocal display should be avoided; that musical forms should not impede the action; that the overture should prefigure the nature of the work to follow; that the sharp distinctions between recitation and lyrical numbers (arias) should be moderated; and that the simple, the clear, and the natural are to be valued over the showy and the artificial. While Gluck's "reforms" may not be entirely attributable to his individual efforts, the classical position he espoused prefigured Mozart's masterworks in the now-standard opera repertoire.

English traveler and music critic Charles Burney (1726–1814) compared Neapolitan singer Carlo Broschi favorably to the most famous and celebrated race horse of his day ("Childers"), appropriately recognizing the athleticism required in this intensive form of singing. Broschi—better known by his stage name, "Farinelli"—was the greatest male soprano (i.e. castrato) of the eighteenth century. Burney credited Farinelli with...
such powers as never met before, or since, in any one human being; powers that were irresistible, and which must have subdued every hearer; the learned and the ignorant, the friend and the foe."

The American consciousness of the "grand spectacle" and its attendant celebrities emerged in the early nineteenth century. Earlier, music theater entertainments in America were primarily English or American ballad operas, a kind of assembled musical show with less spectacle, lower artistic ambition, and more familiar tunes that lots of people could sing. But by the mid-nineteenth century, Italian operas, like Shakespeare's plays, functioned in American society as definers of culture. As Lawrence W. Levine has noted (in Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America, 1988), the "sacralization of culture" in the United States was much advanced by the popularity of Italian opera and its touring superstars, with appeal that was at once popular and elite. The popularity factor was enhanced early on by the practice of offering Italian works in English translation, with spoken dialogue replacing the sung recitatives and familiar songs replacing some of the composed arias. But by mid-nineteenth century, operas were being performed in major US cities in the original languages and closer to their original forms, elevating the "elite" over the "popular" and raising the ever-interesting question of the role of elite culture in a democratic society.

The most successful European diva in nineteenth century America was Jenny Lind (the "Swedish nightingale"), whose American career was master-minded by P. T. Barnum. Her arrival by steamer in New York in 1850 was, according to a contemporary account, met by thirty to forty thousand waiting on the pier. The throng surged around the carriage that was to transport Lind to her hotel, and police struggled to control the crowd of fans who pelted the carriage with flowers. Barnum had guaranteed Lind $150,000 for 150 concerts, an astonishingly high fee for the time. The following year she broke her contract in order to retain more of the profits herself. In her two year American tour, she became the most heard singer in the history of the United States to that time. Her programs were offered as concerts but targeted to theatrical audiences. Her repertoire freely mixed opera arias with lighter well-known songs of the day, often incorporating gimmicks, as in her signature "Echo Song," involving a vocal trick of ventriloquism that pleased the crowds immensely.

Walt Whitman championed the opera genre, its drama and its divas. In Leaves of Grass, he offered an expansive hymn to sonorous experience in art and nature in "Proud Music of the Storm":

Across the stage, with pallor on her face, yet lurid passion,
Stalks Norma, brandishing the dagger in her hand.
I see poor crazed Lucia's eyes' unnatural gleam;
Her hair down her back falls loose and dishevell'd.
I see where Ernani, walking the bridal garden,
Amid the scent of night-roses, radiant, holding his bride by the hand,
Hears the infernal call, the death-pledge of the horn.
To crossing swords, and grey hairs bared to heaven,
The clear, electric base and baritone of the world,
The trombone duo—Libertad forever!
From Spanish chestnut trees' dense shade,
By old and heavy convent walls, a wailing song,
Song of lost love—the torch of youth and life quench'd in despair,
Song of the dying swan—Fernando's heart is breaking.
Awaking from her woes at last, retriev'd
Amina sings;
Copious as stars, and glad as morning light, the torrents of her joy.

As a commentator, Whitman advocated for American virtuosi, not only touring European stars, to sing these roles, although it was "Italia's peerless compositions" he celebrated in his own song. And it is the Italian contralto Marietta Alboni (who toured the US in 1852-53, as Jenny Lind's worthy successor and rival) he singled out for poetic praise: "The lustrous orb, Venus contralto, the blooming mother, Sister of loftiest gods, Alboni's self I hear." Tales of violence, madness,
duels, heroic idealism, unrequited love, and torrents of joy offered colorful celebrities then and now the opportunity to be at once great artists and great box office.

In our own time, artistry is not a necessary condition for celebrity status in popular culture. But opera audience members still expect artistic talent—and voices that project to the back of the house over the orchestra without amplification—even if the general public does not. Occasionally popular audiences find opera virtuosity (or at least opera virtuosi) compelling. Among the several opera stars whose passing was marked in this year just ending were two remarkable for their “cross-over” appeal as well as their virtuosity: soprano Beverly Sills of Brooklyn who died July 2 in New York at seventy-eight, and tenor Luciano Pavarotti, the pride of Modena in Northern Italy, who died September 6 at age seventy-one in the city of his birth. Both died of cancer.

Beverly Sills (née Belle Silverman, known popularly as “Bubbles”) had a relatively short singing career, due to a somewhat late professional start and deliberate choices she made about what and how to sing. She was quoted as saying she would choose “ten years as [Italian diva Maria] Callas rather than thirty years as somebody else.” Her New York debut in 1955 did not propel her career immediately. She made her mark as Cleopatra in Handel’s Guilio Cesare at New York City Opera in 1966, a role she had fought hard and played politics to secure. Contracts at major European houses followed. Her New York Metropolitan Opera debut, however, waited until 1974. She was noted for bel canto finesse and for vocal pyrotechnics. And she was noted as a great actress while also a “personality” in real life. Her ability to balance her artistry with her celebrity was remarkable throughout her life and recounted in the tributes at the time of her death. She was the “democratic” opera star that would have suited Walt Whitman’s ideals perfectly. And she suited perfectly the American public in the twentieth century. She appeared on the covers of Newsweek (1969) and Time (1971), she was a regular talk show guest of Mike Douglas and Merv Griffin and occasionally the guest host of The Tonight Show. She teamed with Carol Burnett on CBS prime time. She sang and acted, and hammed and clowned, and was a celebrity of a warm and wholesome kind. Her personal life was well known—both her children had severe disabilities—and her personal strength was observed and admired. Post vocal prime, she re-directed her charm and celebrity towards her work as an opera executive, advocate, and fund raiser. Her tribute in Opera News noted that “she did more than any other performer to democratize the art form.”

Luciano Pavarotti’s was a very different career. His vocal supremacy was never in question and his “King of the High C’s” nickname suggests a more autocratic position than Sill’s claim to royalty as “America’s Queen of Opera.” His career was long and demanding, and his voice remained strong for most of it. He took no particular credit for his talent: “God kissed my vocal cords,” he said. His international career took a particular shape in America, where his Metropolitan Opera Debut in 1972 was a defining moment, and he starred as Rudolfo in La Boheme in the first ever Live from the Met television opera broadcast in 1977. The seeming ease with which he set the vocal standard for operatic tenors in the twentieth century was conjoined with a charismatic personality, and—eventually—a kind of silliness that lent itself to parody. But primarily, his commitment to singing and to the expressiveness possible for the extra-developed singing voice, bespoke of past ages. His obituary in the New York Times likened him to Enrico Caruso and Jenny Lind, and noted that, like them, he “became a titan of pop culture.” He took that role quite seriously, appearing in concerts and recordings with Sting, Elton John, Paul McCartney, and Bono, among others, and finding it relatively easy to dominate given the size of his body, the size of his talent, and the size of his voice which could fill stadiums without amplification. He introduced the “Three Tenors” phenomenon, with Plácido Domingo and José Carreras, probably a poor artistic idea, but one that generated huge profits and even broader popularity. His foray into film, as the star of Yes, Giorgio in 1982 was less successful, but another indication of his diverse exposure. And for much of his career, Burney’s words for Farinelli seem also to apply to Pavarotti: “powers that were irresistible, and which must have subdued every hearer; the learned and the ignorant.”

At the time of his death, along with the extravagant but genuine praise for his singing, tributes
mentioned his vocal and physical unreliability in recent years, his notorious pattern of cancellations after thousands of tickets were sold, and occasional ill-advised choices when he did show up. At the end of a long career, as opera and rock audiences are inclined to do, the adoration demonstrated by fans was sometimes not for how the star—whether Bob Dylan or Pavarotti—performed on a given night, but rather for a lifetime of stellar performance. We cannot know for sure how Jenny Lind sounded, nor Farinelli, nor those earliest singers who created what we know as opera singing. We have an idea of Caruso and others who lived into the early era of sound recording, but we must filter that idea through the technology of the 1920s. Future generations will have more than an idea of Pavarotti’s sound and will bring that knowledge to bear on what they can know of him through contemporary accounts and anecdotes. Images of the overweight and over-made-up aging star will remain, as do those of Elvis, whose recordings nevertheless endure as an essential part of our musical heritage. In the case, of Pavarotti at least, the legacy of fine singing will outlast his legacy of celebrity. Even among devotees of this “grandest of all spectacles” it is unlikely that reports of “Luciano sightings” will surface, and with discerning listeners measuring against Pavarotti’s recordings, it will be a good while before anyone else lays claim to the title of “King.”

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Q & A

“Look there,” he said, and pointed out the window of the climbing plane.

“More swimming pools in Johannesburg than you have got in Los Angeles.”

And there were many. Little strings of aqua jewels that necklaced every neighborhood.

The man was on his way to finance gold mines on the shores of Lake Victoria.

They would leach the gold from piles of ore with cyanide, a cunning way.

“Do you worry about the water?” I asked. “The groundwater?”

He made a face. “Just look,” he said. “Look at all the swimming pools.”

Paul Willis
My childhood friend Sarah was the first to point out to me the mystery at the spiritual center of our church’s architecture: we were not to go inside of the communion rail because that space was “holy ground.” Since she was the pastor’s daughter, she should know. Such a designation clearly distinguished that real estate from the rest of the space where we gathered for worship on Sundays, since the latter doubled as fellowship hall and gymnasium in our church. There we could run around pretty much at will. But not up front. It was holy in the most basic sense of the word: “set apart” for the worship of God.

I recall with equal clarity how Sarah’s father described to us kids the meaning of the structure in the midst of that sacred space. It was significant, he said, in three ways: as altar, as table, and as tomb. While I came to appreciate these concepts more fully only in the course of time and theological education, my pastor’s explanations were age-appropriate and provided a basis from which to grow. The altar (as it always was called then) was the place where God's people offered their thanks and praise to God, in response to God’s love, above all, in Jesus. At the same time, we could rightly think of it as table, since that was where the Lord's Supper was served. And that big box up front was also a tomb, located at the foot of the large, empty cross on the wall, reminding us that at the core of our faith was Jesus Christ crucified, buried, and on the third day risen again—just as we said week after week in the Creed.

Much has changed in typical worship practice and church architecture since the early 1960s, and much of that change has been for the good. I, for one, am most thankful for the explosion in hymnody over the last forty years. So far as I could ever tell, “For All the Saints” was one of the very few songs in the hymnal of my youth with either tune or text from the twentieth century. And the increasing tendency to place the center of attention in the physical center of the worship space has, I believe, enriched both our sense of what is theologically central and our understanding of what it is to be a “congregation” (gathering) of those who receive and respond, with our Lord literally in our midst, as promised (Matt 18:20). But as I listen carefully to those with far greater expertise in matters liturgical than I, and as I work my way into a new generation of hymnals and associated works, it strikes me that we have lost something along the way via certain intentional or unintentional omissions, to the impoverishment of our worship as the people of God.

Specifically, what evokes my present concern is with the dominant use of the word “table” to refer to that “big box” in the chancel. (A related issue is the shape of the furniture itself, which increasingly offers no interpretative possibility but that of “table.” But my present focus is on terminology and concepts.) This development is in many ways both understandable and benign. Over the past forty years Lutherans increasingly have come to see the “visible Word” that is proclaimed in the Eucharist as fully equal in importance to the preached Word of the sermon, such that weekly celebrations of the sacrament are more and more common. It is also a healthy development that this frequent and regular feeding of God’s people be connected in our minds to the “daily bread” that we receive from God’s hand in the meals that we eat at other tables, thereby conjoining the First and Second Articles of the Creed, as it were. To employ the term that relates most immediately and obviously to the Eucharist follows naturally from these developments.

But emphasizing “table” to the near exclusion of “altar” and “tomb” exacts a price, as well. “Tomb,” for example, places at the physical heart of our worship not only the death and resurrection
of Jesus, but our organic connection with those saints and martyrs who are, even now, part of the “all the company of heaven” cited in the Proper Preface and who await with longing the “great and promised feast” of which the Eucharist is but a type and foretaste (Rev 6:9–11). Historically, “tomb” also reminds us of those preConstantinian days when the sacrament was served literally from the top of Christian tombs. This is a useful concept, as we live further and further into the era that some have labeled “post-Christendom.” In fact, even where Christianity retains at least nominal cultural dominance, we do well for all sorts of reasons to live as those in tension with the values of our surroundings, both for the sake of “the least of these” in whom our Lord takes so special an interest (Matt 25:35f.) and for the sake of our own souls.

But it is the disuse of “altar” language that I frankly find particularly problematic. An altar, not a table, is where the people of God bring their sacrifices. Along these lines, it is striking how rarely I see the offerings placed on the altar/table top. The far more common practice, at least in my observation, is to place them on a credence table (sometimes following an imitation of the “heave offerings” of old) or even to whisk them out a side door, in my experience most often to give the counters a head start. The upshot is to reinforce the popular impression that money, even when given to God, is something profane, not to be brought in too close proximity to holy things.

Of course, Lutheran Christians are rightly sensitive to problematic teachings and practices that are connected with the altar as altar, such as the “unbloody sacrifice of the Mass” historically associated with Roman Catholic teaching. But we verge today, like Luther’s drunken peasant riding a donkey, on falling off the other side. “Altar” provides a crucial link to the roots of our worship in the worship practices of ancient Israel. “Altar” recalls the entirely appropriate concept, affirmed in the Lutheran Confessions, of eucharistic sacrifice, by which God’s people respond to the gifts of God “with shouts of thanksgiving.” And “altar” may even remind us of the historic doctrinal fact that, geography notwithstanding, when it comes to a Lutheran understanding of the sacrament, Wittenberg is closer to Rome than to Geneva. Indeed increasingly, Roman Catholic theologians have formulated their understanding of the sacrament in terms far more amenable to Lutheran appropriation, such as “re-presentation,” the idea that those who share in the Eucharist are made present at the core events of salvation in a way more true than historical (cf. Deut 5:1–5).

I make this latter point with some trepidation. The reality is that it is Reformed Protestant churches who have come to full communion agreements with Lutherans (at least in the ELCA), not Roman Catholics. I have no insider knowledge that those who negotiated such agreements were attempting to ease the way by emphasizing a term that is more amenable to a symbolic understanding of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist than “altar.” And it is well past time that we cease imputing unworthy motives to those with whom we disagree in the church.

What can fairly be said, I believe, is that an emphasis on “table” privileges the value of hospitality in such a way as to trump other considerations that bear on communion fellowship, including those that continue so tragically to divide Lutheran Christians from Roman Catholic Christians. Otherwise put, the emphasis of “table” on the horizontal dimension of the unity that is ours through baptism into Christ cries out for the balance that “altar” brings with its stress on the vertical dimension, by which the people of God receive the incarnate Lamb of God who takes away their sins and those of the whole world.

Again, my concern is not with motives, but with effects. Consistent with the diversity of the biblical witness, as it testifies to the one God revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the liturgical heritage of the church offers different ways of viewing even sacred furniture. As with that biblical witness—above all, in the Fourfold Gospel—we only impoverish ourselves and our worship, if we downplay or ignore elements that can enrich our faith, even at the occasional risk of creative tension.

At least, that is what I mean to say, if ever I come across a meeting of a Table Guild.

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WHEN I RETURNED FROM MY SABBATICAL IN
the middle of August my parishioners
asked, “How was it?” and I answered,
“Pretty OK!” They asked, “Did you have a
good time?” and I answered, “I had a lot
of good times.”

What is interesting though is that the best of
these times were complete surprises. I had
an agenda for my time away, of course, but
as they say, “If you want to make God laugh,
tell Him your plans.”

Re-entry has been difficult, which I
understand is common among clergy who
have taken sabbaticals. At first, the planning
was also difficult, but then I had an experience
that got me thinking creatively.

A colleague took a three month silent
sabbatical a few years ago. She retreated
to a cabin in the woods, stockpiled food, and
told her nearest neighbors that she'd be
observing silence as best she could. She did not
read any periodicals, listen to the radio, or
watch television. As she described her
career as being Hebrew for “Stop it!”
The renewal part was pretty easy. I planned
the first month around two trips, with ten
days in between to prepare for a class.
I attending major league baseball games in
stadiums I had never been to before, bringing
my life list of ballparks to twenty-six. I also
visited more than twenty friends, some of whom
I had not seen in twenty years. My first trip took me as far
east as Boro Park Brooklyn, the neighborhood I lived
in the year between college and seminary. When I
got to talking to friends who had not moved out of
New York, they told me I had to see Boro Park, it
had changed so much.

A Phone Works in Brooklyn

The day I visited Boro Park was one of the
most memorable and surprising days of my sab-
\[read Playboy.\] The Playboy advisor used to room with a Presbyterian minis-
ter, or is it the other way around? We've stayed in
touch through the years, and he has even occasionally
sought my guidance to answer a question a reader [Yes, there are people who
read Playboy!] has posed. Check out the September 2007 Advisor
column, where I am quoted, though not cited. We
will see what this revelation does to my career.

We went to a Japanese noodle restaurant and
talked about our kids, in-laws, and home repair—
topics that were not on our radar screens twenty
years ago.

As I left his office, I gave him a hug and got
on the elevator with a stranger. I said unto him,
“That's the Playboy Advisor; we roamed together
in college.”

“Hhm.”

“Now, I'm a Presbyterian minister.”

“They're both good reads!” the stranger replied.
Only in New York.
Next I took the subway to Brooklyn to see how my old neighborhood had changed. The parks and houses had not changed much, but the commercial strip on Fort Hamilton Parkway was completely different. It seemed that all the shops catered to a Spanish-speaking clientele now. When I lived here my landlord had informed me, “There’s two kinds of Italians: Sinatra Italians and Cuomo Italians.” Twenty years ago Boro Park was filled with Sinatra Italians. Now they had been replaced by Central Americans, Dominicans (the short-stops, not the nuns), and Chinese-Americans. The Hasidic population had expanded a few blocks to the west as well. After a few hours of walking, I needed to find a bathroom and a payphone. Both were difficult to find. Boro Park does not have many places with bathrooms which are available to the public, and payphones have gone the way of door-to-door salesmen, because everyone has a cellphone these days. Just as I was about to burst, I remembered the branch of the public library I used to frequent. I could use the bathroom there. I could not remember though whether it was on Forty-Second, Forty-Third, or Forty-Forth Street. I could not find anyone who I was sure would speak English to ask either. Finally, I spotted an African-American mail carrier.

“Excuse me, can you tell me where the branch library is?”

“Child! I am so new on this route, I don’t even know what street I’m on!”

I found my library, and bathroom, a block away, on Forty-Third Street.

Next I needed to find a phone to find out where I was meeting a friend for supper. We have a standing bet. When we’re together for a meal during baseball season, I buy the pizza if the Mets are ahead, he does if the Cubs are ahead. Miracle of miracles I found a working payphone. This, I thought was kinder, though less accurate, than calling it “vile.”

Riding the subway again, walking the streets of lower Manhattan where I had worked and central Brooklyn where I had lived was an eerie, but satisfying endeavor. I did not feel as though I were visiting places where I had lived and worked twenty years before. I felt as though I were visiting myself twenty years ago. I remember what it felt like to be twenty-three, living on an island between the United States and Europe, as Spalding Gray described New York. I had not been aware of how young, wide-eyed, and free I had been then. Getting to visit myself in that place, at that time, was a moment of serendipity and grace.

I left New York on a Tuesday afternoon, thinking I would beat rush hour. By the time I went from apartment to cab to ferry to parking lot I was in the thick of the New Jersey suburban gulag’s nightly traffic jam. I tuned in to public radio for an hour, then dug out “Audio Prozac.” I commissioned Audio Prozac from a web-savvy friend. I selected thirty songs that make me happy the instant I hear their first notes on the radio. This is an eclectic mix of hip-hop, bluegrass, mainstream rock and roll, and gospel. Many of these songs were popular in my preliterate days. I popped the music in and found, well, I was disappointed in the effect Audio Prozac had on me. It was as though I were trying to make a whole meal out of caramel corn. Ever notice how each handful of caramel corn is a little less enjoyable than the one before it? By the seventh handful, aren’t you looking for someone to pawn it off on—1 mean, share it with? That’s how Audio Prozac felt. I love all these songs, but an unbroken diet of them was simply too much. As I passed into Pennsylvania, I switched to country music, which was a little like getting a shot of insulin.

After returning from the East Coast and 1987, I had ten days to prepare for a class I was about to take. I was back in town, but determined not to set foot in my office. I phoned the office staff, asked them to hunt down books I needed for my
assignment, learned of pastoral prayer concerns, and asked for the mail. I was determined not to return “behind” from sabbatical.

The staff rebelled, threatened to quit if I did not back off!

I was surprised and hurt by this revelation. And I soon understood that I was wrestling with my addiction to responsibility. I shared this observation with a trusted colleague in her office, who waved and said, “Hi, Tom!” as though we were at a twelve-step meeting. Being able to laugh with her, at myself, was a turning point in my sabbatical.

She also confessed that she suffers from “practical atheism,” the creed that states, “Because there is no god—I must step in and take the role!” I realized that if I were to be “away” I would have to accept that I would be “behind” when I return.

I was able to go from saying, “I suck at sabbatical!” to saying, “I’m taking a mulligan on my first month.” I had two more months, and come heck or high water, I was going to get sabbatical right!

I returned from class with two months left on sabbatical. I noticed a rattly cough when I was swimming in the lake with my sons. Lake swimming was a fascinating, disorienting experience. I left my hearing aids at the cabin and my glasses on the dock. I was in sensory deprivation. Still, I could look up and see shapes in the clouds with the same clarity as with my glasses. I had many Monet moments as the boys did cannonballs and scooped rocks and shells onto the dock.

It was difficult to embrace the non-productivity of the Sabbath. I did my best. Here’s my July 5 to do list:

AM pay electric bill
PM pick raspberries

A month later I was getting ready to attend my high school reunion when my rattly chest turned into bronchitis or tuberculosis—I wasn’t sure. But I really could not remember ever feeling worse. I could not get to urgent care until the afternoon, so I decided to let my older son enjoy Dad’s last few hours of life. I agreed to play Risk with him. He’s eleven. Sartre wrote “No Exit” which contends that Hell is other French people. I’d put a different spin on Hell. It’s playing Risk with an eleven-year-old boy.

I confess I was once eleven years old and played Risk. I know and understand the game and its strategy. This, and a stunning streak of fortunate dice rolls, explains how I managed to defeat a shrewd, fiercely-competitive, and wily adversary in this game of global domination. I beat my kid at Risk while running a 102 temperature! And we played to the bitter end. I controlled every square inch of the planet with my armies, as I horked up chunks of my lungs and popped Tylenol like jelly beans.

The physician at urgent care split the difference between my diagnoses. He informed me I had pneumonia. I asked what restrictions I was under. He said I should not go back to work for a few days.

“I’m on sabbatical.”

“Oh, uh. Yes.”

He did not say I should not drive to Peoria for my high school reunion in two days. So I did.

I had planned this trip exquisitely too. I put REO Speedwagon’s “Decade of Rock and Roll,” a two CD set into my car’s sound system as I headed to the highway. In the summer of 1980, this had been the soundtrack in Peoria, Illinois. REO is a fiercely average Midwestern rock band. Back then, they had toured for ten years, cranked out albums, but had never had a hit. They had millions of flannel-clad fans throughout the Midwest. Their lead guitarist was from Peoria, so we also had the “local boy makes good” angle. Decade begins with this insight:

I’ve seen women who cross their legs when they sit down to the table
And I’ve seen women who look to the sky screaming “Lord I believe in the Bible”

Then it gets vapid, though the rhyming improves.

REO’s “Decade” was the opposite of Audio Prozac. It didn’t make me feel sixteen again; it made me nauseous. Loud and repugnant is how I’d describe their sound now. I was being kind when I called them “fiercely average.” Still, as with the Risk game, I stayed to the bitter end. I listened to all nineteen songs, over ninety minutes of bathos. When it was finally over, I felt like I had done my penance and was ready to spend a few hours with my high school chums.
I got to chat with Scott Zumbahlen. He sat behind me in algebra. Scott sat behind everyone in every class. I spent a lot of time near him in the alphabetical ghetto. It was in Mr. Higgins's enriched algebra class in 1978, that Scott first hissed “smart ass” to me, just loud enough for me to hear. A few months ago an elder at my church chose the same epithet for me as we worked together in the kitchen one afternoon. I had a flashback to Peoria High School and quadratic equations. Sharing that story with Scott almost made the trip worth the time. Getting to visit the Oscar Meyer Weiner mobile, as it made a rare appearance in West Peoria earlier in the day, sealed the deal.

Driving back from Peoria on a Sunday morning I felt two urgent needs as I merged onto I-80: more coffee and a good cry. I've learned to trust these sudden instincts so I found a gas station in LaSalle and popped “There Goes Rhymin' Simon” into the CD player. This 1973 album by Paul Simon contains “American Tune,” which makes me cry without fail. Simon wrote it as a national lament during the Watergate scandal. It's based on Passion Chorale, the tune we know as "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded." I had forgotten that the first tune on the album is “Kodachrome,” which begins, “When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school...” I laughed till I cried. For the next fifty miles I drove trying to remember one thing I still knew from high school. The correct use of a semicolon is about the extent of it. Oh, and the Pythagorean theorem.

Blackberries

I cannot say what I expected from sabbatical, having never taken one before. I tried to balance structure and freedom. I think I expected a three-month mountaintop experience, which is completely unrealistic. For me, I get fifteen seconds on a mountaintop every few years, max. Still, I had a moment of insight and transformation while on sabbatical that I hope to carry with me through the months and years ahead.

Late on a Saturday afternoon, my family took a walk while I was away, and found many bushes filled with wild blackberries. They returned home with their palms purple, and we decided to return to the trove, appropriately dressed, the next day. The Reverend Thomas C. Willadsen is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.
Among alcoholic beverages, Jack Daniel's has enviable name recognition and market share, but the product name also reflects the founder's name—or at least one of the founders. Less familiar is the name of Jack Daniel's original partner in the whiskey business, Daniel H. Call. Call was a veteran of the Confederate army, a farmer, a small-time distiller, and a lay preacher in the Lutheran church. According to most historical accounts, he adopted the young Jack Daniel into his family, taught him how to make whiskey, and went on to co-found with Daniel what would become one of the best known distillers of all time.

But in a remarkable move, Call quit the whiskey-making business only seven years after the partnership was formed and sold his entire share to Daniel. The temperance movement within southern Lutheranism after the Civil War was remarkably powerful. Available accounts report that Call was under pressure from his wife, his congregation, and his synod to get out of the liquor business. However, a revival at Call's church may have been the immediate motivator. Daniel's biographer Ben Green tells of a temperance preaching female revivalist who visited the congregation just before Call sold. The results can be seen on liquor store shelves across the country and around the world: Call's name is absent from that famous black label.

A Calling Not Sinful in Itself

Of course, it was not a new idea in Daniel Call's time that a particular role or type of work could be unfitting for a Christian. The re-discovery of vocation as a theological idea at the time of the Reformation sparked considerable discussion and debate on the issue. Arguing that God endowed all socially useful offices and roles with vocational meaning, Martin Luther upset the sharp division between the spiritual and the material realms. No longer was a calling restricted to the "spiritual" offices of bishop, priest, monk, and nun. Several years later, John Calvin adopted Luther's project on vocation with some alterations but also with great continuity. Both saw a vocation as a means of service as well as a means to order and preserve creation.

The broad expansion of vocation outside the ecclesiastical realm raised several questions about how wide the expansion should go. Luther himself was asked specifically whether being a soldier could be a Christian vocation. He answered "yes." Without prompting, he even encouraged able Christian men to consider service as executioners, if there was community need. Luther also commended the vocational roles of marriage, house servant, judge, farmer, ruler, and citizen. In each of these cases, he saw the roles as forms of community service. Luther explicitly forbid only a few places of vocations. For example, he said that no one should be a robber, usurer, prostitute, nun, monk, priest, cardinal, or pope. His overriding concern was service to neighbor, and that was possible, he wrote, as long as the Christian worked "in a calling that is not sinful in itself" (Luther, 1905, 248-49).

Certainly, the production of alcoholic beverages was not included in this category because Luther's own wife, Katie, was a brewer of beer and maker of wine at their Wittenberg home. The mores of the time and place would not have suggested prohibition as a Christian position.

In contrast to Luther and Calvin, the Anabaptists of the Reformation were much more restrictive about what kinds of work that a Christian could perform. Calvin and Luther readily acknowledged that all vocational roles included some moral ambiguity, but the Anabaptist sought a higher degree of moral purity. For example, the Schleitheim Confession of the Swiss Brethren forbade military service and all types of civic service. Thus the Anabaptist
marginalized themselves politically by refusing to support the state and marginalized themselves occupationally by refusing to allow criteria other than the gospel—including criteria like justice—to govern their work. As a result, the Anabaptists have been much more willing to forbid certain places of vocation, while other Protestants have tended to be more concerned with moral behaviors within the profession.

Contemporary theologians in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions have explored the same issues, asking “where do we draw the line?” in the modern world of work. Douglas Schuurman at St. Olaf College has argued that the emphasis on service to neighbor by Luther and Calvin provides guidelines that allow certain types of work to be excluded while also guiding the “work processes and conditions” for acceptable roles. Schuurman states that “paid work creating products or services that harm the neighbor cannot be vocations” (Schuurman, 2004: 131). This was the very reason Luther forbade the papal priesthood and usury, and Schuurman offers the examples of the tobacco industry and the manufacture of nuclear weapons as two possible modern day places where neighbors are not served. Interestingly, he believes that Christian communities should provide financial support to Christians working in harmful areas to allow their transition out and towards better work.

In his reflection on appropriate and inappropriate roles, Lutheran ethicist Robert Benne has claimed that all places of Christian vocation must be “sanctioned.” In other words, they must conform to certain moral standards that are revealed through law and culture, personal conscience, and discernment of God’s will. The three “levels” of sanctioning, Benne says, exist in a hierarchy with the divine will at the pinnacle, but they also interact. At the same time, change is ever apparent. Some places of vocation cease to exist and new ones arise, while current places can retain their core even in the midst of change. Benne argues that places of vocation are “dynamic,” and it is the reality of change that sometimes makes it difficult to discern God’s sanction or its absence. Cultural change can be a morally neutral trend, a new conformation of the world to the will of God, or a demonic move away from God’s intended purposes.

Perhaps one of the best known and certainly the most over-quoted definition of vocation is found in the book *Wishful Thinking* by Frederick Buechner, and he too seeks to draw lines of inclusion and exclusion. As Buechner defines it, vocation is that marvelous “place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” But his example is more telling. When trying to discover your vocation, Buechner says,

By and large a good rule for finding out is this: The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you most need to do and (b) that the world needs to have done. If you really get a kick out of your work, you’ve presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing cigarette ads, the chances are you’ve missed requirement (b) (118-19).

The cigarette ad writer is worth considering since it parallels Schuurman’s example and because our society’s contemporary outrage against tobacco mirrors the temperance crusade. All aspects of tobacco have assumed almost pariah status, including farmers who grow it, companies who manufacturer and sell it, businesses that allow tobacco to be used on their premises, and even consumers who smoke, dip, and chew it. What was once socially and morally acceptable as well as readily available and consumed has been transformed because of a variety of cultural factors, including the malfeasance of the tobacco industry, new scientific research, and changing cultural ideals regarding health. Tobacco has lost its sanction and is not regarded as a help but as a harm to our neighbor, and churches may even advocate for legal changes and other restrictive practices against it.

Daniel Call and his congregation had to consider an even more complicated dilemma: whether the production of alcoholic beverages was morally acceptable for a Christian minister. Bi-vocational clergy often are expected to meet a higher standard in their choice of second (or first) careers, thus further limiting their options. This may become an important issue again as American Lutherans endorse greater use of non-stipendiary ministers, lay presidency, and synodically authorized min-
isters. Would Luther have endorsed a pastor also
serving as a community’s executioner? A role may
not be “sinful in itself,” but it may be perceived as
incompatible with service as a minister of the
gospel.

Moral Relativism and the Paradox
of Christian Vocation

However we determine the suitability of a
particular place of vocation—the extent to which
it provides service to the neighbor, the presence of
sanction, our ability to discern
God’s will—our decision
will be greatly affected and
sometimes determined by
the historical situation and
cultural trends. The case of
Daniel Call illustrates this
well, and within our own
lifetimes, the transformation
of attitudes toward tobacco
provides another example.
The resulting temptation is
to question the meaning of
vocation itself just as some
question the possibility of
ethics in an environment of
moral relativism.

This suggests that it may
be appropriate to embrace a
kind of vocational relativism.
Within the Reformed and
Lutheran traditions, theolo-
gians often have been careful to distinguish what
the Puritan William Perkins called the “general”
and the “particular” call. The general call is the
call to faith in Jesus Christ; it is the call to disciple-
ship. The particular call speaks to the specific roles
and responsibilities in which and through which a
Christian might live and serve faithfully. Reformed
theologians argue that within a Christian life, the
particular call must always conform to the higher,
general call, and this is how questions about the
moral value of particular jobs, roles, and types of
work should be understood.

While not using the same language, Dietrich
Bonhoeffer explained Christian vocation simi-
larly, stating that one experiences God’s call in the
encounter with Jesus Christ. In turn, Bonhoeffer
says, “vocation is the place at which one responds
to the call of Christ and thus lives responsibly”
(290–91). At the heart of this interpretation of
vocation is the place of response, and this place has no
ultimate meaning or eternal significance. Only the
encounter with Jesus Christ is ultimately signifi-
cant, Bonhoeffer says, just as only the general call
is ultimately significant. From this perspective, we
can look at the life of Daniel Call and conclude that
neither his making whiskey nor his decision to stop
making whiskey ultimately mattered. As Luther
himself noted, work is not
redeemptive, and there are no
particular callings in heaven;
their existence is temporary
and fleeting. With the writer
of Ecclesiastes, we can truly
say that the work of humans
is nothing but vanity.

Frankly, a fundamental
problem with our renewed
interest in vocation today
is that we are likely taking
it too seriously. Vocation
may assume an ultimate
significance that it does not
deserve. Christians seek
absolute certainty in know-
ing whether a particular line
of work is God’s will. Still
others believe that God has
a specific role and place for
them—a clear plan for life.

What you will do, where you will work, who you
will marry, and all the other messy questions of life
take on ultimate significance and are understood
to be predetermined and awaiting revelation by
a divine call. While such views can be personally
appealing, they are theologically misguided.

Of course, places of vocation, roles, and offices
have meaning, but their value is what Bonhoeffer
calls “penultimate.” The paradox of a Lutheran
theology of vocation is that these places of respon-
sibility do really matter, even without ultimate
significance. They matter so much that Christians
should organize their lives around them; they
require commitments that will consume time,
energy, and maybe even one’s life; they prompt
moral questions that should be studied, pondered,
and debated; and they are also vulnerable to change, ambiguity, and contextualism. Even more, institutions, including churches, should make judgments about them, including the compatibility of certain vocational roles with public ministry.

To be faithful, a practical theology of Christian vocation must beware of losing the paradoxical relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate. Temperance advocates or other moral absolutists frequently profess to proclaim God’s unambiguous will, and there is theological danger in the application of an ultimate meaning to something that has none. Moral fanaticism, Bonhoeffer says, is spawned by the collapse of the penultimate into the ultimate, and Benne cautions that Christians should not confuse God’s saving the world in Jesus Christ with human efforts to make the world a better place. Yet a complete separation is equally dangerous because it baptizes the status quo. By its claim to be someone’s vocation, every role can be represented as God’s will without God’s judgment, and there is also no need to seek to know if God’s revelation might be more complete.

The result is that humility is a much needed virtue in vocational discernment and discovery. It is humility that challenges the zealot’s moral absolutes but also leads one to openness to new understandings of moral truth, whether revealed or natural. A little humor may go a long way too. When interviewed, one contemporary descendant of Daniel Call wished that Call had given up preaching instead of making whiskey. Perhaps he was right. Call may have been a lousy preacher, confusing law and gospel every time. However, Call could make damn good whiskey, and if forced to choose a vocation, making good whiskey is better than bad preaching any day.

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Works Cited


Prospects for Patriotism?

As a political scientist and a parent, I have both a professional and a personal interest in patriotism. While recently browsing in a bookstore, therefore, my eye was caught by a book entitled How to Raise an American: 1776 Fun and Easy Tools, Tips, and Activities to Help Your Child Love This Country, co-authored by Myrna Blyth, conservative journalist, and Chriss Winston, former head of the White House Office of Speechwriting. Blyth and Winston have written a kind of parents' guide to raising future patriots. As its subtitle suggests, the book is full of ideas for historically educational and patriotically inspirational books to read, movies to watch, websites to explore, historic sites to visit on family vacations, celebratory activities for national holidays, and even suggested topics for dinner table conversation. It makes an excellent resource for home schooling parents looking for ways to supplement instruction in history and civics.

Whether other parents will find it equally useful, I'm less certain. I don't watch many movies, but if I did take the time for one, I'd rather watch Major League than Saving Private Ryan. (In the movie, at least, the Indians win.) For a family vacation, I'd just as soon take the kids to see their grandparents as visit a historic battlefield. I can't even imagine myself launching a dinner table conversation by asking what my children think the Founding Fathers had in mind when they wrote the First Amendment. And this is coming from someone who teaches political science for a living. I actually think stuff like historic battlefields and the First Amendment are pretty interesting. Reading the book, however, it is hard not to be reminded of an overly earnest high school student body president for whose ideas other students have little enthusiasm.

I have to admit, though, that I feel guilty about this reaction. I agree with the book's authors that patriotism is important, that it is wrongly viewed with suspicion by much of the country's opinion-forming class, and that the media tend to offer up unfairly critical portrayals of America. It's surely true that our schools are doing a poor job teaching history, nor do I doubt for a moment that the typical textbook suffers from stultifying political correctness. And I actually think that most of the book's suggestions (apart, at least, from the dinner table conversations) are perfectly good ideas—not the sorts of things I'm likely to do in my spare time, but nevertheless ideas for resources or activities that we might well make use of in home schooling our children. Blyth, Winston, and I are on pretty much the same page.

So why such an ambivalent response on my part? I initially thought I was reacting against the artificiality of the enterprise, the elaborately planned attempts to create a sentiment one expects to arise naturally. Upon reflection, though, I think that is not quite the issue. Citizens—to borrow a phrase from Noah Pickus—are made, not born, and patriotism is therefore always to some extent deliberately cultivated. We encourage patriotism through a host of largely unobjectionable social mechanisms: parades, marching bands, and fireworks displays; semi-mythical stories about George Washington being unable to tell a lie or Abe Lincoln growing up in his log cabin; flying the flag in front of public buildings and singing the national anthem before ballgames; and, of course, public education. Patriotism is never simply spontaneous. If it were, we would not need to worry about its possible demise.

It is not, then, simply the artificiality of the book's recommendations that gives me pause. It is, rather, the individualized nature of the book's appeal for patriotism. Precisely because they fear that the social mechanisms for instilling patriotism are breaking down, the authors must appeal to individual parents to take in hand their own children's civic education in an act of countercultural conservatism. But it is not clear that this tactic can really achieve its aim.
For in calling for a rebirth of patriotism, what kind of sentiment do Blyth and Winston wish people to experience? Patriotism is a sentiment passed on by society as a whole. It is fundamentally a collective and communal sentiment, one that presents itself to the individual citizen as an allegiance to something larger than the self, a corporate body extending across generations, with a common history and a shared future. It is thus felt more as obligation than as choice, asking less for our consent than simply our assent. Parents can, no doubt, generate an image of patriotism through a series of rational decisions to attempt to raise patriotic children. But that image, by becoming individualized and self-conscious, will have changed its nature. One sees this most clearly in the emphasis given by the book's authors, in their defense of patriotism, to America's values (freedom, hard work) and good qualities (tolerance, courage, generosity). Once the appeal for patriotism becomes framed in these terms, our country inevitably comes to be valued less because it is ours, a community of which we are a part, than because it is good, an object of individual rational choice. Even if the authors' efforts were to succeed, the patriotism that would result would thus be different from the one whose gradual disappearance they lament.

Does this matter? If patriotism is no longer necessary or appropriate for the globalizing world of the twenty-first century, its decline would not be a concern. And even if it remains important, its nature might well need to evolve with changing political circumstances. What can we say about the appropriate role of patriotism in the political world of coming decades? I wish to suggest—far too briefly and inconclusively—not only that patriotism remains important in the contemporary world, but also that its changing nature presents us with certain very real political dilemmas.

Patriotism remains important because of its close connection to representative government, using the word "representative" in a broad sense, to indicate not simply democratic procedures for governing through elected representatives, but rather the more general notion that a government, democratic or otherwise, ought to represent the shared life of its citizenry. Citizenship in the modern world has several functions. One is administrative, marking out the group of persons subject to a given state's legal apparatus and for whom it must take responsibility. Another is participatory, indicating those with a right to participate in governance and office-holding. A third is essentially representative. Citizenship demarcates the class of persons belonging to the body politic and entitled to expect that their government's laws and actions will "represent"—reflect, embody, proceed from— their common life. Only to the extent that such a common life actually exists can a government be truly representative at all.

Patriotism both reflects and helps to sustain that common life. When institutions are representative, the common life of the people naturally flows into and finds expression in public life and law, giving rise to the celebrations, holidays, songs, stories, symbols, and rituals that foster patriotism by embodying a broader community existing across time, of which citizens are a part and toward which they owe obligations and feel allegiance. The feeling of patriotism in turn nourishes a commitment to that common life, helping citizens view themselves as sharing a common destiny, obliged to work out their civic disagreements with one another, exercising the option of voice rather than exit, in A. O. Hirschman's terms. Patriotism and representative government are thus closely linked, for a body politic possessing a genuine common life will exhibit the former and be capable of the latter.

There is considerable momentum in today's world, at least in the liberal West, toward forms of "global governance," pushing more political power and responsibility onto international institutions of various sorts. Yet the world remains deeply divided along numerous cultural fault lines. There is no global body politic, no global common life. Despite the aspirations of international lawyers, human rights activists, NGOs, and UN bureaucrats, genuinely representative government remains possible only on a smaller scale, in the sorts of political communities in which patriotism is also conceivable. To the extent that we value representative politics, we should also value those communities and the patriotism that serves as their affective lifeblood.

Not just any patriotism, however. Here the distinction noted earlier, in considering how Blyth and Winston's very efforts to revivify patriotism subtly change its nature, becomes relevant. For the patriotism that sustains these communities is primarily one that confronts us as members of a corporate body to which we belong, but which we did not choose. If
we are patriots only as a result of individual, voluntary decisions, adhering to our country for its various good qualities, our allegiance is essentially transferable. What we have freely given, we may freely retract should our country no longer appear to possess one of those good traits we admired or should some other country possess them to a higher degree. Those who love their country only because it is good do not really love their country. Their patriotism is just one more voluntary act of that chief player in the drama of contemporary liberalism, the autonomous self. Where a real common life exists, however, we never simply choose it. We acknowledge it as already ours, and thus as legitimately making claims upon us.

We have long known how to sustain the patriotism that supports real communities. Tocqueville explained the secret in his analysis of American democracy. He knew that public spirit is always in part a product of artifice. Especially in a democracy, he suggested, individual citizens—finding themselves equal and therefore equally weak, unable to accomplish anything of much public significance on their own—would tend to withdraw into small, private circles of family and friends, focusing on modest but attainable pleasures and leaving public life to fend for itself. Federalism and local government were the successful American antidotes to this democratic individualism. Democratic citizens would recognize their common life only when forced to confront the numerous ways in which it intersected their smaller, private circles, and they would take responsibility for it only when given the power to do so successfully. Public spirit and patriotism arise when meaningful political authority resides in actual communities with a shared life.

Decentralization is thus essential to the mutually sustaining combination of patriotism and representative government. We see evidence of this in contemporary America, where political power has moved steadily towards the center for the better part of a century. Indeed, the “culture wars,” to which How to Raise an American really belongs, are best understood as a backlash against a government no longer experienced as representative by many. They thus testify to the difficulty of sustaining a truly common life on such a broad scale. In the context of our current globalizing world, the lesson to draw seems clear: If we value representative government, we should resist calls to transfer sovereignty to international institutions, locating it instead at lower levels, so that patriotic sentiment can sustain a community with a common life across generations.

The American precedent, however, reveals a difficulty with this conclusion. For the centralization of power in American politics occurred at least in part for very good reasons, namely, to deal with a pair of intractable problems with which states and localities seemed unable to cope on their own: the rise of an integrated national economy and racial discrimination. Similarly, contemporary advocates of global governance point toward analogous problems beyond the capacity of individual states to resolve: the rise of an integrated international economy, environmental concerns, and security issues such as nuclear proliferation and terrorism, to name some of the most important. Perhaps these advocates underestimate the nation-state’s ability to deal with such problems through forms of cooperation falling short of transnational governance. And conceivably a sense of global community and cosmopolitan patriotism could one day arise that would make representative global institutions for dealing with such problems possible. But the problems are here today, and any such global body politic is very far off indeed.

In thinking about the future of patriotism and citizenship, therefore, we are faced with a real dilemma. Our choice appears to be between local and national institutions in which patriotism and representative government reinforce one another, but which may be of insufficient scope to deal adequately with a range of important issues, or transnational institutions of greater scope, but in which both patriotic sentiment and representative government will be impossible in any foreseeable future. My own preference under such circumstances is for particularism and patriotism, for political institutions capable of representing and reinforcing what common life we possess. But even if we all read How to Raise an American and do our best to follow its advice, the problems of patriotism and citizenship will not go away any time soon. ¶

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Reprising Brown vs. Board of Education
New Hope or More Despair

CRYSTAL MEREDITH FILED SUIT IN PARENTS INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS VS. SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1 (2007, ALSO KNOWN AS THE PICS CASE), BECAUSE SHE WANTED HER SON JOSHUA TO ATTEND THE ALL-YEAR KINDERGARTEN NEAREST HER HOME. BECAUSE LOUISVILLE'S SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS WERE ATTEMPTING TO KEEP ITS SCHOOLS RACIALLY BALANCED, JOSHUA WAS INSTEAD ASSIGNED TO AN ALL-YEAR SCHOOL TEN MILES FROM HOME. IN SEATTLE, ANDY MEIKS'S PRINCIPAL ENCOURAGED HIM TO APPLY TO BALLARD HIGH SCHOOL'S BIOTECHNOLOGY CAREER ACADEMY, WHERE THE PRINCIPAL THOUGHT THAT ANDY, A MIDDLE SCHOOL HONORS STUDENT WITH ADHD AND DYSLEXIA, WOULD THRIVE. BECAUSE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT WAS ATTEMPTING TO MEET ITS TARGET RACIAL BALANCE AT BALLARD AND HIS OTHER TOP SCHOOL CHOICES, HOWEVER, HE WAS ASSIGNED TO A SCHOOL THAT REQUIRED A FOUR-HOUR COMMUTE ON THREE CITY BUSES.

LIKE MANY SUPREME COURT CASES, HOWEVER, THE PICS CASE HAS A LARGER SYMBOLIC MEANING BEYOND GETTING JOSHUA AND ANDY TO THEIR PREFERRED SCHOOLS. EVER SINCE THE FIRST JUSTICE HARLAN'S DISSERT IN PLESSY V. FERGUSON, WHICH UPHOLDED A STATE LAW FORBIDDING "COLORED PERSONS" TO SIT IN THE SAME RAILROAD CARS AS WHITES, TWO VIEWS ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S DUTY IN MATTERS OF RACE HAVE BATTLED IT OUT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL ASCENDANCY. ONE VIEW, REPRESENTED BY JUSTICE HARLAN'S STIRRING CLAIM THAT "OUR CONSTITUTION IS COLOR-BLIND" IS ECHOED IN THE PICS OPINION BY CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS, WHO ARGUES, "THE WAY TO STOP DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF RACE IS TO STOP DISCRIMINATING ON THE BASIS OF RACE." IN THIS VIEW, WHEN GOVERNMENT STOPS USING RACIAL CLASSIFICATIONS, THE PROBLEM OF RACE EVENTUALLY WILL GO AWAY. INDEED, IN GRUTTER V. BOLLINGER (2003), CHALLENGING THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN'S RACE-CONSCIOUS ADMISSIONS POLICIES, JUSTICE O'CONNOR EXPRESSED HER EXPECTATION THAT RACIAL PREFERENCES SHOULD NOT BE NECESSARY TO FURTHER IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL DIVERSITY INTERESTS WITHIN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS.

Justice Blackmun gave voice to the opposing view in Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (1978), where the Court signaled that racial preferences to further minority admissions in education would henceforth be under attack. Dissenting, he argued, "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way." He would no doubt have repeated himself if he had been on the bench for the PICS case. In PICS, the nation learned what school desegregation experts have known for a long time: America's public schools are re-segregating. While substantial desegregation gains were made between 1968 and 1980, with the number of black children attending all-minority schools declining from sixty-four to thirty-three percent, this trend has reversed since then. As of 2002, 2.3 million students—one in six black children—attend schools that are ninety-nine to one hundred percent minority.

In the Blackmun view, if the government does not pay attention to this re-segregation of public education and act affirmatively to forestall it, the civil rights struggle represented by Brown v. Board of Education will be a failure. The leadership gains that racial minorities have made in business, the professions, and political life will be reversed if the next generation of Americans comes out of segregated schools, whether they are segregated by conscious public choice or because of public neglect.

From the perspective of constitutional doctrine, the PICS case is not particularly novel. The central rule of the plurality opinion—that state or local government use of visible racial classifications must survive the courts' "strict scrutiny" even if that use is "benign" and for the benefit of minorities—has been firmly in place at least since City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Company (1989). Similarly, the PICS plurality followed longstanding case law holding that under the "strict scrutiny" test, the state must...
show a "compelling interest" when it uses racial preferences and that remedying past racial discrimination and diversity in higher education are adequate compelling interests.

However, *Croson* and subsequent affirmative action cases show that, constitutionally, the devil is in the details. Starting with *Croson*, the Court effectively has held that, except for Congress (perhaps), government units can only remedy the discrimination that they themselves have caused or participated in. Thus, a school board cannot use racial assignments to remedy ongoing racial inequality caused by historical segregated housing patterns or discriminatory employment practices. Only those school boards that intentionally segregated their students by race and then never came into compliance with *Brown* can do so. Once a school district has complied with *Brown* by dismantling its segregated system, as most districts have now done, it can rarely if ever use past discrimination as a reason to assign children to public schools based on race, even if the schools have become completely re-segregated. Because of this rule, the Court essentially has accepted that minorities who start from unequal places in education, employment, and other opportunities because of the legacy of racial discrimination will never have a legal remedy.

Similarly, the Court's previous rulings that higher educational institutions have a compelling interest in ensuring a diverse student body for pedagogical interests seems to have very limited application to K-12 institutions, under the PICS ruling.

Four justices rejected the school districts' claims that their desegregation plans were a constitutionally valid "narrowly tailored" method to "reduce racial concentration in the schools," "ensure that racially concentrated housing patterns do not prevent nonwhite students from having access to the most desirable schools," and provide "educational and broader socialization benefits... from a racially diverse learning environment" including a critical mass of minority students to prevent their isolation at various schools.

Moreover, according to the plurality, the Seattle and Louisville school plans were not carefully designed to ensure "exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas and viewpoints" because they used limited definition of diversity. In Seattle, race was defined as white/nonwhite, and in Louisville race was defined as white/black/other.

The plurality opinion leaves open the possibility that a school district's racial assignment plan might prevail if the district can provide evidence of a clear correlation between racial assignments and educational benefits. However, the Court will take a dim view of plans that "are directed only to racial balance, pure and simple, an objective this Court has repeatedly condemned as illegitimate."

What makes the reach of the PICS opinion somewhat uncertain is that much of Justice Roberts's opinion was joined only by the three most conservative members of the Court, Justices Thomas, Scalia, and Alito. Justice Kennedy, often the swing vote on the Court, largely agreed with the Court's analysis of when remedies for past discrimination are appropriate, but did not sign on to parts of the opinion rejecting the districts' claims that using racial demographics was the best way to achieve their stated goals. In his view, the plurality was "too dismissive of the legitimate interest government has in ensuring all people have equal opportunities regardless of their race... and displayed an "all-too-unyielding insistence that race cannot be a factor" in such decisions. Achieving a diverse student body and offering equal educational opportunity were significant enough interests, in his view, to devise a "race-conscious" remedy but not to use "crude racial categories of 'white' and 'non-white'" in achieving these goals.

Yet, Justice Kennedy also rejected the dissent's view that the PICS plurality "undermines Brown's promise of integrated primary and secondary education that local communities have sought to make a reality." Justice Breyer's dissent, joined by Justices Stevens, Souter, and Ginsburg, gave a lengthy history of the difficult efforts after *Brown* to desegregate the nation's public schools, noting that Louisville and Seattle desegregated schools only after their school districts were sued.

Justice Breyer's opinion, which paints a dismal picture of today's re-segregated schools, notes the difficulty of balancing community aspirations for a racially diverse student body with other important goals, such as high quality education, more neighborhood schools, less busing, more parent
and student choice, and reducing the risk of "white flight" into the suburbs. Because suburbs cannot be constitutionally forced into assisting inner-cities with desegregating their schools unless the suburban districts were involved in intentional segregation—which is difficult to prove in suburbs that never had to think about school segregation because minorities were discouraged or prohibited from living there—white flight has made true desegregation exceedingly difficult in core cities with large minority populations.

For school districts strongly committed to racial desegregation, the PICS case will be simply a large legal hurdle that they have to surmount. If they avoid using "race on its face" and look at other elements of diversity, such as economic, cultural, gender, and other factors in assigning students, their plans probably will pass muster in the courts. To accomplish this, of course, they may have to re-think how much "school choice" they are able to provide parents, since the more sophisticated assignment plans become, the fewer options school administrators may be able to offer parents. Their challenge will be finding the significant extra time and resources needed to create and administer such a sophisticated assignment system that does not so overtly rely on racial demographics to assign students to schools.

However, for those morally committed to a racially integrated society—or those who recognize its practical necessity in an increasingly multicultural world—PICS poses the greatest risks in the very communities which most need to attend to how race divides people. Communities that always have resisted the spirit of Brown, as well as communities where Caucasian parents simply don't care if their kids don't go to school with minorities, have been given a free hand by PICS to ignore the increasing racial segregation in urban schools. And, as long as those communities do not intentionally cause racial re-segregation by assigning minority pupils to all-minority schools because of their race, they are immune from suit under the Constitution.

The plurality and Justice Kennedy are probably right that there are other, less "crude" means than simple black-white racial assign-ments to remedy the increasing segregation of many of America's urban public schools. Like the University of Michigan, for example, school districts could require applications from K-12 children that describe how they meet diversity criteria, and individually consider students for placements, though such a system would divert scarce public school funds from classrooms to administration. More ambitious communities might try eliminating the city-county school district lines that track racially segregated housing patterns, or provide better incentives for Caucasian parents to select racially mixed schools than magnet schools and other incentive projects that have succeeded only partially. However, in the end, if there is no public will to acknowledge how government decisions in everything from zoning to transportation segregate communities, and to demand unstintingly the complex social changes necessary to prevent complete re-segregation of American schools, the prospect of repeating our dismal past is upon us.

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**life together**

Recovering a Sense of Place: The Promise of New Urbanism

Jeanne Heffernan Schindler

In 1908 Wassily Kandinsky, one of the founders of abstract expressionism, and Gabriele Münter, his companion and fellow artist, moved to Murnau, a small town in the lake district of southern Bavaria. Denizens of the avant-garde art world, the pair made quite a cosmopolitan couple. It is easy to imagine them residing in any number of European capitals. Yet, they were drawn to the pastoral setting of Murnau. It was there that each drew artistic inspiration for some of their most important works. Having visited Murnau recently, I can see why. The landscape is exquisite, marked by gently rolling hills and an extensive moor that reaches the foothills of the Alps. But Kandinsky and Münter were impressed not only by the natural beauty of the area; they were likewise inspired by its built environment. Kandinsky's *Murnau, A Village Street* and Münter's *Staffelsee in Autumn*, for instance, show a harmonious interplay of nature and human design, each worthy of artistic representation. On my visit, I was struck by just this interplay. The farm houses, hillside chapel, town square, medieval castle, and winding cobblestone streets are all comfortably at home amidst the mountains, lakes, foliage, and fen of this rich region. Little wonder that Murnau has been attracting residents and visitors for centuries. A sublime organic unity has been achieved here between the natural and created orders, each of which enhances the other. There is also a palpable vitality to the place. The shops, restaurants, offices, brewery, theater, church, and square are abuzz with activity. Both the unity and vitality of Murnau vindicate the principles of a promising architectural and city planning movement known as New Urbanism, a movement dedicated to the preservation and creation of precisely the kind of livable, beautiful, vital towns and cities that have historically dotted the European (and American) landscape and of which Murnau is a classic example.

New Urbanism began a generation ago, emerging from the work of Leon Krier, an architect and urban planner from Luxembourg. Krier’s central insight was that industrialism and its counterpart, industrial zoning, had destroyed the unity and vitality of countless European cities. The prime culprit at work was not the rise of manufacturing per se, but rather the rigid, mechanical separation of a once-integrated urban fabric into functional zones. As Krier pointedly insists, “Functional Zoning is not an innocent or neutral planning instrument; it has been the most effective means in destroying the infinitely complex social and physical fabric of pre-industrial urban communities, of urban democracy and culture.” Once the law mandates a physical separation of work, education, leisure, and living, the city’s cohesion unravels.

Philip Bess, an American New Urbanist, finds a parallel between the fragmentation of modern urban life and the fragmentation of human personality evident in individualism. In his newest book, *Till We Have Built Jerusalem: Architecture, Urbanism, and the Sacred* (ISI Books), Bess proposes that human beings not only shape their built environment but are, in turn, shaped by it. In this vein, he observes, “Given that the historic success of the now increasingly problematic idea of the self as disembodied, autonomous, and a-historical has been historically proximate to the disintegration of the traditional city, perhaps we should not be surprised that a ‘disintegration of the self’ and a ‘disintegration of the built environment’ seem to have been occurring together.” This two-fold disintegration finds its clearest instantiation in suburban sprawl.

According to the New Urbanists, suburban sprawl is far from a neutral development. Rather, it is both a symptom and cause of civic decline. In the US, suburban sprawl boomed after 1945 with the convergence of a number of factors: post-War affluence allowing for mobility and new construc-
tion, widespread ownership of automobiles, the impulse to escape urban social and racial tensions, and, most importantly, planning ordinances that mandated the physical separation of human activities into functional zones. Hence the rise of “bedroom communities” and the long-distance commute. More ominously, Bess contends that suburban sprawl has engendered a set of baleful effects: it has prompted disinvestment in historic city centers, created an artificial segregation of people according to income (with housing developments built according to an income gradient), and a de facto separation of communities according to age and race. Suburban development, as he sees it, also has exacted a heavy environmental toll, as farmland and wilderness areas have been consumed to make way for the costly infrastructure needed to sustain what Bess calls the new “paradigm for the good life.” The American dream, it seems, no longer requires simple home ownership, but rather ownership of a particular kind: a detached, single-family home on at least an acre. The New Urbanists prompt us to consider the monumental resources required to build and maintain the segmented pattern of life mandated by suburban construction, nearly every element of which requires the use of an automobile. We drive to the shopping center, office park, grocery store, school, and church. The human scale (which in a pre-industrial city meant a five-minute, walkable radius to those places necessary for fulfilling our daily tasks) has been definitively abandoned. And it has been abandoned to the distinct financial advantage of the construction and automotive industries, but to the disadvantage of nearly everyone else.

The environmental disadvantages of suburban sprawl are clear and serious, but they are related to even more significant spiritual and civic costs. As the preface to James Howard Kunstler’s provocative piece “Home From Nowhere” (Atlantic 1996) charges, post-War development has created “a system that corrodes civic life, outlaws the human scale, defeats tradition and authenticity, and confounds our yearning for an everyday environment worthy of our affection.” Kunstler contends that the pattern of development we have witnessed for the last sixty years cannot sustain our souls or our polity. Why? For one thing, he notes that suburban development fails to respond to the human need for beauty. Think of the ubiquitous strip mall. “It is,” he declares, “in every one of its details a perfect piece of junk. It is the anti-place.” The fantastic ugliness of the strip mall, free-standing Jiffy Lube, gargantuan shopping warehouse, and the like are easy targets, but even upscale housing developments violate good aesthetics and undermine civic connections. Most such subdivisions are painfully monotonous and constructed with efficiency and economy rather than handicraft and durability in mind. They have no history and no identifiable distinctions. They are infinitely interchangeable, constructed as easily—and similarly—in Fort Wayne or Fort Lauderdale. Moreover, they are intensely privatized. Most forego sidewalks in favor of traffic flow and sprawling front lawns. Most have no distinctly common spaces and are not accessible by public transit. All privilege the automobile and individual acreage.

Suburban residential and commercial architecture run afoul of what Kunstler calls the principles of “civic art.” Taken as a whole, these principles of physical design encourage a sense of place, communal belonging, and historical continuity—all essential elements of a robust civic identity. First among the principles of civic art is the proposition: honor the human scale. What this means in practice is that the neighborhood should be the principal unit of urban planning, and it should be modest in size, walkable, and home to all of those institutions necessary for daily living, such as schools, shops, churches, and parks. This leads to the second principle: promote mixed-use development. Planners and builders should design higher-density properties that house a variety of purposes, residential, commercial, artistic, and so on. This vitalizes an area, preventing the ghost-town effect of suburban exodus. Instead, neighborhoods and the cities of which they are the building blocks remain active beyond the work day. The principle of mixed-use development has another advantage. It promotes an integrated life. Instead of driving to far flung places in order to learn, worship, work, eat, and relax, a well-constituted neighborhood offers these opportunities close to home. Moreover, it does so in a setting that is beautiful.

This is a third principle of civic art: construct buildings that are aesthetically pleasing and durable. On this score, New Urbanists directly
challenge the prevalent concept of a “design life,” namely, the conscious construction of buildings meant only to last fifty years or so. It is to the world of construction what “planned obsolescence” is to manufacturing—building with demolition in mind. For Kunstler, this represents a criminal waste of resources and effort. It almost invariably constitutes a crime against beauty as well. “Compare any richly embellished firehouse or post office built in 1904 with its dreary concrete-box counterpart today,” and you will see the problem. “Compare the home of a small-town bank president of the 1890s, with its massive masonry walls and complex roof articulation, with the flimsy home of a 1990s business leader, made of two-by-fours, Sheetrock, and fake fanlight windows.” The former is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; the latter will scarcely see its seventy-fifth birthday. The ephemeral and banal character of contemporary construction betrays what Kunstler calls “chronological connectivity.” The materials and style of new buildings evoke no sense of the past, no connection to an architectural tradition, while their short design life ensures their time-boundedness. By contrast, he notes that “the buildings our predecessors constructed paid homage to history in their design... and they paid respect to the future in the sheer expectation that they would endure through the lifetimes of the people who built them.”

Traditional urban design fostered another form of connectedness, what we might call “civic connectivity.” As noted above, it accomplished this by means of identifiable, populous neighborhoods that fostered frequent human interaction. It also accomplished this in another noteworthy way. Towns and cities traditionally incorporated a spatial hierarchy of streets, leading to the city center, often a square or plaza, which featured civic and religious buildings most prominently. The very institutions that symbolize and instantiate our communal identity were given pride of place. These were the landmarks of the urban landscape, and they testifies visually to the importance of the community and gave to the individual citizen a sense of belonging to a larger whole. In ages past, our built environment did something that moral exhortations to good citizenship alone cannot do; it physically encouraged a way of life that brought us into frequent contact with other citizens and with the symbols of our public identity. Philip Bess accounts for this phenomenon by observing that “there is a reciprocal relationship between the built environment on the one hand and people’s character and social relations on the other.” An appeal to the common good has more weight, one suspects, when the fact of our interdependence is everywhere evident.

None of the above principles is new. As the New Urbanists themselves insist, they merely express the common wisdom about urban design embodied very clearly in those places Americans and Europeans love to visit but have forgotten how to build: Savannah, Annapolis, New Orleans, London, Florence, Paris. These are the places that evoke creative response; the places we photograph and memorialize in art and song and story; the places whose beauty and charm inspire loyalty and service. When Gabriele Münter died in Murnau in 1962 (in her home of nearly sixty years), she bequeathed a visual testimony to the importance of place—that marvelous composite of nature and artifact that both roots us in history and allows our imagination to take flight. If the New Urbanists are right, we can build such places again. And the work of great artists can remind us how.

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Mark Torgerson, associate professor of worship arts at Judson College, has done extensive work on the contemporary Lutheran architect Edward Sövik. He intends this book as an aid to providing a variety of contexts for those thinking today about designing appropriate spaces for Christian worship across denominational lines. As the title indicates, Torgerson emphasizes divine immanence rather than transcendence as the starting point for design for worship, and his book is designed to provide a variety of historical, theological, architectural, and liturgical tools for implementing the goal of designing contemporary churches that reflect this basic assumption about the theological groundings of worship.

Torgerson begins with some helpful introductory observations about the relationship of physical setting to worship and the notions and experiences of the divine that shape and are shaped by that setting. He sets up the contrast between God as immanent and transcendent, and explains how such devices as scale, lighting, and symbolism can be utilized to evoke one or the other of these attributes, which always have been mysteriously complementary in Christian incarnational belief. From the beginning, however, Torgerson makes clear his belief that contemporary worship spaces should be designed to evoke a sense of immanence—“God with us”—in contrast with more traditional design, such as the Gothic, which was more suited to the sensation of transcendence. This assumption is axiomatic and not extensively explained or defended, and the reader must be prepared to accept his argument on this premise. Although much of what follows is useful for anyone interested in modern religious design, those with different theologies of liturgy may find this assumption problematic.

Succeeding chapters—each of them brief and organized into subdivisions around central points—provide further context for the emergence of this particular strain of design for worship. Torgerson finds theological roots primarily in liberal and neo-orthodox twentieth-century Protestantism, particularly in Bonhöffer’s “religionless Christianity” and disciples such as Harvey Cox of The Secular City. The author’s choices here may not be to everyone’s taste, and the work might have profited from the invocation of a broader range of theological sources. Perhaps more important for his argument is his discussion of the ecumenical and liturgical movements in both their Protestant and Roman Catholic dimensions, which have had a profound effect on the theory and practice of worship both within and across Christian traditions.

 Chapters four through eight are perhaps the most useful, since they focus most directly on religious architecture. Torgerson does a good job explaining the basic theories, features, and practitioners of modern architecture, beginning with three major figures—Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbusier—who collectively designed only a handful of buildings for worship, but whose ideas on design were broadly, even pervasively, influential during the middle decades of the twentieth century. He identifies four basic principles informing the work of these architects—functionalism, simplicity, integrity, and contemporary expression—that were taken up by architectural
theorists and architects more focused on religious design. Among the latter, he discusses the innovative European work of Auguste Perret, Otto Bartning, Dominikus Böhm, and Rudolf Schwarz. He then discusses a representative sampling of significant twentieth-century American churches such as First Christian in Columbus, Indiana (Eliel Saarinen) and Philip Johnson’s Crystal Cathedral. The extensive chapter that follows is on E. A. Sövik, whose idea of a “nonchurch” that is usable both for liturgical and other communal activities appears to be Torgerson’s ideal.

The final two chapters deal with an assessment of the impact of the ecumenical and liturgical movements on contemporary worship and religious building, stressing the convergence of worship patterns of Catholics and Protestants. He goes on to discuss the growing assault on architectural Modernism as the previous century progressed; the emergence of the pluralism and eclecticism characteristic of Postmodernism; and a renewed theological interest in divine transcendence, expressed architecturally through a sense of mystery rather than the extreme clarity characteristic of the International Style. He concludes with some practical advice on planning for religious building, as well as an appendix of relevant documents (e.g., from Vatican II) and a glossary of terms.

Torgerson’s work is accessible and practical, designed more for clergy and parishioners rather than scholars. Its main defect is a tendency towards oversimplification. The author’s contrast of immanence and transcendence as theological categories is not well developed and rather fuzzy. He also neglects the differences that, despite ecumenical convergences, nevertheless separate Christian groups and have implications for patterns of worship and church design. He does not differentiate Anglicans from Protestants—as many Episcopalians would today—and also does not explore seriously the very real differences between the worship style that usually prevail in mega churches from that of more liturgical traditions, whether Roman, Anglican, Lutheran, or Reformed. (The Crystal Cathedral, for example, differs in some very important ways from the Roman Catholic churches with which Torgerson juxtaposes it.) Given these caveats, Torgerson’s book stands out as an informative and provocative introduction to thinking about contemporary church design for those with a practical interest in the issue.

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In May 1971, The Cresset published an article by Stanley Hauerwas on the “Problematics of a ‘Christian College.’” This article marked the beginning of almost four decades of thinking through the difficult issues at the intersection of Christianity and liberal education. Hauerwas’s most recent work, The State of the University, as the author admits, is his “first sustained attempt” at an articulation of this thinking.

As with much of Hauerwas’s published work, this book consists of lectures, articles, and even homilies written for diverse occasions and dedicated to far-ranging personalities. The grounding force in this multiplicity is theology, which appears in two modes: first as a “form of [academic] knowledge” in its own right, but also as the instrument which dictates the distinctly Christian character of other “forms of knowledge” within the university.

In the background of these reflections rests a common assumption that theology is superfluous in the modern university. Taking comments by Yale University President Richard Levin as the classic expression of this attitude, Hauerwas sets out to demonstrate the interconnectedness of theology with disciplines such as history, ethics, and metaphysics, thereby advocating theology’s inclusion in any university that presumes coherence among its faculties. Ultimately, however, Hauerwas resists the temptation to legitimate theology by reference to external criteria. In a move...
he learned from Karl Barth, Hauerwas demands that the message of theology—and the “joy and confidence” (32) that this message cultivates—stands for itself. Indeed, “theology” for Hauerwas is always determined by church practice, and by the individuals that church practice produces. Hauerwas even goes so far as to say that the lives of the figures about whom and for whom he writes are necessary for the validity of his argument.

A wonderful gem in the center of Hauerwas’s book is his chapter inspired by Wendell Berry (Chapter Six). Academics usually think of Berry primarily as an authority only regarding matters agricultural. While this is the sector in which Berry would confess he is most confident, his writings contain a vast treasure of solid thinking on many subjects. Readers outside of the academy long have found these insights provocative and fruitful. Now Hauerwas calls on professional theologians to do the same.

Hauerwas capitalizes on an early essay by Berry in order to voice a critique of abstract speech in the modern university. “Abstraction is the enemy wherever it is found” (94, quoting Berry). By “abstraction,” Berry means the lack of three determining criteria: 1) precise designation of an object, 2) accountability on behalf of the speaker, and 3) conventionality—the ability of the speaker’s community to recognize the first two criteria. In opposition to the tendency to abstraction, Berry offers an ethic of responsible speech that grounds one’s words in one’s immediate community. What Hauerwas adds to Berry’s intuition is a definition of community (“the church”) that fulfills Berry’s ethical requirements. For Hauerwas, the church is that group of people for whom the concrete words of the Gospel place a check on unwarranted theological impulses to abstraction. To support this move, Hauerwas brings his well-versed conception of Christian witness to bear on the problem that John Howard Yoder deemed “Constantinianism,” a problem which Hauerwas construes as an identification of the church with the abstract concept “state” (103).

Hauerwas’s discussion of Berry revolves around the idea of a Christian university. This is, nevertheless, only one aspect of a larger matter, that of Christianity in general and the university. Recent times have seen a renaissance of scholarship around this topic. The style of this book does not, however, follow that of other recent works. Hauerwas draws attention to recent volumes of a theoretical nature by George Marsden (1996) and James Burtchaell (1998), and to those that take an historical line of inquiry, such as Thomas Albert Howard’s monograph (2006). The approach one discovers in The State of the University is consistent with the bulk of Hauerwas’s thinking; it is practical and personal. Yet the material is sufficiently sophisticated to be demanding for many readers, particularly those who are not professional academics.

Such sophistication achieves its fullest expression in three chapters (nine, ten and eleven) toward the end of the book. These chapters consider the university’s relation to and place within the modern nation-state. This theme comes to a head in Chapter Eleven, in which Hauerwas defends a claim that he has been dancing around since the introduction: the university’s power lies in its ability to legitimate a secular politics by feigning this politics’ “inevitability” (170).

Here Hauerwas’s use of Yoder finds its payoff. To execute his defense, Hauerwas fully explicates Yoder’s concept of “Constantinianism” and includes an excellent analysis of the nature of “secularism,” as understood by Charles Taylor and others. The result is an identification of the modern nation-state as a Constantinian entity that wields secular discourse to purge the university of “unnecessary” subject-areas. In order to combat this trend, Hauerwas advises, on a theoretical level, that theology reclaim its power to demand “the church exist as an alternative to the state” (179). On a practical level, Hauerwas prescribes prayer. Prayer, he explains, is a practice which presupposes an arrangement of reality contrary to that of the modern nation-state.

Beside the usual suspects (Yoder, Jeffrey Stout, Alasdair MacIntyre), Hauerwas also gives attention to more exotic thinkers, such as Gregory Nazianzen, a fourth-century
theologian and rhetor. Adopting Gregory as its exemplar, the final full chapter in *The State of the University* advances an even more concrete picture of the sort of “alternative” to the secular university that the church is called to embody. The church is called to love the poor, not merely diagnose, treat, and dismiss the poor. On Hauerwas’s reading, this contrast—between the promise to “eradicate poverty” (10) and the extension of community to those currently afflicted by poverty—distinguishes the Christian faith from a more secular mindset and becomes possible through the orations of Gregory of Nazianzus.

Finally, one notes that, in contrast to some of Hauerwas’s earlier writings, the current book is written in a more typical scholarly form. The meticulously researched argument is seasoned with long and comprehensive footnotes. Yet, the graciousness with which the author (generally) regards his sources and the self-consciousness with which he regards his own ideas yield a discussion with strikingly communal overtones: one feels as though one is invited to ruminate alongside the author. The Latin verb *rumina* meant originally “to chew over again.” Truly, food for thought is precisely what *The State of the University* offers.

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THE LAST WORD THAT HISTORY can say of itself and for itself is a word of Law. A careful and sensitive study of the historical process, accompanied by introspection and reflection, can lead me to the conclusion that my thinking and believing are conditioned by the times in which I live. Such an examination can also show that regardless of the place I or my society may occupy in the continuing stream of history, I use the results of historical development and technological advancement in the service of evil rather than of good.

In a word, history is corrupted and in need of redemption—this much I can know of myself. I can learn to know history as Law. But the central message of the Christian faith is its assertion that the Law is not God’s last word to men, but that His final self-disclosure is the Gospel of salvation. This salvation was historically wrought and can be historically realized. It is God’s pardon for history, and history’s only hope.

Not Self-Redemptive

If history’s pardon and history’s hope are rooted in God, then any view of history which sees it as self-redemptive is ruled out. As the announce-ment of the giveness of God in and for history, the Gospel is also the denunciation and renunciation of all human efforts to save history and of all trust in human ability to redeem historical process.

That divine stricture applies with equal force to all such efforts, regardless of their origin. It directs itself with equal vigor against the bourgeois and the Marxist theory of progress, as against any other construction that would seek to rob God of primacy and lordship in the achievement of human redemption.

What we term the “bourgeois theory of progress” is the naive faith in the infinite improvability of man that characterized many of the founding fathers of the United States and that was largely produced by the capitalist revolution in European history. The development of finance capitalism in the early modern era made it possible for men to go from rags to riches in a short time. The impression thus created of infinite possibilities for expansion and improvement was substantiated when men grew rich in the trading days of the seventeenth century. But nowhere was this myth of progress more widespread than in the early United States.

Students of colonial history will recall that America was a land of economic opportunity to those who came here from various parts of Europe. On the frontier the individual was pitted against the forces of nature. If those forces were victorious, he died. But if he managed to overcome them by brain or brawn or a combination of the two, he could make a life for himself and for his family in what had previously been a wilderness. With the industrial revolution there came additional support for the theory of progress. For all a man needed was inventive genius, cleverness, and a little luck to achieve great things in the field of manufacturing and business.

Regardless of the economic and social value of the movement just sketched—an interesting and important problem, but not directly related to our question—the fact remains that the development of the middle class as the most aggressive economic and political unit in modern society brought with it an ideology of progress and of man’s function in history that runs counter to some of the basic affirmations of Christian
faith. When a man could, by the manipulation and use of this or that natural resource, acquire wealth, prominence, and power over his fellows, it was very easy to make him believe that there was no limit on his opportunity and that the course of history is forward. Thus it was that the older form of "liberalism" developed its philosophy of history.

And Marxism Concurs

Although both would object violently to the comparison, there is much affinity between this philosophy of history and the Marxist view. The theory of history which Marx propounded a century ago is, to be sure, a dynamic one in contrast to the static conception underlying the theory of progress. But it shares with the theory of progress a naive faith in history's power to redeem itself.

"The history of all hitherto existing society," says the Communist Manifesto of 1848, "is the history of class struggle." Before history began, however, this was not true. The Marxist philosophy of history envisions a prehistoric golden age, in which there was economic harmony. But this harmony was disrupted by catastrophe when, for the first time, a man exploited the labor of another man. Ever since then history has been the arena for a struggle between those who labor and those who use the labor of others for their own aggrandizement; first one, then another class has come out on top. But history is working its way out of this struggle. It has produced a new class, the proletariat, to which the future of history belongs. One day this class will unite to destroy its oppressors, and then the primitive golden age will be restored. Despite the many parallels between this view and the Christian understanding of history, the Marxist theory significantly rules out the redemptive and creative activity of God as the ruling force in human history.

This is, indeed, the fundamental heresy in both the theory of progress and the Marxist philosophy of history. The theory of progress believes that history will move toward its goal by a steady rise; Marxism believes that history will achieve that goal by revolution. But both mistakenly believe that this will be history's own doing, and both are opposed to God's revolution in Christ—the bourgeois theory because it is a revolution, the Marxist theory because it is God's. The pride of achievement in the former and the pride of ambition in the latter make it impossible for either to accept the Christian claim that in Christ God has turned history upside down.

History an Arena

And yet that is the core of the Christian understanding of history as Gospel. Like Marx, the Christian sees history as the arena of a struggle, not between social classes, but between God and Satan. The Christian also looks backward to a primitive state of innocence, a golden age, in which harmony prevailed. He also believes that this golden age was destroyed by the selfishness of man, not by a sin against another man, but by a sin against the Almighty. He also believes that history will be redeemed by a cataclysmic event, not by a revolution from below, but by a revolution from above. The Christian faith in God's redemption of history centers in the Cross. The Cross is, characteristically, the symbol of history as Law (men failed to realize that they were crucifying their King) and the symbol of history as Gospel (by the crucifixion God became the King). Hidden in the Cross is God's Word to history and His promise of redemption. For by the Cross God broke into history and shattered the power of those who ruled history. The "Prince of this age" held men captive, and those who served him lived for this age. But in His Son, God established a new age and set into motion a new aeon.

Because of the Cross, the Christian sees history as the bearer of the divine activity. He knows better than does anyone else that history cannot be counted upon to work out its own salvation. For history as it moves on is part of the old aeon, of the aeon that passeth away. It is only by the radical intrusion of the new aeon in Christ that men can begin to live again. This is the "eternal life" of the New Testament, the life of the (new) age, hid with Christ in God. But that life begins in the here and now, and so the Christian view of history takes time very seri-
ously. In contrast to the Greek view that time was unimportant and only eternity mattered, Christianity bade men to understand that the Word had become flesh, had entered history. As we mentioned in the first part of this essay, the Christian interpretation of the Kairos, the appointed time, is part of this general attitude toward history and time.

No materialist, dialetical or otherwise, is more pessimistic than is the Christian of history’s chances to redeem itself. But no idealist, bourgeois or otherwise, is more optimistic in his assertion that history can be redeemed—but by God! The Cross is both the denunciation of all human attempts at self-redemption and the annunciation of God’s redemption in Christ.

Because the Christian philosophy of history takes time seriously, the Christian doctrine of the Church is an integral part of that philosophy. The Church is, in New Testament terms, the body of Christ, whose Head is its redeeming Lord. Whatever may be its state in the world, it is to the Church that the future of history belongs. “All things are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” is the Pauline description. The Church is the company of those who acknowledge Christ as Lord and who have entered into the new aeon in Christ. It is the visible exhibit of God’s condescension to men disclosure of the power and will which governs history, both life and history had found their previously partly hidden and partly revealed meaning.”

If what we have sketched here is a description of the Christian view of history, then this view is a part of the Christian doctrine of justification by faith and not by works. That doctrine, abused and misunderstood, means no more and no less than this: that man cannot become what he should become except by the act of God in Christ. All human efforts are thereby declared useless, but man is called into fellowship with God by God Himself. The love and favor of God are bestowed, not because man is lovable, but because God is loving. So it is with history. History comes as Law whenever its movement demonstrates that man cannot achieve his own salvation. But it comes as Gospel when, in the Cross of Christ, it brings the message of God’s favor and abiding love. This is the ultimate meaning of history and the last, best hope of earth.

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A recent addition is the Jaroslav Pelikan Archive, featuring all of his essays published in The Cresset.
Sadao Watanabe (1913–1996) was a Japanese Christian artist who received an honorary doctorate from Valparaiso University in 1987. The Brauer Museum of Art has fifty-seven of Watanabe’s kappazuri dyed stencil prints in its permanent collection. Watanabe's works are featured in the Brauer's current exhibition of Japanese prints from its permanent collection, curated by the noted scholar Dr. Sandy Kita and on display through 23 March 2008.

Watanabe's images are a fascinating blend of East and West. The bold black outlining seen in his work reminds one simultaneously of traditional Japanese woodcuts, early medieval art, and stained glass designs. His works can be appreciated for their depiction of a particular biblical theme or story and can also be enjoyed for their patterned, compressed space that borders at times on complete abstraction. Through his high degree of stylization or simplification, Watanabe communicates both his reverence for his subject matter and his personal dialogue with art history.

Watanabe's technique of kappazuri stencil printing was adapted from a technique originally used for the dyeing of textiles. His prints have an elegant fluidity to their surfaces and a rich saturation to their color, both qualities which make them satisfying to view.

on reviewers—

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Palm Sunday
Tom Willadsen

Richard Russo’s *Bridge of Sighs*
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