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AD FONTES

A JOURNAL OF PROTESTANT LETTERS

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About

***AD FONTES* IS A QUARTERLY JOURNAL PUBLISHED BY THE DAVENANT INSTITUTE.**

Ad fontes, "to the sources," was a rallying cry of the Reformation. The Reformers bequeathed to us a heritage, rooted in the Scriptures and their wide-ranging humanistic studies, which sought to address the hard questions of theology, philosophy, and culture in a way that was true to the revelation of God's word and God's world. *Ad Fontes* channels this ethos into a modern context, seeking to explore our questions alongside the great cloud of witnesses and the many exemplars who have gone before us.

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ESSAYS

Calvin's Complex Ecumenism

JAMES R. WOOD

INTRODUCTION

The concept of catholicity has recently experienced a renaissance among Reformed Christians in North America.[1] This is salutary, for although American evangelicals and conservative Reformed Christians often regard the church as a spiritual unity, they have generally lacked commitment to visible catholicity.[2] Those who consider themselves John Calvin's (1509–1564) heirs—i.e., Reformed and evangelical Christians—have exhibited a reticence regarding ecumenical activity that goes beyond parachurch collaboration or *ad hoc* participation in public declarations on contemporary moral issues ("Evangelicals and Catholics Together" exemplifies both tendencies). And it is a tragic fact that the Reformed tradition has in recent history been marked by division.[3]

Calvin's concern for visible church unity was a complex synthesis of commitment, clarity, and charity. As will be demonstrated, Calvin believed that visible unity was a matter of great importance. He also believed that the only appropriate ground for union is the truth and therefore was not willing to pursue unity at any cost. His understanding of what constitutes a true church, however, was charitable. He held to a limited core of essential doctrines, was willing to compromise on secondary issues, and was flexible in his formulations.

Calvin's approach to church unity provides a constructive challenge to contemporary Christians who consider themselves his heirs. Those who wish to honor Calvin must care deeply about the visible unity of the church and resist complacency in the face of ecclesial division. To be faithful to the Reformed tradition, at least as it has been shaped by Calvin, necessarily includes a concern for catholicity. Our context today differs from Calvin's, but we would be wise to consider those opportunities according to Calvin's catholic convictions, particularly by focusing upon how Calvin worked for visible

1. There is a burgeoning movement of theologians under the label "Reformed catholicity/catholicism," including the Davenant Institute. The number of books and articles that include that description in their titles or addresses has surged. A representative sampling includes: W. Bradford Littlejohn, *The Mercersburg Theology and the Quest for Reformed Catholicity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009); Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015); Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, editors, *Church Dogmatics: Reformed Theology for the Church Catholic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016); Peter J. Leithart, *The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016); and James R. Wood, "Christ's Body is One: Resources for Reformed Catholicity in John W. Nevin's Incarnational Ecclesiology," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 14, no. 1–2 (2020): 73–99.

2. See Eddy Van der Borght, "Reformed Ecclesiology," chap. 10 in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. Gerard Mannion and Lewis S. Mudge (New York: Routledge, 2008), 189.

3. See Martien E. Brinkman, *A Reformed Voice in the Ecumenical Discussion*, Studies in Reformed Theology 31 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 15.

CALVIN MAINTAINED THAT THE CHURCH IS COMPOSED OF THE ELECT AND THAT GOD ALONE IS ABLE TO PERFECTLY PERCEIVE IT; YET CALVIN EXPANDED ON THIS TO ARGUE THAT THE WORD "CHURCH" ALSO HAS ANOTHER SENSE—AN ENTITY THAT IS VISIBLE TO HUMAN EYES.

unity with fellow Reformers and how he wrote about visible unity in his *Institutes*. In short, Calvin will not permit us to sacrifice truth on the altar of unity, but neither will he countenance neglecting unity in the name of truth.

Those newly initiated to Calvin's thought might assume that, due to his famous teachings on predestination, he would place primary emphasis on what is commonly referred to as the "invisible church." And, to a degree, this did mark much of his early ecclesiological thought. In the first version of the *Institutes* of the Christian Religion (1536), the Genevan Catechism (1537 and 1542), and his two Genevan Church Orders (1537 and 1541), Calvin defined the church largely in terms of predestination, and launched his ecclesiological reflections from the invisible church. At that earlier stage, Calvin argues that the question of the church's visibility or invisibility marked the primary difference between Rome and the Reformation.[4] But even in this stage, although clarifying that no human is able to perceive with perfect accuracy who will ultimately endure as the elect, Calvin already argues that there are no elect outside the communion of the faithful. Membership in the visible church is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for membership in the invisible church of those predestined to salvation.

As Calvin's theology matured, his focus shifted to the visible church.[5] This was likely informed by his efforts to build up the Reformation churches and his altercations with various radical groups which downplayed, if not denied, the institutional character of the church.[6] Calvin still maintained that the church is composed of the elect and that God alone is able to perfectly perceive it; yet Calvin expanded on this to argue that the word "church" also has another sense—an entity that is visible to human eyes. In the final version of the *Institutes* (1559), Calvin's discussion of the invisible church is quite brief,[7] and he quickly turns to devote most of his attention in his massive fourth book to matters related to the visible church.[8]

As certain scholars have argued, the Reformed distinction between the visible and invisible church can be helpfully understood in eschatological terms.[9] According to this conception, the visible church should be understood as the church in history—what is often referred to as the church "militant"—while the invisible church would be the church "triumphant," seen from the perspective of the consummated kingdom at Christ's return. The "External Means" of grace which are the focus of book four of the *Institutes* are to be understood as tangible instruments accommodated to temporal existence that enable believers to participate in the eschatological kingdom.[10] So emphasis is on the visible, historical church as a reflection and means of participation in the eschatological reality. It is thus imperative that the visible resemble and anticipate the invisible (i.e., eschatological) reality as much as possible.

BUDDING WITH BUCER

As early as the first edition of the *Institutes* (1536), the principle of unity was present in Calvin's thought, but it was during

4. See Dorothea Wendebourg, "The Church in the Magisterial Reformers," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Paul Avis (Oxford: Oxford, 2018), 231f.

5. For Calvin's identification of the visible church as the true church, see Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin,* trans. Harold Knight (London: Methuen, 1956), 191–193.

6. See Wendebourg, "The Church in the Magisterial Reformers," 233.

7. Calvin really only engages this theme in the first three sections of chapter one of book four.

8. See Edward A. Dowey, "Calvin on Church and State," *Reformed and Presbyterian World* 24 (1957): 247; Wendebourg, "The Church in the Magisterial Reformers," 233ff.

9. See John Tonkin, *The Church and the Secular Order in Reformation Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 129–130. This logic is echoed by Peter Leithart in various works. See especially the chapter, "The 'Body of Christ' is the Body of Christ," in Peter Leithart, *The Baptized Body* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2007).

10. See Dowey, "Calvin on Church and State," 248.

his years of exile from Geneva in Strasbourg (1538–1541) that it became an explicit agenda in his writings.[11] Already in the works published during this time,[12] one can see the clarity of Calvin's convictions on church unity, the ground of which he understood to be a fundamental and submissive commitment to the Word of God.[13]

These convictions come into clear expression in his response to the letter written to the Genevans by Cardinal Jacopo Sadoleto (1477–1547), who intended to draw them back to the Roman Church. He accused the Genevans of defecting from the truth and deserting the church.[14] Calvin's letter displays, even at this nascent stage of his career, his conception of what constitutes the church, and why he and the Genevans could not be justly charged with schism. He argued that Protestants revere the church "as our mother, [and] so we desire to remain in her bosom."[15] He described the marks of a true church: true doctrine, true use of the sacraments, and faithful execution of church discipline. He argued that Roman leaders were the schismatics since they had rejected Christ's authority through the Word by inventing deleterious doctrines and practices.[16] Through their disregard for and distortion of the doctrine of justification by faith, they had diminished the glory of Christ, overthrown the hope of salvation, and ceased to be a true church.[17] But Calvin was careful to state that there remained elect persons within the Roman Church and that his war was with the leaders who had rejected the truth and usurped Christ's authority over the church.[18] He explained that he never wished to leave the party of Rome and that he had always manifested, in word and deed, an eager desire for unity.[19] Here he provides one of the clearest statements of his views on church unity, the components of which would play out in the remainder of his life and ministry: "My conscience told me how strong the zeal with which I burned for the unity of thy Church, provided thy truth were made the bond of concord."[20]

During his time in Strasbourg, particularly under the influence of Martin Bucer (1491–1551), Calvin's views on church unity matured and were enacted in his reforming program. He studied Bucer's actions in the world of imperial religious politics[21] and began to make small efforts at achieving Protestant union himself.[22] While he was in Frankfurt for the meeting of the Schmalkaldic League, he met Phillip Melanchthon (1497–1560). Soon after, Calvin sent him twelve articles on the Eucharist which Melanchthon received with approval. This relationship "encouraged Calvin to believe that Protestant unity was achievable."[23]

Calvin increasingly distinguished his views on unity from Bucer after the series of colloquies between Rome and Protestant churches in 1540–1541.[24] Calvin criticized Bucer's excessive eagerness for reunion with Rome for resulting in an over–willingness to compromise.[25] The colloquies ultimately proved ineffective in terms of their original objectives. These would be the last of such efforts before the Council of Trent made permanent the division, and Calvin, thereafter, abandoned Rome and focused his attention exclusively on unity with Protestants[26]—who at least shared a core commitment

11. See John T. McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism: A Study in Our Religious Resources* (New York: Abingdon, 1930), 182.

12. During this time Calvin published, among other things, the second version of the *Institutes* (1539) as well as his commentary on Romans (1539).

13. See Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale, 2009), 103–105.

14. See John Calvin, "Letter to Cardinal Jacopo Sadoleto," republished in *A Reformation Debate: John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoleto,* ed. John C. Olin (Grand Rapids,: Baker, 1966), 57.

15. Ibid., 63.

16. Ibid., 69–73. He lists and discusses the Mass, the law of Innocent, intercession of the saints, and purgatory.

17. Ibid., 64–66.

18. Ibid., 75, 85.

19. Ibid., 55, 85.

20. Ibid., 86.

21. Calvin accompanied Bucer to meetings such as the Leipzig Disputation and the imperial diet of Frankfurt in 1539.

22. See McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism*, 180, 184. "Early in his career as a Reformer, Calvin began to make proposals of Protestant union. . . . It is safe to conjecture that the influence of Bucer was among the most potent factors in deepening his concern for union."

23. Gordon, *Calvin*, 99. His views of German Lutheranism became increasingly positive, so much so that he signed Melanchthon's Variata of the Augsburg Confession in 1540.

24. See ibid., 99–102.

25. See Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Mediaeval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale, 1981), 364.

26. See Gordon, *Calvin*, 104–105. "Having witnessed at first hand the divisions among the Protestants, Calvin offered a distinctive perspective as a basis for unity. For the Catholics, there was nothing to be said, as he fully endorsed Melanchthon's repudiation of reconciliation with the Roman church. For the Protestants, however, he wished to make a very different point: there was room for differences of theology and method as long as it was among those whose primary commitment was to the Word of God." See also McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism*, 180. "His union effort is primarily directed toward the consolidation of Protestantism. . . . His desire for the visible unity of the Church of God did not lead him to concede a place in that church to official Rome."

to the lordship of Christ over the church, which Christ governs by his Word.[27]

MESSY IN THE MIDDLE: MEDIATING LUTHER AND ZWINGLI

When Calvin was reinstalled as pastor of Geneva, he returned with a more robust vision for Protestant unity despite remaining embroiled in controversy with other Protestants. The Swiss and German Reformed sharply disagreed over the Eucharist, and the Marburg Colloquy (1529) had not alleviated the tension.[28] The Wittenberg Concord (1536)—a document drafted by Melanchthon and supported by Bucer—provided a glimmer of hope. But those hopes were dashed when, in that same year, Swiss Reformed theologians wrote the First Helvetic Confession in which they declared themselves against the Wittenberg Concord, thereby renewing the hostilities. These were Calvin's "first lessons in the self–destructive nature of disunity within the Reformation."[29]

Calvin realized that this disagreement was crippling the Reformation, and he also believed that reconciliation was possible, committing himself to that end. From his vantage–point, the failure at Marburg was due to a mutual misunderstanding of the respective parties' views.[30] Calvin himself did not fully align with either Ulrich Zwingli's (1484–1531) or Martin Luther's (1483–1546) formulations.[31] He persisted in believing, however, that the root of the truth was found in each and that his own formulation might be a resource for unity.

Calvin, as one seeking to define the boundaries of Reformed catholicism, offered a mediating position on the Eucharist which was consistent with the views he had already expressed. In his expositions of the Eucharist in the second edition of the *Institutes* (1539) and the *Little Treatise on the Lord's Supper* (1540) one can see his sensitivity to these issues and willingness to be flexible. He engaged in sustained communication with Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575) to articulate a formula that would satisfy the Swiss and do justice to the Lutheran view.[32] There were reasons to be hopeful until Luther's rejoinder in his *Short Confession of the Lord's Supper* (1544) which attacked Zwingli and his associates.[33] This tragically reignited the tensions between Swiss and German Reformed that Calvin had hoped to ameliorate.

STRATEGIC THROUGH SWITZERLAND

When Luther's invective dashed any immediate dreams for unity over the Lord's Supper, Calvin strategically invested his energies foremost in Zurich as the first step toward eventual union among the wider Reformed communities. His "plan was to make unification between Geneva and Zurich the first stage in general agreement."[34]

Beyond restating his commitments to unity in his commentaries written during this period (especially in the relevant passages in 1 Corinthians,[35] Ephesians,[36] and the Gospel of John[37]), the most significant unifying activity during this time involves Calvin's collaboration with Bullinger.[38] Though Calvin had significant disagreements with Bullinger about the Eucharist, he prioritized assuaging Bullinger's concerns and was willing to compromise with him. After Calvin had

27. See John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (Oxford: Oxford, 1981), 229. "Calvin was capable of considerable forbearance toward those suspected of heterodoxy who were not dangerously hostile to his system. He argued against narrow definitions of the doctrinal terms of communion so as to exclude diversity of opinion on nonessentials. . . . He favored a liberal practice of intercommunion between churches, even where minor divergences existed in doctrine, discipline, and worship. . . . Along with Bucer, he cultivated . . . an interconfessional toleration . . . His passion for ecumenical unity induced an ecclesiastical tolerance that was unusual in his day."

28. See Ozment, *Age of Reform*, 337.

29. Gordon, *Calvin*, 54.

30. See McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism*, 186.

31. See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490–1700* (New York: Penguin,2004), 248–250.

32. See Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 154.

33. See McNeill, *Unitive Protestantism*, 189–190.

34. Ibid., 196.

35. See John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Volume 1, trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 51. "[As] the object of the gospel is, that we be reconciled to God through him, it is necessary . . . that we should all be bound together in him. . . . For we must be one body, if we would be kept together under him as our head. . . . Hence to glory in his name amidst strifes and parties is to tear him in pieces."

36. See John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 268–282. In support of flexibility, Calvin argues that Paul recommends forbearance as the means to promote unity, which would result in a "harmony of views." This forbearance only goes so far, though. Staying true to his convictions about the clarity with which unity must be sought, Calvin makes multiple statements in his comments on 4:4–12 in which he explains that the grounds for such efforts is the truth/the Word/true doctrine.

37. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Volume 2, trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 182–189. "[Let] us remember that the Son of God . . . does not approve of any other faith than that which is drawn from the doctrine of the apostles, and sure information of that doctrine will be found nowhere else than in their writings…But woe to the Papists, whose faith is so far removed from this rule."

38. For more in–depth discussion of these events and Calvin's complex relationship with Bullinger, see Ozment, *Age of Reform*, 196ff; MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 251ff; and Gordon, *Calvin*, 176ff.

made five trips to Zurich, they reached an agreement on the Lord's Supper in 1549. The final version of the document, which would be later called the *Consensus Tigurinus*, consisted of twenty–six articles which, though they did not contradict Calvin's views, reflected little of his other writings on the Lord's Supper. This displays once again Calvin's flexibility for the sake of unity. This was a remarkable achievement, and a rare display of theological statesmanship for the time.[39]

Although the *Consensus* appeared to be a hopeful harbinger for greater future union among Protestants, it did not result in such positive developments with the Lutherans. After Luther died, Joachim Westphal (1510–1574) carried the torch of Luther's indignation toward these eucharistic agreements.[40] Calvin responded to Westphal and other Lutheran rigorists with a series of controversial tracts on the Lord's Supper. Though trenchant in tone, these tracts also display Calvin's consistent exposition of his mediating sacramental doctrine and desires for Protestant unity.[41] The unfortunate result of this affair, despite Calvin's best efforts, was that the divisions known since Marburg perdured and the antagonisms continued to calcify.

ENIGMATIC WITH ENGLAND

One of the more enigmatic elements of Calvin's catholic efforts is his engagement with the reform in England during the final years of his life. His theological flexibility was demonstrated in his regard for many liturgical matters as adiaphora[42] and his openness to episcopal polity.[43] But ambiguity emerges as one observes his communication with Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556). In light of the meetings of the Council of Trent, Cranmer sent correspondence in 1552 inviting Calvin to attend a meeting with Melanchthon, Bullinger, and himself. Cranmer's desire was for them to arrive at agreement on doctrine, especially over the Eucharist, so that they might refute the errors of Rome and strengthen the church in unity. Calvin responds with a letter in which he reiterates his concerns for unity and his despair over the divisions in the church, but he regretfully declines due to his inability to participate.[44] He exhorts Cranmer to proceed with this endeavor and commits to pray. In this letter, Calvin appears hopeful and sympathetic to Cranmer's reforms.

CALVIN'S CONCERN FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH STAMPED ITSELF ONTO THE STRUCTURE OF HIS MAGISTERIAL *INSTITUTES*.

A mere three months later, though, his tone shifts completely. He rebukes Cranmer for mishandling the reformation in England.[45] Calvin remarks that Cranmer should be ashamed that aspects of the Mass were retained in English worship and informs him that Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) was the reformer he trusted most in England. This is a jarring and perplexing shift of perspective on Calvin's part in such a short period of time. The following year Cranmer was jailed for his Protestant faith and burned at the stake. Cranmer's reforming career was over, having concluded without much direct assistance from Calvin.

SUMMARY FROM THE FINAL FORM OF THE *INSTITUTES*

The convictions concerning catholic church unity which remained constant throughout Calvin's career are expressed clearly in the final version of the *Institutes* (1559), particularly in book four, which is referred to with Calvin's title: "The External Means or Aims by Which God Invites Us Into the Society of Christ and Holds Us Within"; which is then abbreviated with the editorial title: "Of The Holy Catholic Church." The importance of this topic is evident in the fact that not only is it the subject of an entire book in Calvin's major work, but the lengthiest book at that. Calvin's concern for the catholic church stamped itself onto the structure of his magisterial *Institutes*.

In the opening paragraph of the opening chapter, Calvin makes multiple statements which explicitly convey his com-

39. See Ozment, *Age of Reform*, 339. According to Ozment, the *Consensus* "established theological agreement on disputed doctrines and prepared the way for the more comprehensible and definitive union of the two bodies." This would manifest in the compilation of the Second Helvetic Confession in 1566.

40. See MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 252.

41. See McNeill, *Character of Calvinism*, 206–207.

42. See Hesselink, "Calvinus Oecumenicus," 87. See also Gordon, *Calvin*, 260. According to Gordon, the "externals of worship" were consistently treated with a "charitable spirit."

43. See McNeill, *Character of Calvinism*, 217.

44. See John Calvin, "First Letter to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer," April 1552; reprinted in *Letters of John Calvin*, Volume 2, ed. Jules Bonnet, trans. David Constable (University of Toronto Library, 2012), 2:330–333.

45. See John Calvin, "Second Letter to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer," July 1552; reprinted in *Letters of John Calvin*, Volume 2, 2:341–343.

mitment to the church. To begin with, the chapter is titled: "The True Church with Which as Mother of all the Godly We Must Keep Unity." The church is the institution "into whose bosom God is pleased to collect his children." Therein, Christians are welcomed, nourished, and guided until they mature into spiritual adulthood. Fellowship in the church is a great gift of God's grace; therefore, it should not be treated lightly. Calvin proceeds with the comment: "What God has thus joined, let no man put asunder. To those to whom God is a father, the church must also be a mother." With this comment, Calvin mixes marital and maternal metaphors by conflating a statement from Jesus about the comprehensive and permanent union involved in marriage (Mark 10:9) with the famous quote from Cyprian (200–258) about the absolute necessity of membership in the visible church for one's salvation. In Calvin's view, since the church is the bride of Christ and mother of believers, concrete membership within her is essential to the being, and not merely the well–being, of Christian life. An implication of the visible church's maternal nature, Calvin argues, is that Christians must glean from her nurture their whole lives. "[It] is always disastrous to leave the church."

"WHEREVER WE SEE THE WORD OF GOD PURELY PREACHED AND HEARD, AND THE SACRAMENTS ADMINISTERED ACCORDING TO CHRIST'S INSTITUTION, THERE, IT IS NOT TO BE DOUBTED, A CHURCH OF GOD EXISTS."

In leaving the whole, one loses some element which is vital to Christian nurture. Therefore, Calvin states that Christians are under obligation "to cultivate the communion" of the universal visible church.[46] But the stakes are even higher—the Christian's hope for her future inheritance is tied to her unity "with all other members under Christ, our Head."[47] Calvin goes on to argue that God's commitment to unity in his church is so strong that "he counts as a traitor and apostate from Christianity anyone who arrogantly leaves any Christian society, provided it cherishes the true ministry of the Word and sacraments."[48] The consequence for schismatics is a "separation from the church [which is simultaneously] the denial of God and Christ."

Calvin also communicates his clarity regarding the grounds of the unity which is sought. Again, he identifies what he considers the constitutional elements of a true church. First he restates the essential marks: "Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."[49] In order to determine whether the Word and sacraments are handled properly, Calvin returns to the theme of Christ's lordship. In the section supplied with the editorial title, "The Church is Founded upon God's Word,"[50] Calvin asserts that the Word is the instrument through which Christ executes his lordship over the church.[51] This emphasizes once again Calvin's conviction about the fundamental submission to Christ through his Word. Unless this characterizes a church, there can be no true union with it.

He elaborates on this theme in a section discussing schism and heresy.[52] There he argues that "this communion is held together by two bonds, agreement in sound doctrine and brother love…[Apart] from the Lord's Word there is not an agreement of believers but a faction of wicked men." Unity without submission to Christ who rules through his Word is not true catholicity. To remain in union with a fellowship which has abandoned Christ as its lord is, effectively, to abandon Christ.

Though Calvin's statements about the Roman Catholic Church and the pope in his day are harsh, he nevertheless calls for significant charity in ecclesial recognition. He argues for "charitable judgment whereby we recognize as members of the church those who, by confession of faith, by example of life, and by partaking of the sacraments, profess the same God and Christ with us."[53] A practical application of this is that there must be an acknowledgment of varying levels of magnitude in doctrine. Calvin declares that the doctrines of absolute

46. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.7.

47. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.2.

48. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.10.

49. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.9.

50. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.2.4.

51. "[The] church is Christ's Kingdom, and he reigns by his Word alone."

52. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.2.5.

53. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.8.

necessity are: "God is one; Christ is God and the Son of God; our salvation rests in God's mercy; and the like."[54] These are essential to Christian faith and take ultimate priority in ecclesial unity. This allows for significant variance regarding other theological disputes, "which still do not break the unity of the faith." Division over such "nonessential" issues, Calvin argues, constitutes a thoughtless "[forsaking] of the church" for "petty dissensions."[55] Calvin opposes rash dissociation from faltering Christians for the sake of purity. He describes such purists as "evil persons" who forsake the call to love one's fellow believers by tolerating their vices while gently guiding them in truth.[56] To predicate reunion upon comprehensive theological concord will render catholicity impossible. But, even worse, to require doctrinal purity for ecclesial recognition will resign the church itself to oblivion. Thus, Calvin says: "[If] we are not willing to admit a church unless it be perfect in every respect, we leave no church at all."[57]

The emphasis on visible catholic unity and the condemnation of schism pervaded the church theory of Calvin. As those united to Christ, Christians are forbidden from severing themselves from his body. They are implored to seek the bonds of fellowship with his whole body as long as the marks of a true church are maintained and essential doctrines are not distorted or neglected. Nevertheless, however desirable and necessary unity may be, it must never come at the expense of truth—found in fundamental submission to Christ's rule as the head of the church through his Word. This is why, for Calvin, the separation from the contemporary church of Rome was not schism. He was willing neither to mandate agreement on every doctrine nor to endorse the divisions among Christian bodies and leave union to the invisible, "spiritual" plane. He worked tirelessly in unifying efforts and was willing to make concessions on nonessential points of doctrine.

Moving beyond Calvin's day to ours, we have witnessed significant development along catholic lines within the previous century as a result of the modern ecumenical movement and post–conciliar Roman Catholicism. Though there is much to celebrate, there is much left to be done. There remain two major obstacles to catholicity relevant to the topic of this essay. First is the fact that Rome has not abandoned its positions on papal authority. In fact, in some areas the power of the pope has only increased since the time of Calvin.[58]

But another major problem in modern catholicity is the reticence of those who consider themselves Calvin's heirs to privilege visible unity. Such persons should consider Calvin's catholic convictions and the manner by which they were expressed in his life and ministry. It is all too common for Reformed parties to fall into rigorism, believing that unity can only be achieved by agreement on a vast list of doctrines. Furthermore, many Evangelicals are simply complacent about visible catholic unity, defaulting to a view in which the invisible church is the only church. But as Calvin demonstrates, Reformed catholics should commit to unity and exhibit a certain flexibility regarding formulations in doctrine and ecclesial practice—particularly in terms of church government, liturgy, and sacraments. Representatives of particular ecclesial bodies need to remain open to elucidation, enhancement, and correction in dialogue with one another in hopes of reunion. This means that catholic efforts will not necessarily entail a dilution of doctrine. Rather, commitment to union, by bringing together true churches which foreground various aspects of truth under God's Word, will function to mature the whole body.

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54. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.12.

55. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.13.

56. See Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.16. Such purists "prostitute [this] to the sacrilege of schism."

57. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.1.17.

58. This is especially true in terms of the doctrine of papal infallibility, which became official dogma at Vatican I and was reasserted at Vatican II. See Mark E. Powell, *Papal Infallibility: A Protestant Evaluation of an Ecumenical Issue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009) and Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

Metrical Psalm 111

BY PHILIP MELANCHTHON

TRANSLATED BY E. J. HUTCHINSON

PSALMUS CXI. Confitebor Domino.

Quas laudes tibi nos pater canemus,
Quae praeconia maximisque factis
Dicemus? manifesta signa nobis
Monstrasti bonitatis et favoris,
Ut curae tibi nos sciamus esse.
Escam namque piis pater dedisti,
Et tradis Cananaea regna nobis,
Mansurum quoque foedus omne in aevum
Fecisti: rata sunt, eruntque semper,
Quae dicis pater, atque polliceris.
Defendes populum tuum, atque mittes
In terras Dominum, ille liberabit,
Et nos proteget, et procul fugabit
Aerumnas, mala cuncta: reddet ille
Vitae gaudia sempiterna nobis.
Ergo omnes Dominum Deum timete,
Nam prima est sapientia hunc timere,
Quisquis iussa Dei facit, colitque,
Is demum sapere optime est putandus.

O what praises to You shall we sing, Father?
What renown for Your works are we to proclaim?
For You've shown to us signs of goodness, favor;
These make clear with no doubt that we are Your care.
You gave food to the godly, gracious Father;
You give also to us the land of Canaan.
Not just this, but Your covenant forever
You have fixed; it is firm and everlasting.
All Your heavenly promises are "Amen."
You will faithfully guard your congregation;
You will send to the earth the Lord, and He will
Free us and give us all protection, send far
Off from us all distresses, all our evils;
He will give us the joys of life eternal.
Therefore fear the Lord God, all you, His people,
For His fear is the way we come to wisdom.
That man, therefore, who does His will and worships
Must be reckoned the wisest and the best man.

The meter of the poem is hendecasyllabics, which go like this ("–" = a long syllable; "u" = a short syllable; "x" = a syllable that can be long or short): x x – u u – u – u – – . In my English translation, I've attempted hendecasyllabics, substituting the stressed and unstressed syllables of English meter for the long and short syllables of Latin quantitative meter—though I've allowed myself some liberties (this kind of license is, I believe, called "poetic") and my attempt is far from perfect.

ESSAYS

Imagining a People: An Essay on the Possibility of Political Representation

BRAD LITTLEJOHN

In the first installment of this essay, "The Return of the Vigilante," I considered the paralyzing loss of faith in the possibility of political judgment that besets America today, and the consequent fragmentation of society into a kaleidoscope of private judgments intent on enacting justice. Such efforts are doomed, we saw with the aid of Christopher Nolan and Oliver O'Donovan, doomed to remain trapped within private construals of reality that, however idealistically they begin, become increasingly self–serving and self–deluded, ending as parodies of "blind justice" that are blind to the world around them.

To transcend private judgment, however, it is not enough to fall back on procedural forms that carry the legalistic stamp of legitimacy and due process. The Joker makes that clear enough, mocking the emptiness of Gotham's high–minded but ineffectual courts of justice, unable even to sustain the modicum of order and security that is their poor substitute for authentic justice. These institutions, symbolized in Gotham's "White Knight," Harvey Dent, collapse back into the blind proceduralism of "Two–Face's" private vendetta, and the empty facade of brute force built on public falsehood that Gordon propagates at the end of *The Dark Knight*. As *The Dark Knight Rises* begins, order and security have at last been secured in Gotham, but at the cost of a deep rift within society between the ins and the outs, the haves and the have–nots. There is still no true justice, and soon there will be no peace either.

VIGILANTE AS SAVIOR?

Again, O'Donovan puts his finger on the nub of the problem.

> Official judgment serves the public order in this much stronger sense of acting on *behalf of the public*...To put our finger on this narrowly political role, we must single out its *representative* function: a political act with political authority occurs where not only the interests of the of the community are in play, but the agency of the community as well.[1]

Why can't the vigilante secure public justice? Well, because he has not been authorized or recognized as an agent of the public; that is precisely what it means to be a vigilante. But what if the vigilante achieved such recognition, like a Cromwell or a Napoleon? The vigilante begins as mere private citizen, but under extraordinary circumstances, can emerge as the hero

1. O'Donovan, Oliver. *The Ways of Judgment: The Bampton Lectures, 2003*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005, 11.

and savior of the republic—or end as an unprincipled tyrant. This theme of extraordinary representation, offering a tantalizing possibility of salvation for Gotham, is explored in a fascinating conversation early on in *The Dark Knight*. Wayne's date, Natascha, complains about that "the kind of city that idolizes a masked vigilante." Dent replies, "Gotham's proud of an ordinary man standing up for what's right," to which Natascha answers, "Gotham needs heroes like *you*—elected officials, not a man who thinks he's above the law." Wayne interjects, agreeing, "Exactly. Who appointed the Batman?" Harvey's answer is intriguing: "*We* did. All of us who stood by and let scum take control of our city." In other words, the abdication of the duly appointed authorities from executing the justice with which they have been tasked has left a void, in which the community's agency devolves upon a private citizen of their own recognition. To Natascha's complaint that such an appointment is an abandonment of the procedures of democracy, Harvey answers, "When their enemies were at the gate, the Romans would suspend democracy and appoint one man to protect the city. It wasn't considered an honor. It was considered public service." Rachel objects, "And the last man they asked to protect the republic was named Caesar. He never gave up that power." Harvey concedes, "Well, I guess you either die a hero or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain. Look, whoever the Batman is, he doesn't want to spend the rest of his life doing this. How could he? Batman's looking for someone to take up his mantle."

This conversation foreshadows many of the themes that will dominate the film and its sequel. We have a dark hint of Harvey's willingness to suspend the ordinary rule of law in pursuit of justice, by which he ceases to be the hero and becomes the villain—though at the end, Batman quotes this line about himself, having taken Harvey's villainy upon himself. But although this prospect of an extraordinarily appointed public representative has a dark side, it is not rejected entirely; Nolan dangles the possibility before us throughout the trilogy. If the role is to be legitimate, however, he must be a genuine agent of the city, filling a genuine void in which representative government has failed and the city is in dire need, and he must be ready to resign the role once the need is met. These conditions are at last met in *The Dark Knight Rises*.

THE FRAGMENTED POLIS

However, we must pause before examining this film, for the first two films suggest an additional reason why Batman cannot be a genuine political agent. And that is because Gotham must first be a genuine *polis*. If he is to act as the representative of "the people," they must first be *a people*, and not merely a mass of individuals. This is yet another theme with which Nolan appears to be absorbed throughout the trilogy. Although Gotham City is ostensibly a city within the United States (a fictional New York City), it functions symbolically as its own political unit; the outside world plays almost no part until *The Dark Knight Rises*, and then it is only introduced in order to display its irrelevance and impotence, and refocus attention more sharply on the political identity of Gotham itself. Throughout, however, this focus serves to draw attention to the fact that Gotham fails miserably to be a political unit. A contrast with the film *Spider–Man* is instructive here. When the Green Goblin attacks Spider–Man, an ordinary citizen yells, "You mess with one of us, you mess with all of us!" and the crowd around him cheers. This is clearly the opposite of Gotham. Not only do they turn on Batman rather than rallying behind him when threatened, but more fundamentally, they *do not constitute a community in the first place* that could meaningfully adopt Batman as one of them.

> **"TO SEE OURSELVES AS A PEOPLE IS TO GRASP IMAGINATIVELY A COMMON GOOD THAT UNIFIES OUR OVERLAPPING AND INTERLOCKING PRACTICAL COMMUNICATIONS, AND SO TO SEE OURSELVES AS A SINGLE AGENCY."**

The villains in each film recognize this political dysfunctionality and seek to exploit it, turning the already–divided city against itself. In *Batman Begins*, the strategy is to capitalize on the fear and suspicion the citizens already have of one another, and turn it into panic so that they have to do nothing but "stand back and watch Gotham tear itself apart"—and they succeed with one part of the city. In the *Dark Knight*, the Joker voices the same conviction: "They're only as good as the world *allows* them to be. You'll see—I'll show you . . . when the chips are down, these civilized people . . . they'll eat each other." He proceeds to try to make them do just that, first by threatening to blow up a hospital if they don't kill Mr. Reese, and then by threatening to blow up two ferries—one full of ordinary citizens, the other of criminals under guard—if one doesn't detonate the other first. In the first case, the people do go after Reese; in the second case, the Joker's plan fails, but only because no one has the guts to do the dirty deed—the ordinary citizens vote overwhelmingly to blow up the ferry

with the criminals, but ultimately do not. (There is a triple irony here: the people, contrary to the Joker's predictions, establish a sufficient political identity to *vote* on the decision, but, in line with the Joker's predictions, choose to turn on their fellow Gothamites—the criminals—but, in the end, are too politically impotent to carry through on the decision they have made.) In *The Dark Knight Rises*, these predictions finally come true, as Bane bursts into the city and proclaims a revolution in which the masses turn on the wealthy and powerful, and tear Gotham apart.

A passage from O'Donovan captures for us Gotham's failure to become a people.

> To see ourselves as a people is to grasp imaginatively a common good that unifies our overlapping and interlocking practical communications, and so to see ourselves as a single agency, the largest collective agency that we can practically conceive. A people is a complex of social constituents...To have identity as a people is to be able to conceive the whole that embraces these various constituents practically, as a coordinated agency. When it is no longer possible to discern the constituent elements within the whole, each with its stock of tradition, its reserve of memory, and its communal habits of practice, then the whole dissolves before our eyes. It also dissolves when it is no longer possible to think of these elements as acting, in some sense, together and for one another.[2]

At least three sources of Gotham's disunity, its inability to operate as a *polis*, appear in the films, and each of the three offers a sobering picture of our own loss of peoplehood in contemporary America: the divide between rich and poor, the divide between "law–abiding citizens" and the incarcerated underclass, and the divide between governors and governed.

The first divide, a yawning inequality of wealth, haunts all three films. In each, we see glaring evidence that there are in fact two Gothams, a gilded upper layer, which insulates itself and seeks to remain completely out of touch, and a dark and dirty underworld, in which most citizens find themselves hopelessly stuck. Bruce Wayne's parents, we are told, tried to take a lead in using their wealth to overcome the division, but could make little progress, and their own murder by a desperately hungry man on the streets appears to confirm their failure. We are told later that their murder finally galvanized the other wealthy Gothamites to take some action to improve conditions in the city, but it appears to have been a temporary reaction, stimulated by fear rather than genuine conviction. By the time of *The Dark Knight Rises*, the gap has become wider than ever, and most of the wealthy are completely apathetic about the plight of the underclass. Bane exploits this fact, attacking the Stock Exchange and declaring open class warfare. Selina Kyle speaks for the brewing revolution when she whispers in Wayne's ear: "There's a storm coming, Mr. Wayne. You and your friends better batten down the hatches. Pretty soon you're going to wonder how you could ever live so large and leave so little for the rest of us." Of course, the irony is that Wayne has all along been seeking to use his immense resources for the rest of Gotham; in this he is continuing the legacy of his parents. Indeed, it is at this point that the otherwise clashing vocations of Bruce Wayne and the Batman come together in their combined effort to make Gotham into a city that can stand on its own two feet: in *The Dark Knight Rises*, Wayne's philanthropic efforts especially on behalf of an orphanage for boys are shown to play a decisive role in Gotham's resurrection.

The second divide, between the citizenry and the criminals, is dramatized in the ferry dilemma that the Joker creates. On the one hand, you have "innocent" ordinary citizens, on the other, people who "made their choices. They chose to murder and steal"—criminals who are now serving their time in crowded and frightening prisons. The citizens have little sympathy for these men; they certainly feel no sense of camaraderie with them as fellow Gothamites, as they vote by a nearly two–to–one margin to detonate them. In the other boat, however, one of the criminals persuades his guard to hand him the detonator, implying that he will use it, as the guard wants to but dares not, to blow up the other boat, but then throws it out the window. Clearly not all of these criminals, at any rate, have lost their humanity. However, Gotham does not learn the lesson. At the beginning of *The Dark Knight Rises*, we learn that their response to Dent's "murder" was simply to lock away more Gothamites in prison, and for longer. The "Dent Act" has shut away hundreds and taken away any opportunity for parole. The city is not interested in reconciliation or restoration, but instead perpetuates an "us versus them" mentality. The result, we learn, is that crime has not been abolished, but merely driven out of sight, underground. Gotham is soon brought to regret its unwillingness to try to reintegrate criminals into society. When Bane declares his revolution, he begins it by breaking open the main prison, which he identifies as a symbol of oppression. The freed prisoners stream out and lead other violent–minded Gothamites in a murderous rampage, and even set up a "court," a mockery of justice that sentences without trial anyone who is wealthy or an agent of the law to death.

2. O'Donovan, T*he Ways of Judgment*, 150.

This last point leads us to the third great rift in Gotham's society, which prevents it from being a genuine political community: the rift between the governors and the governed. This is the most decisive of all, for if the people see their authorities not as representatives but as oppressors, then the political unit has broken down. Throughout the first two films, the governing structures of Gotham suffer from a crisis of legitimacy (hence Dent's recognition that Batman has been "appointed" by the people to fill the void of leadership). The ranks of law enforcement are rife with corruption from top to bottom, and its leadership seems to suffer from warped priorities—more eager to protect their own image and jurisdiction than to fight crime. Thus their first instinct in *Batman Begins*, when Batman catches Falcone for them and gets them the evidence they need to prosecute, is to go after Batman, not Falcone—"No one takes the law into their own hands in *my* city," the police commissioner growls. In *The Dark Knight*, there is a temporary truce, it seems, but the police force quickly shows itself more eager than anyone to get rid of Batman when he becomes a liability—"No more dead cops!" This obsession is taken to the point of absurdity in *The Dark Knight Rises* when Gordon's lieutenant calls off the police from chasing Bane and his thugs and tasks them all to capture Batman instead, because of the personal glory such a capture would bring him. Moreover, there is a mutual suspicion between police and populace, which the Scarecrow's hallucinogens succeed in escalating to the point of open conflict in *Batman Begins*, and which results, in *The Dark Knight Rises*, in law enforcement personnel being considered public enemies in Gotham after Bane's revolution.

So it is that at the end of *The Dark Knight*, and the beginning of *The Dark Knight Rises*, the most fundamental untruth that Gotham has told is not about Batman, but about itself. O'Donovan tells us, "As well as appropriate predication, however, true description implies a reflexive contextualization. A further truth comes into the picture, which is the truth about the community that judges; and only by taking that truth into account can we attain a satisfactory discrimination of innocence and guilt" (19). The ugly truth about Gotham, which the Joker unmasks, is the same as the ugly truth about Rome that Augustine unmasks in his famous *City of God* Bk. 19: It cannot be a commonwealth, a people, for a people is defined as "a gathered multitude united by consent to *ius* [right, or justice] and common interest" or as "a gathered multitude of rational beings united by agreeing to share the things they love." There is no commitment to justice in Gotham, nor any unity around a sense of common interest, nor a common object of love that serves to orient them. It is merely a collection of individuals, ready to "eat each other" when the chips are down.

LEARNING TO SPEAK THE TRUTH

At the beginning of *The Dark Knight Rises*, Gotham has limped along for eight years as a people–in–name–only, a facade represented by an ideal, held together by a shallow faith in a pseudo–hero. Only when this facade is unmasked by Bane does Gotham have one last chance of becoming a true *polis*, in which the public exercise of judgment according to truth is a real possibility.

THE FIRST STEP TOWARD THIS POSSIBILITY IS FOR A COMMUNITY TO LEARN TO SPEAK THE TRUTH ABOUT ITSELF.

In many ways, *The Dark Knight Rises* hearkens back more to *Batman Begins* than to its immediate predecessor. Bane comes seeking again the eschatological justice that the League of Shadows had sought, to destroy a city that is corrupt beyond saving. In doing so, he represents himself as one ready to tell the truth about Gotham, as the city's authorities have not been willing to. He reads aloud to the people the speech that Gordon has written, but could not bring himself to deliver, telling the people of Gotham the truth about Harvey Dent. In so doing, he demonstrates the folly of thinking that Gotham's peace could be secured by a lie, for the truth will always come out in the end, and rarely at the time or in the way of our choosing. But as we have seen, this eschatological judgment is not judgment according to truth, because it is "summary justice," undiscriminating, unmerciful justice that denies the possibility of redemption. In one of the many Christological resonances in the trilogy, we find that it is by taking this eschatological judgment upon himself—going through the death and descent into Hell that Bane has in store for Gotham, and returning from it—that Batman averts such judgment from Gotham and re–establishes the possibility of provisional political justice.

The first step toward this possibility is for a community to learn to speak the truth about itself. This step is ironically provided by Bane, whose judgment visited upon Gotham comes with the awful twist that before destroying the city, he will pretend to give it new life. In mockery of the sham commonwealth that Gotham had been, he forges the city into a parody of a *polis*. First he formalizes Gotham's isolation from

the wider world (which we remarked upon previously), forcing it to become an autonomous political unit, which cannot hope for any outside help. He declares to them the truth that has been hidden from them, decrying as "oppression" the so–called "justice" founded on falsehood, and promising to liberate the city. He frees all the prisoners and announces their re–entry into the broader society, thus tearing down one of the barriers that Gotham had erected between groups of citizens. He offers to the city the opportunity to cleanse itself from its injustices by erecting a mock court of justice that deals out summary execution to the wealthy and powerful oppressors. Of course, none of this can create a true commonwealth, since none of the schisms that formerly divided Gotham have been truly healed; the balance of power has just been reversed. The poor, the convicts, the citizenry have been turned against the rich, the judges, and the police. No genuine unity is achieved, and certainly no concept of the common good stands at the center of the new regime.

However, in a way, Bane's revolution does provide the catalyst that will help Gotham become a people. The moment of crisis, the absence of any outside help, forces Gotham to realize that they will need to band together and depend on one another. But significantly, they are unable to do so on their own; they need a symbol, a representative—they need the Batman.

Again, O'Donovan elucidates what is going on:

> When we recognize a political authority summoning us to act together in defense of the common good, we recognize ourselves. We conceive ourselves as a 'people,' a community constituted by participation in the common good. On the relation between the 'people' and the authority that summons it, hangs the delicate question of political representation. [3]

There is a paradox here, which Nolan's films explore. To become a people, Gotham must recognize a political authority, a representative. But to have a legitimate representative, she must first be a people. This is one of the fundamental ambiguities in political theory: how can authority arise except as delegated from a political community? But how can a political community exist except as a body under authority?

Some traditions of political theory, to be sure, have insisted that the political authority logically precedes the political unit, that the sovereign summons his people into being as a *polis*. O'Donovan critiques this tradition, saying,

> Political authority does not 'make' a people; it 'finds' it. The governing state–structure serves the defense of something other than itself. The point of the state is not to defend the state but the people. The people, the subject of the common good, must be imagined apart from its political and juridical arrangements if either people or state is to be imagined properly at all. Otherwise the juridical unity of the state is simply imposition, not protection. (154)

However, he critiques equally the liberal understanding that authority is simply a creation of the people, that we come together and make a covenant to be a people, and only then appoint for ourselves authorities to act on our behalf. In a way, Bane's parody of a politically–united Gotham is a form of both errors. Bane is clearly a dictator, a warlord who controls Gotham with a private army and the threat of mass destruction. He is the sovereign, who makes Gotham a city as *his* city, summoning into being a political unit merely as a product of his own sovereignty. On the other hand, Bane pretends at any rate merely to announce a revolution, to empower the people to come together and form their own government, and to stand back in the shadows while they do so. His sovereignty is largely invisible, lurking behind the facade of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

O'Donovan describes the relation between the people and the representative in far more mysterious terms, saying,

> The people is imaginatively envisaged when and as its common good is in need of defense. The idea of the people and the idea of the authority that summons it to defend its common good arise together.... In awakening our sense of ourselves as a people, political authority simultaneously awakens us to itself. We become aware of an authority that commands us, not abstractly but in a concrete form, as 'our' government.... The representative bears the people's image, makes the people visible and tangible, to itself and to others. Yet the representative does not bring the people into existence, but simply makes it appear.[4]

One could ask for no better summary of the narrative of *The Dark Night Rises*. Batman summons Gotham to rise to defend the common good, but not on the basis of a prior authority by which he can command their obedience; rather, to be effective, his summons must coincide with Gotham's awakening to see itself as a people called to take action, and its awakening to see itself in the Batman. Central to this awakening is the

3. O'Donovan, T*he Ways of Judgment*, 149.

4. O'Donovan, T*he Ways of Judgment*, 154, 157.

A POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVE MUST BE MORE THAN A MERE MAN; THE SYMBOL OF REPRESENTATION MUST BE IMMORTAL AS THE BODY POLITIC IS TO BE IMMORTAL.

reconciliation that must occur if Gotham is to transcend its earlier divisions and achieve unity. Accordingly, we find that on Batman's return, he receives the recognition and support of those who had earlier opposed him, so that united behind him, they abandon their earlier differences. The police, jealous and suspicious of the powers of a mere citizen, and tempted to use their power against him rather than against injustice, rally behind him and show their willingness to fight and die on behalf of the city; thus they remove from themselves the stigma of all their earlier corruption, inaction, and distorted priorities, which have dogged them all throughout the trilogy. The poor, jealous of the privilege of people like Bruce Wayne, recognize that it is possible to use wealth and power for good—this is signified perhaps through the disadvantaged orphans who show their loyalty to the Batman, but also through Selina Kyle (a.k.a. Catwoman; though she is never called that in the film), who spends the first half of the film openly despising the fat cat upper class of Gotham, only to gradually come to respect Bruce/Batman (she is one of the few who learns his true identity) and eventually to fight alongside him. Her role, however, is doubly significant, for she serves as a representative of the criminal underclass that has been divided against the rest of Gotham, a situation only exacerbated, as we have seen, by the Dent Act. Her regret about the cycle of crime she has become trapped in, and her quest for a "clean start," serves as a reminder that not all convicts are in jail because they are hopelessly evil. Many are desperate for a chance to start afresh, to regain legitimacy in the eyes of the world, to be reconciled to the rest of society; it is precisely this, of course, that the Dent Act has categorically denied to Gotham's criminals, generating the pent–up resentment that Bane exploits. Kyle's climactic decision to throw in her lot in with Batman, and with him, with the Gotham that has never had any use for her, the Gotham with which she has no reason to feel solidarity, tells us that the Dent Act and Bane's revolution are not the only paths; reconciliation is possible, new life is possible.

AWAKENING TO ONE ANOTHER

But let us return to O'Donovan. He describes as a "false turn" the early modern idea

> that representation is founded in the *will*. It is founded in the imagination. That the representative may act for us, and we in him, it is necessary that we see ourselves in him. Representation is a case of symbolization; the representative 'stands for' our consciousness of our common association…through this particular actor we recognize ourselves as summoned to a collective action. It is an affective as well as a cognitive movement. Political recognition is like the recognition we accord to a face or form, the recognition of Gestalt, grasped at once in a moment of acknowledgement and welcome. Underlying many ancient political conceptions, there is a visual aesthetic. The language of light, radiance, and display permeates classical political symbolism, in notions such as 'splendor,' 'magnificence,' 'glory.' These elicit something akin to erotic fascination.[5]

Batman's "theatricality," then, his visual aesthetic, is not merely incidental. It is part of his projection of Batman as a symbol. He must be more than a mere man, for a man is mortal. He must become "a symbol, a legend," immortal. But not for himself, for personal glory—as Alfred frequently worries that he is being tempted by—but for Gotham. Gotham cannot see herself in a mere man, for a political representative must be more than a mere man; the symbol of representation must be immortal as the body politic is to be immortal. This is why Batman refuses recognition at the end, why he must remain hidden, although Gordon insists that the people must know who their savior is. No, that would defeat the point, for that would distract Gotham's attention from what the Batman is meant to be—everyman. Batman replies to Gordon, "A hero can be anyone…A man doing something as simple and reassuring as puting a coat around a little boy's shoulders to let him know that the world hadn't ended," alluding to the scene

5. O'Donovan, T*he Ways of Judgment*, 161. O'Donovan adds, in words well worth pondering: "The affective dimension is entirely absent from official theories of representation in the modern West. The understanding of ceremonial recognition was lost to Western political philosophy at the point where God was lost to it; for it is essentially an acknowledgment of providence. The representative is recognized because he is there; God 'raises up' leaders of the peoples. That God does so with patient regularity is no reason to suppress our wonder at it, let alone imagine that we ourselves arranged for it to happen… [Contractarianism] dispensed with the moment of recognition, conceiving the representative relation as achieved by a once–for–all act of the human will. The point was to establish lawful and binding authority for all existing political orders, deriving them from a supposed contractual agreement in the past, just as the divine–right theory, of which it was a mirror–image, sought to derive them from a past act of God. Once conceived as a purely contractual status, representation lost touch with the moment of collective self–discovery, reflected in the person of its representative, dawns on its recognition."

at the beginning of *Batman Begins* when the junior police officer Gordon comforts the young Bruce after his parents' murder. The point is for the people of Gotham to awaken to the possibility of acting for one another, working together for the common good; the Batman is not a savior from outside, but merely they themselves writ large, and his vocation—the enactment of justice with mercy—is their vocation. By his self–offering on behalf of the people, Batman becomes a genuine representative, and by their recognition of him, and of themselves, they become a genuine *polis*, capable of enacting the limited, provisional justice that political authority is to serve. So we are to hope, at any rate, in that crucial final scene in which the statue of the Batman—not a man but a symbol—is unveiled in City Hall, symbolizing the city's fresh start.

The film, to be sure, does not end without ambiguity. Are public structures of judgment really capable of sustaining truth and justice? John Blake (a.k.a. Robin) seems not to think so, at any rate, resigning the police force in disillusionment about the inauthenticity of Gotham's power structures, and the injustice in the fact that they do not know their liberator. It is hinted at the end that he will take up the Batman's role, that an agent of justice outside its public structures will still be called for. Although the police force has redeemed itself by the end of *The Dark Knight Rises*, we are still shown at the end how unreliable and unjust the appointed guardians of public safety can be, when American troops fire upon Blake to keep him from bringing the orphan boys out of the city to safety—significantly, it is at this moment that Blake throws away his badge. Nor is it clear whether Batman's faked death and hidden identity do not perhaps just constitute another lie on which justice is to be built. Certainly no one could accuse Christopher Nolan of being a Pollyanna optimist. Batman may have redeemed Gotham, but even renewed, it remains fallible, imperfect, and often unjust.

CONCLUSION

Still, if there is any lessoned to be gleaned from Nolan's saga, it is that it is only by reconciling ourselves anew to the radical imperfectibility of human justice—*yet without* yielding to cynicism and disaffection—can we recover the possibility of politics, of justice, of peoplehood. As we reflect on these questions in the long shadow of the events of January 6, it is worth remembering that that dark day was also the Feast of Epiphany, the day when Christians celebrate the unveiling of Christ as the light of the world, the desire of nations. It is because of Epiphany that we can remember that the justice we enact itself lies under judgment; that we can afford to see through a glass darkly, and to behold the oppressions under the sun, because they do not have the final say. We can bear the torture of uncertainty knowing that he who has suffered in our place will not leave us there forever. We can repress our rage in the face of miscarried justice knowing that the Judge unjustly judged in our place will in his own time render a just verdict. And we can entrust our political fate to a human representative precisely because we know that our eternal fate has been entrusted to human representative who stands for us before the throne.

The long shadow of Christendom is in danger of giving way either to the perpetual gloom of a politics without purpose or the false radiance of a politics–as–savior, a politics bright enough to lay bare every falsehood and right every wrong. We must resist both. Having chastened our expectations and adjusted our eyes to the half–light of earthly judgment, we must reject the lure of the vigilante and recognize ourselves anew as called to collective action. The time is indeed out of joint, but thankfully it does not fall to each of us to set it right. "All we have to decide," as Gandalf famously admonished Frodo, "is what to do with the time that is given to us."[6] "It is not our part to master all the tides of this world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule."[7]

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6. *The Fellowship of the Ring*, ch. 2, "The Shadow of the Past."

7. *The Return of the King*, ch. 9, "The Last Debate."

Homer, God's Poet

BY PHILIP MELANCHTHON

TRANSLATED BY E. J. HUTCHINSON

Vera est fama bonos agitari numine Vates,

Nam Deus illorum pectora casta movet.

Virtutis praecepta canunt, ac vatibus auctor

Tradidit in terris illa docenda Deus.

Largaque cum caelo veniat facundia, rursus

Eloquii vires altera dona dedit.

Est igitur pietas quaedam cognoscere Homerum,

Cum bona de superum munera sede ferat.

That good poets are moved by God is a tale that is told true.

For it is God who stirs song in their virtuous hearts.

They proclaim virtue's commands, just as God, the first author, has passed them

On to the poets to teach—God's vatic bards here on earth.

That isn't all: since eloquence comes in its richness from heaven,

God has given in turn answering power of speech.

Thus it's a duty divine that we give recognition to Homer,

Since he bestows the good gifts brought from celestial realms.

ESSAYS

Get a Room! On Our Detrimental Misreading of C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*

CLIFFORD HUMPHREY

A recent Gallup poll indicating that church attendance in the United States has fallen below 50% for the first time shocked many American Christians. Conversely, a random internet search of "most popular Christian books of all time" yielded exactly what I expected to find: C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* was on nearly every list, often among the top five books (a 2000 survey by *Christianity Today* had it as the top Christian work of the 20th century). We ought to find this odd, for the book's preface makes it clear that Lewis did not write *Mere Christianity* for Christians. Nonetheless, its straightforward presentation of basic Christian belief has proven a beloved aid to believers and unbelievers alike for understanding the faith.

Yet despite the book's immense popularity many Christians, and Protestants in particular, have misinterpreted Lewis's overall purpose, and that misunderstanding has had a detrimental effect on the Church. The immediate cause of this harmful misreading is a false anthropology that a large portion of Protestants, evangelical and otherwise, have unwittingly adopted and imported into their ecclesiology. So long as this false anthropology is accepted uncritically, it will continue its corrosive effect on our churches.

BAXTER'S "MERE CHRISTIANITY"

In the preface to *Mere Christianity*, Lewis tells us exactly why he wrote the book and who his intended audience was. He refers to "my unbelieving neighbours" and "an outsider" who might be brought "into the Christian fold" through arguments for essential points of doctrine.[1]

Of course, Lewis had Christians in mind as a secondary audience. Everyone loves to watch a champion win a fight. Xenophon and Plato relished watching Socrates play coy with, and then better, his self–confident interlocutors in the Athenian marketplace. Even Jesus's disciples must have enjoyed the sight of their carpenter–teacher dumbfounding the religious literati of Jerusalem. And so it is with Christians reading Lewis's beautiful and simple arguments in *Mere Christianity*.

These purposes are noble indeed, and Lewis was immensely successful. I think it fair to say, though, that we—the Lew-

1. C. S. Lewis, Preface to *Mere Christianity (*HarperCollins, 2001), viii.

is–reading, generally Protestant public—have, to the Church's detriment, appropriated his language for our own purposes, at times in direct defiance of Lewis's intentions.

Lewis described his intention in writing *Mere Christianity* with a now famous analogy.[2] His distillation of Christian beliefs, he insists, was never intended as "an alternative to the creeds of the existing" denominations; rather, he imagined it as "more like a hall out of which doors open into several rooms. If I can bring anyone into that hall I shall have done what I attempted."[3] For Lewis, the distinction between the "hall" of Christian beliefs and the "rooms" of "existing communions" is highly important. We, however, have come to view ourselves as Lewis's primary audience, obfuscated this distinction, and turned the hallway of "mere Christianity" into something very much like "an alternative to the creeds of the existing communions."[4]

Lewis attributes the term "mere Christianity" to Richard Baxter (1615–1691), the influential and eloquent Puritan pastor and theologian. In the introduction to his thoroughly named *Church–history of the government of bishops and their councils abbreviated including the chief part of the government of Christian princes and popes, and a true account of the most troubling controversies and heresies till the Reformation* (1681), Baxter defended himself from a critic who wanted to associate him with certain Scottish Presbyterians. Baxter retorted by denying he belonged to any specific sect. He wrote:

> I am a CHRISTIAN, a MEER CHRISTIAN, of no other Religion; and the Church that I am of is the Christian Church, and hath been visible where ever the Christian Religion and Church hath been visible: But must you know what Sect or Party I am of? I am against all Sects and dividing Parties: But if any will call Meer Christians by the name of a Party, because they take up with Meer Christianity, Creed, and Scripture, and will not be of any dividing or contentious Sect, I am of that Party which is so against Parties: If the Name CHRISTIAN be not enough, call me a CATHOLICK CHRISTIAN; not as that word signifieth an hereticating majority of Bishops, but as it signifieth one that hath no Religion, but that which by Christ and the Apostles was left to the Catholick Church, or the Body of Jesus Christ on Earth.[5]

It is beyond the scope of this essay to mark the reasons for Baxter's view with detail.[6] It suffices here to note that, after leaving the Church of England, he maintained a stance of denominational independence throughout his life, seeking to defend that position most often by resorting to the idea of being a "meer Christian."

Attraction to the idea of a stripped–down, non–sectarian Christianity is perfectly understandable given the abuses in the medieval Roman Church and the bitter confusion and fallout among Reformation–era Protestants; and the yearning for unity among all Christians is a good, right, and holy desire, one that accords with Our Lord's prayer in John 17.

IN OUR SINCERE ATTEMPTS TO HOLD NON-PARTISAN POSITIONS, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO CHURCH PRACTICE, WE CAN BADLY MISUNDERSTAND HUMAN NATURE.

Nonetheless, in our sincere attempts to hold non–partisan positions, especially with regard to church practice, we can badly misunderstand human nature, which never exists without the embodiment and finitude of time and place. These attempts can also betray a naivete that we have reached such spiritual heights that we no longer need distinct, robust, thoughtful ecclesial identities and practices that accord with this embodiment and finitude. Furthermore, we can deny that there is still work for the Holy Spirit to do to heal our divisions that remain, no matter how much we wish to ignore them and think we can live above them.

The fact that the Puritans as a distinct group of Christians have now completely died out, wholly absorbed into other sects, suggests that Baxter's party of non–partisans was not sustainable. Indeed, the word *mere* derives from the Latin *merus*, meaning "pure" or "undiluted," which describes the whole Puritan ethos. Even for Lewis, Baxter's Puritan nonconformist

2. For this essay, I will be drawing primarily from the Preface of *Mere Christianity*, which Lewis added in 1952, when his broadcast talks were first put into print form.

3. Preface, xv.

4. As evidence that Christians easily imagine themselves as Lewis's primary audience, one can even find a "Bible study" on *Mere Christianity*.

5. Published by Thomas Simmons at the Princes Arms at Ludgate Street, 1681.

6. For a thorough account of the general differences between Baxter and Lewis on the concept of mere Christianity, see Timothy E. Miller, "Mere Christianity: An Examination Of The Concept In Richard Baxter And C. S. Lewis," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, Vol. 20, 65–88.

WE HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE IN THE GOODNESS OF THE PARTICULAR CHARACTER AND PRACTICES OF THE TRADITIONS THAT COMPOSE THE INDIVIDUAL ROOMS.

stance went too far. Lewis himself remained firmly attached to one of those "Sects" and "Parties" Baxter disavowed: "there is no mystery about my own position," Lewis writes, "I am a very ordinary layman of the Church of England."[7]

Baxter's position as a Puritan dissenter from the very Anglican Church of which Lewis was a member is not unimportant here. This difference between the two men suggests that Lewis thought he could borrow Baxter's term "meer Christian" without having to agree with Baxter's ecclesiology. Put simply, Lewis sees in Baxter's portrayal of Christianity an analogy by which to describe essential Christian beliefs, not a Christian way of life. As Lewis says of the "hall" of Baxter's simplified description of Christianity, "[it] is a place to wait in...not a place to live in," for "it is in the rooms, not the hall, that there are fires and chairs and meals." In case there remain any confusion, Lewis clarifies that even "the worst of the rooms (whichever that may be) is, I think, preferable [to the hallway]."[8]

It is true, though, that Scripture and even some of what Lewis writes suggest that Christianity should remain something simple and unrefined, as the dissenting Puritans understood it. James 1:27 tells us that "religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (ESV). Again, Jesus condemns the Pharisees for preferring their ancient customs over the law of God: "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8). Understandably, some Protestants interpret such scriptures strictly as discouragement from any form of organized religion save something approaching a house church, while a few even consider meeting with other Christians entirely unnecessary.

Lewis himself seems to come close to endorsing this interpretation. He writes in the preface that the overflow of praise he had received for *Mere Christianity* "may possibly be of some help in silencing the view that, if we omit the disputed points [of denominational Christianity], we shall have left only a vague and bloodless H.C.F" (highest common factor, equivalent to the idea of the lowest common denominator). Lewis here recognizes the criticism of the idea that the few beliefs he defends in his book are altogether too insignificant to bring someone to Christian faith. He continues: "the H.C.F. turns out to be something not only positive but pungent; divided from all non–Christian beliefs by a chasm to which the worst divisions inside Christendom are not really comparable at all."[9]

Nevertheless, clearly what was the whole of "mere Christianity" for Baxter—as one who sought refuge within a sense of a pure, tradition–less expression of Christianity—was merely the first step for Lewis. The hallway was only a place from which to evaluate the various rooms before committing to one: "you must regard it as waiting," Lewis said of the activity of the hallway, "not as camping."[10] Consequently Lewis decisively did not understand himself as a "meer Christian" in the Baxterian sense, and he did not think other Christians should either.

We, though, have largely adopted Baxter's description of Christian religion: we have attempted to make the part into the whole. As a result, we have lost confidence in the goodness of the particular character and practices of the traditions that compose the individual rooms, seemingly embarrassed by the denominational distinctions that make the "rooms" places of nourishment, vim, and vitality as Lewis describes them. Perhaps for this reason, more Americans than ever before identify as non–religious, even though most of those still claim to believe in some sort of spiritual force or reality. This is the "spiritual–not–religious" crowd who are leaving the church in droves.[11] Of course, there are other causes for this phenom-

7. Preface viii.

8. Preface, xv.

9. Preface, xi. As E. J. Hutchinson has noted, another component of our misunderstanding of Lewis involves our understanding of the word "mere" to mean merely something like "bare" or "only," though Lewis likely meant it also in another sense as "truly" or "absolutely " (E. J. Hutchinson, "What Does 'Mere' Mean in C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*?" https://calvinistinternational.com/2018/07/16/what–does–mere–mean–in–mere–christianity/, accessed June 6, 2021). Hutchinson's point is an interesting one for the very reason that few who read Lewis's book today interpret it that way.

10. Preface, xvi.

11. See *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*, (New York: Public

enon, but I posit that this twisting and absorbing of Lewis's metaphor is a great cause.

A FALSE ANTHROPOLOGY

The reason that this misinterpretation has a pernicious effect is because it assumes a false anthropology that fails to connect people deeply and holistically with other members of their church and with particular Christian disciplines. It also leaves them vulnerable to *du jure* cultural influences that easily render church–going a fashionable, ephemeral practice.

When a collection of beliefs is lifted out of actual human ways of being, they cannot be lived or practiced but only assented to. Such a cerebral anthropology has little of incarnational, communal Christianity in it.

Lewis criticizes this very anthropology in his *Screwtape Letters*. The demonic Screwtape explains to his young demon protégé this overly "spiritualized" understanding of human nature as an effective strategy for discouraging Christians from praying:

> The best thing… is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether…this is best done by encouraging him to remember, or to think he remembers, the parrot–like nature of his prayers in childhood. In reaction against that, he may be persuaded to aim at something entirely spontaneous, inward, informal, and unregularised…One of their poets, Coleridge, has recorded that he did not pray 'with moving lips and bended knees,' but merely 'composed his spirit to love' and indulged 'a sense of supplication.' That is exactly the sort of prayer we want; and since it bears a superficial resemblance to the prayer of silence as practised by those who are very far advanced in the Enemy's service, clever and lazy patients can be taken in by it for quite a long time.[12]

Note that the old tempter suggests this mode of prayer not because it renders prayers ineffective but because it dissuades Christians from having even the "intention of praying." To drive this point home, Screwtape concludes: "At the very least, [Christians] can be persuaded that the bodily position makes no difference to their prayers; for they constantly forget, what you must always remember, that they are animals and that whatever their bodies do affects their souls."[13]

It is not difficult to see that whatever would dissuade Christians from having the intention to pray would also dissuade them from the intention of participating in the *body* of Christ, the Church. We have yet to see the full effect that Zoomified pandemic church services will have on the habits of former church–goers, but if Lewis is right, then what is to prevent Christians from being persuaded that they can participate in church *merely* digitally without involving their bodies at all?

Protestants are especially prone to adopt this false anthropology. A common criticism we hurl against Roman Catholics is that they are simply "going through the motions" with the body during their liturgy while their spirit is disengaged. But we must here admit that we have too often fallen into the ditch on the other side of the road.

A stronger anthropology would accomplish two things: it would facilitate a greater sense of connection between church members, and it would encourage an intention within them to participate in the disciplines they all aspire to practice. To describe the nature of a more accurate anthropology—one more in keeping with embodied human nature and more effective at accomplishing these two goals—I offer an example: I am part of a group of men who regularly exercise together. This voluntary group is quite effective at facilitating connection between its members and encouraging the intention to participate in its rigorous discipline.

My group is one of thousands in a nationwide organization, united by a select few principles, from which arises a distinct culture that helps embody those principles in concrete ways of being in community. The principles include: free of charge, open to men only, held outdoors rain or shine, peer led, and always ends with a circle of trust and a prayer or meaningful thought.

The practices that embody these principles are rather quirky. For example, each person is given a nickname, often one that has only the thinnest association with some characteristic of the person and is usually ridiculous. Although most exercises are recognizable, they are given unusual names (push–ups are *merkins*, for example).

In addition to using this strange dialect, members set themselves apart by wearing official merchandise, participating in the after–workout "coffeeteria" fellowship, organizing community service projects, and recognizing a kind of calendar of "holy days" that mark certain anniversaries (a yearly 9/11

Affairs, 2020), 17, for recent data on this phenomenon.

12. It is coincidental for this article but still telling that Lewis describes Coleridge's style of prayer with adverb "merely."

13. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters: Annotated Edition* (HarperCollins, 2013), 22–23.

workout involving climbing many flights of stairs is held in honor of the firemen who died in the World Trade Center towers, for example).

Each workout ends with a form of "passing the peace." Each member greets the group as a whole by reciting his age and nickname, and—as if with an "And with your spirit"—the rest of the group responds by repeating his name in return, assuring him of his membership in the group. All these physical ways of being compose a liturgy that creates a strong sense of belonging among members. By showing up often enough to learn a distinct terminology or calendar, a newcomer makes himself a member of the association. Crucially, this is a knowledge that can only be gained by actual participation.

Beyond reinforcing a connection between members, this liturgy also habituates them to enjoy a discipline they would otherwise struggle to maintain on their own. For example, many groups meet promptly at 5:30am, an early hour that most would never see if it were not for the mysterious allure of the group and its peculiarities. Altogether, insofar as the group facilitates self–improvement through mutual help, it approaches that highest form of friendship that Aristotle describes in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: a shared vision of the good life. Thus, despite the sweat, rain, and occasional vomit, there is something beautiful about the whole ordeal that its members find compelling.

Though most of these groups continued to meet throughout the 2020 pandemic, some experimented with Zoom, and the established density and quirkiness of the practices made it easy for members to step back into their former habits. There was something for their bodies to do, not simply a list of thoughts to think about. My guess is therefore that the proportion of this exercise group that have returned to physical gatherings after a temporary separation is higher than the proportion of congregants in "mere Christianity" churches who have returned to post–lockdown services. Truth be told, for many who attended large churches with "mere Christian" services before the pandemic, it was always a kind of remote experience: Zoom simply made it more convenient.

So what would our ecclesiology look like if it incorporated such an anthropology? For myself, I can only draw on my own experience in the Anglican Communion, but I have found in that tradition a deep well of ways of being that I can step into, reminiscent of my exercise group. Examples include the rich prayers and songs in the daily Morning and Evening Office, ideally prayed and sung together with other believers; following closely the liturgical calendar on a weekly, monthly, and seasonal basis; learning to pray the prayer book, including the Psalms, occasional prayers, and suffrages; feasting on Sundays and high holy days; learning and singing the classical hymns of the Anglican tradition. All of these practices are formative, and when done together have an effect similar to that which I find in my exercise group: a friendship that bonds individuals in a joyful embracing of the disciplines that are otherwise difficult to maintain consistently alone.

Of course, these practices need to be filled with the life–giving content of Christian orthodoxy to be of spiritual benefit. Yet orthodoxy is something we have retained just fine from Lewis and *Mere Christianity*. It is the anthropology which safeguards the effective transmission of that orthodoxy that is now crucial to capture.

A DEFINING MOMENT

In contrast, when we reduce the Christian religion to a short list of beliefs to assent to, stripped of all traditionally Christian ways of being, we are left with very little in which to involve our bodies. As Protestants, we have arrived at a moment that warrants reflection: the rise of non–denominational churches must be the final iteration of a distinctly Protestant trend to eschew traditional, proven liturgies. No doubt very good work is being done in many of those churches, especially in evangelism and church–planting. I know that good and necessary work is also being done in the house churches in China, for I myself was blessed to be a part of one for a time. I also know from that experience, though, that a model that works well temporarily under persecution is not a good model for stable growth under orthodox, authoritative teaching.

Robust, multigenerational Christian communities flourish best under intentional, established ways of being like those found amid the "fires, and chairs, and meals" inside the rooms Lewis describes; eventual deprivation awaits in the languor of the hallway.[14] Furthermore, it is not possible to avoid developing a liturgy: if a group of people meet together regularly, they will always develop authoritative ways of doing things.

The difference between liturgies of "merely Christian" churches and those of established communions is noteworthy. While the latter arise from deliberations of church councils, the wisdom of heroes of the faith, and are time–tested and altered only carefully as necessary (see Lewis's first letter in *Letters to Malcolm*), the former develop either accidentally ("that's just

14. Preface, xv.

MANY DENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES ARE EVEN A LITTLE EMBARRASSED BY HAVING A DISTINCTLY DENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER THAT, BY DEFINITION, ENCOURAGES CONFORMITY.

the way we've always done it") or intentionally but under the inordinate influence of (usually) one or two assertive personalities, the orthodoxy of which is sometimes suspect, and the unchecked power arising from such influence is often all–too–easily corrupted.

This article is not, however, directed primarily at non–denominationalism. This misreading of Lewis is evident in liturgical, denominational churches as well. My own experience visiting various parishes in the Anglican Church in North America over the last ten years proves that, ironically, American Anglicans very often confuse Baxter's "hall" Puritanism with Lewis's "room" Anglicanism, the rich Anglican traditions and explicit rubrics and liturgies in *The Book of Common Prayer* notwithstanding.

Last year, M. H. Turner noted that the official website for the ACNA describes Anglicanism as not "a distinct version of Christianity, but a distinct way of being a 'Mere Christian.'" "The hint," Turner explains, "to use the metaphor from Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, is that if the distinct versions of Christianity are the rooms, then Anglicanism is not a room but the hallway." As is clear from the preface to that book, though, this is a misinterpretation of Lewis's metaphor. Stranger still, many people (including myself) who have come to Anglicanism in the last two decades from other Protestant denominations and non–denominations were attracted to Anglicanism in the first place for the very reason that it was—or at least felt—more ecclesially distinctive than the churches they left. Turner's article is entitled "Why is Anglicanism a Gateway to Catholicism?" in which he argued that hallway–type Anglican churches all–too–often leave parishioners with a hunger that they ultimately seek to satisfy in the Roman Church. The cause of this phenomenon, too, may be explained anthropologically.[15]

Many denominational churches are even a little embarrassed by having a distinctly denominational character that, by definition, encourages conformity. They seek instead some kind of individual "authentic" personality. These churches seem to prefer denominational ambiguity for the sake of theological simplicity, often with potential newcomers in mind. This impulse perhaps explains the trend away from traditional church names such as "St. Matthews" and "All Saints" toward *faux*–inspirational names like "Elevate," New Horizons," "Lifebridge," "No Limits Fellowship" (I've even seen a church named "Potential").

Lewis closes *Mere Christianity* with a reflection on this urge to create a unique personality. He wrote about it primarily in the context of the idea that it is only by dying to ourselves and living for Christ that we can become our true, authentic selves. Lewis notes, though, that "the same principle holds...for more everyday matters." In fact, he claims that "the principle runs through all life from top to bottom," viz., that there is nothing original in the attempt to be original. "Even in literature and art," he notes, "no man who bothers about originality will ever be original." Lewis draws the reasonable conclusion about this phenomenon: "Your real, new self...will not come as long as you are looking for it."[16] Likewise with churches that shun classically Protestant denominational distinctives and liturgies in favor of spontaneous "authenticity," one gets the feeling that they are all original in exactly the same way.

Rather than trying to reduce the practice of Christian living to its *merest* version and then filling in the inevitable gaps with theologically and anthropologically dubious innovation, we ought instead to rediscover the shared practices and ways of being that are found in the "rooms" and in so doing help "retrieve the riches of classical Protestantism in order to renew and build up the contemporary church."[17]

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15. For a thorough and incisive discussion on this general phenomenon, see the five–part series "Why Protestants Convert" by Chris Castaldo and Brad Littlejohn, published by The Davenant Institute.

16. Lewis, 226.

17. The mission of the Davenant Institute.

On the Decalogue

BY PHILIP MELANCHTHON

TRANSLATED BY E. J. HUTCHINSON

Divino praecepta puer si prodita ab ore,

Et facies casto pectore iussa Dei:

Ipse pater vitae cursum moderabitur omnem,

Nec fortuna tibi saeva nocere potest.

If as a youth you'll perform the commandments proceeding from God's mouth,

And with a virtuous heart honor the orders of God,

God the Father himself will guide the course of your whole life,

Nor can you ever be harmed, savage though fortune may be.

BOOKS AND ARTS

A Letter Regarding War

April 15, 1818

JOHN JAY

INTRODUCTION BY BRAD LITTLEJOHN

Born in 1745 in New York City, then a bustling colonial merchant town of eleven thousand, John Jay was destined to play a role in the life of the American nation matched by few his countrymen in that day or since. Beginning with his summons to the First Continental Congress in 1774, Jay spent the next three decades in nearly continuous public service for both his home state and the emerging nation. Highlights included his stints as the first Chief Justice of New York (1776–78) and first Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court (1789–95), President of the Continental Congress (1778–79), Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1784–89), Governor of New York (1795–1801), and lead negotiator of the two most important diplomatic achievements of the early republic, the 1783 Treaty of Paris, and the eponymously named Jay Treaty of 1795. Although a reluctant revolutionary, deeply valuing America's union with Great Britain and her British laws and culture, Jay threw himself into the American cause with complete self–dedication when he deemed independence unavoidable, declaring, "We have nothing to do but our duty, and one part of it is to prepare for every event. Let us preserve peace while it can be done with propriety; and if in that we fail, let us wage war,—not in newspapers and impotent sarcasms, but with manly firmness, and unanimous and vigorous efforts."[1]

Jay was also a devout Anglican Protestant, guided throughout his career by a firm assurance that, though frail men would often fail and deceive, "God governs the world, and we have only to do our duty wisely, and leave the issue to him."[2] *His faith was no mere source of private comfort, but played a key role in his politics; for him, one of America's greatest grievances against Great Britain was her determination to establish in Quebec "a religion that has deluged your island in blood, and dispersed impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder, and rebellion, through every part of the world." In this, as in much else, Jay belies the Jeffersonian–tinged retelling of America's Founding as a new political departure that abandoned the heritage of magisterial Protestantism for a liberal creedless politics of abstract reason and individual freedom. Jay's thought and statesmanship are marked throughout by a classical Protestant recognition that although the state should not exercise dominion* over *conscience, this does not mean that the state should* have no conscience; *on the contrary, it should seek the advancement of virtue and the Christian religion. He was also deeply steeped in both Scripture and the Christian natural law tradition, as he showcases in this remarkable letter.*

1. John Jay, *Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay: 1794–1826*, ed. by Henry P. Johnston (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), IV:50.

2. *Correspondence and Public Papers*, IV:185.

Written late in his retirement (1818) to a pacifist friend, John Murray, Jr., the letter represents an admirably concise, compelling, and elegant summary of the classic Christian just war tradition. Anchoring his argument in the soil of Hookerian distinctions between natural law, divine positive law, and human positive law, and Reformed convictions about the complementary relationship of the Old and New Covenants, Jay also offers a careful exegesis of key passages from the Gospels that continue to serve even today as supposed proof–texts for Christian pacifism. Central to his case is the basic magisterial Protestant conviction of the essential harmony of natural law and Scripture: "Nor do I know of any action done according to the moral law, that is censured or forbidden by the gospel. On the contrary, it appears to me that the gospel strongly enforces the whole moral law, and clears it from the vain traditions and absurd comments which had obscured and misapplied certain parts of it."

From the beginning of our work at the Davenant Institute, we recognized that confusion over these hermeneutical, ethical, and political principles lay at the heart of much silliness in the modern church, and published three short Davenant Guides to restate classic Protestant teaching on these issues: Jesus and Pacifism; The Two Kingdoms; *and* Natural Law. *All three of these themes are eloquently addressed in this letter by one of America's great Protestant statesmen, which we are pleased to reproduce for you in full.*

The letter, dated April 15th, 1818, is taken from volume IV of The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay, *edited by Henry P. Johnston and published in 1893 by G. P. Putnam and Sons. I am grateful to E. Gunnar Enlow for transcribing it.*

MY GOOD FRIEND:

In my letter to you of the 16th October last, I hinted that I might perhaps write and send you a few more lines on the question, whether war of every description is forbidden by the gospel.

I will now add some remarks to those which were inserted in my answer to your first letter. In that answer, the lawfulness of war, in certain cases, was inferred from those Divine *positive* institutions which authorized and regulated it. For although those institutions were not dictated by the moral law, yet they cannot be understood to authorize what the moral law forbids.

The moral or natural law was given by the Sovereign of the universe to all mankind; with them it was co–eval, and with them it will be co–existent. Being founded by infinite wisdom and goodness on essential right, which never varies, it can require no amendment or alteration.

Divine positive ordinances and institutions, on the other hand, being founded on expediency, which is not always perpetual or immutable, admit of, and have received, alteration and limitation in sundry instances.

THE MORAL OR NATURAL LAW WAS GIVEN BY THE SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE TO ALL MANKIND...BEING FOUNDED BY INFINITE WISDOM AND GOODNESS ON ESSENTIAL RIGHT, WHICH NEVER VARIES, IT CAN REQUIRE NO AMENDMENT OR ALTERATION.

There were several Divine positive ordinances and institutions at very early periods. Some of them were of limited obligation, as circumcision; others of them were of universal obligation, as the Sabbath, marriage, sacrifices, the particular punishment for murder.

The Lord of the Sabbath caused the day to be changed. The ordinances of Moses suffered the Israelites to exercise more than the original liberty allowed to marriage, but our Saviour repealed that indulgence. When sacrifices had answered their purpose as types of the great Sacrifice, etc., they ceased. The punishment for murder has undergone no alteration, either by Moses or by Christ.

I advert to this distinction between the moral law and positive institutions, because it enables us to distinguish the reasonings which apply to the one, from those which apply *only* to the other—ordinances being mutable, but the moral law always the same.

To this you observe, by way of objection, that the law was given by Moses, but that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; and hence that, even as it relates to the *moral law*, a more *perfect* system is enjoined by the gospel than was required under the law, which admitted of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, tolerating a spirit of retaliation. And further, that, if the

moral law was the same now that it was before the flood, we must call in question those precepts of the gospel which prohibit some things *allowed* of and practised by the patriarchs.

It is true that the law was given by Moses, not however in his individual or private capacity, but as the agent or instrument, and by the authority of the Almighty. The law demanded exact obedience, and proclaimed: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The law was inexorable, and by requiring *perfect* obedience, under a penalty so inevitable and dreadful, operated as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ for *mercy*.

THE GOSPEL STRONGLY ENFORCES THE WHOLE MORAL LAW, AND CLEARS IT FROM THE VAIN TRADITIONS AND ABSURD COMMENTS WHICH HAD OBSCURED AND MISAPPLIED CERTAIN PARTS OF IT.

Mercy, and grace, and favour did come by Jesus Christ; and also that truth which verified the promises and predictions concerning him, and which exposed and corrected the various errors which had been imbibed respecting the Supreme Being, his attributes, laws, and dispensations. Uninspired commentators have dishonoured the law, by ascribing to it, in certain cases, a sense and meaning which it did not authorize, and which our Saviour rejected and reproved.

The inspired prophets, on the contrary, express the most exalted ideas of the law. They declare that the law of the Lord is *perfect*; that the statutes of the Lord are *right*; and that the commandment of the Lord is *pure*; that God would magnify the law and make it honourable, etc.

Our Saviour himself assures us that he came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil: that whoever shall do and teach the commandments, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven; that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. This certainly amounts to a full approbation of it. Even after the resurrection of our Lord, and after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and after the miraculous conversion of Paul, and after the direct revelation of the Christian dispensation to him, he pronounced this memorable encomium on the law, viz.: "The law is *holy*, and the commandments *holy*, *just*, and *good*."

It is true that one of the *positive* ordinances of Moses, to which you allude, did ordain retaliation, or, in other words, a tooth for a tooth. But we are to recollect that it was ordained, not as a rule to regulate the conduct of private individuals towards each other, but as a legal penalty or punishment for certain offences. Retaliation is also manifest in the punishment prescribed for murder—life for life. Legal punishments are adjusted and inflicted by the law and magistrate, and not by unauthorized individuals. These and all other positive laws or ordinances established by Divine direction, must of necessity be consistent with the moral law. It certainly was not the design of the law or ordinance in question, to encourage a spirit of personal or private revenge. On the contrary, there are express injunctions in the law of Moses which inculcate a very different spirit; such as these: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Love the stranger, for ye were strangers in Egypt." "If thou meet thy enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him," etc., etc.

There is reason to believe that Solomon understood the law in its true sense, and we have his opinion as to retaliation of injuries, viz.: "Say not, I will recompense evil; but wait upon the Lord, and He will save thee." Again: "Say not, I will do to him as he hath done to me. I will render to the man according to his work." And again: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." But a greater than Solomon has removed all doubts on this point. On being asked by a Jewish lawyer, which was the great commandment in the law, our Saviour answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the *first* and the great commandment, and the *second* is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On *these* two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." It is manifest, therefore, that the love of God and the love of man are enjoined by the law; and as the genuine love of the one comprehends that of the other, the apostle assures us that "Love is the fulfilling of the *law*."

It is, nevertheless, certain, that erroneous opinions respecting retaliation, and who were to be regarded as *neighbours*, had long prevailed, and that our Saviour blamed and corrected those and many other unfounded doctrines.

IT IS NOT TO BE PRESUMED THAT OUR LORD WOULD HAVE ORDERED SWORDS TO BE PROVIDED, BUT FOR SOME PURPOSE FOR WHICH A SWORD WAS REQUISITE.

That the patriarchs sometimes violated the moral law, is a position not to be disputed. They were men, and subject to the frailties of our fallen nature. But I do not know nor believe, that any of them violated the moral law by the authority or with the approbation of the Almighty. I can find no instance of it in the Bible, Nor do I know of any action done according to the moral law, that is censured or forbidden by the gospel. On the contrary, it appears to me that the gospel strongly enforces the whole moral law, and clears it from the vain traditions and absurd comments which had obscured and misapplied certain parts of it.

As, therefore, Divine ordinances did authorize just war, as those ordinances were necessarily consistent with the moral law, and as the moral law is incorporated in the Christian dispensation, I think it follows that the right to wage *just* and *necessary* war is admitted, and not abolished, by the gospel.

You seem to doubt whether there ever was a just war, and that it would puzzle even Solomon to find one.

Had such a doubt been proposed to Solomon, an answer to it would probably have been suggested to him by a very memorable and interesting war which occurred in his day. I allude to the war in which his brother Absalom on the one side, and his father David on the other, were the belligerent parties. That war was caused by, and proceeded from, "the lusts" of Absalom, and was horribly wicked. But the war waged against him by David was not caused by, nor did proceed from, "the lusts" of David, but was right, just, and necessary. Had David submitted to be dethroned by his detestable son, he would, in my opinion, have violated his moral duty and betrayed his official trust. Although just war is not forbidden by the gospel in express terms, yet you think an implied prohibition of all war, without exception, is deducible from the answer of our Lord to Pilate, viz.: "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight," etc. At the conclusion of the Last Supper, our Lord said to his disciples: "He that hath no sword, let him now sell his garment and buy one." They answered: "Lord, here are two swords." He replied: "It is enough."

It is not to be presumed that our Lord would have ordered swords to be provided, but for some purpose for which a sword was requisite; nor that he would have been satisfied with two, if more had been necessary.

Whatever may have been the purposes for which swords were ordered, it is certain that the use of one of those swords soon caused an event which confirmed the subsequent defence of our Lord before Pilate, and also produced other important results. When the officers and their band arrived, with swords and with staves, to take Jesus, they who were about him saw what would follow. "They said unto him: Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" It does not appear that any of the eleven disciples who were with him, except one, made the least attempt to defend him. But Peter, probably inferring from the order for swords, that they were now to be used, proceeded to "smite a servant of the high–priest, and cut off his right ear." Jesus (perhaps, among other reasons, to abate inducements to prosecute Peter for that violent attack) healed the ear.

He ordered Peter to put his sword into its sheath, and gave two reasons for it. The *first* related to himself, and amounted to this, that he would make no opposition, saying: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink?" The *second* related to Peter, viz., they who take the sword, shall perish by the sword; doubtless meaning that they who take and use a sword, as Peter had just done, without lawful authority, and against lawful authority, incur the penalty and risk perishing by the sword. This meaning seems to be attached to those words by the occasion and circumstances which prompted them. If understood in their unlimited latitude, they would contradict the experience and testimony of all ages, it being manifest that many military men die peaceably in their beds.

The disciples did believe and expect that Jesus had come to establish a *temporal* kingdom. "They trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." "They knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead; questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." Even after his resurrection, they appear to have entertained

the same belief and expectation; for on the very day he ascended, they asked him: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

The order for swords, and the declaration that *two were enough*, tended to confirm that belief and expectation, and to inspire a confidence that he who had commanded the winds and the waves, and had raised the dead to life, was able, as well as willing, to render the two swords sufficient to vanquish his enemies. Could anything less than such a firm belief and confidence have prompted eleven *such* men, and with only two swords among them, to offer to "smite with the sword" the armed band, which, under officers appointed by the Jewish rulers, had come to apprehend their Master?

Great must have been the disappointment and astonishment of the disciples, when Jesus unexpectedly and peaceably submitted to the power and malice of his enemies, directing Peter to sheath his sword, and hinting to him the danger he had incurred by drawing it: amazed and terrified, they forsook him and fled. This catastrophe so surprised and subdued the intrepidity of Peter, that he was no longer "ready to go with his Master to prison and to death."

It seems that perplexity, consternation, and tumultuous feelings overwhelmed his faith and reflection, and that his agitations, receiving fresh excitement from the danger and dread of discovery, which soon after ensued, impelled him with heedless precipitation to deny his Master. This denial proved bitter to Peter, and it taught him and others that spiritual strength can be sustained only by the spiritual bread which cometh down from heaven.

The Jews accused Jesus before Pilate of aspiring to the *temporal* sovereignty of their nation, in violation of the regal rights of Caesar. Jesus, in his defence, admitted that he was king, but declared that his kingdom was not of *this* world. For the truth of this assertion, he appealed to the peaceable behaviour of his adherents, saying: *"If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is my kingdom not from hence."*

Pilate, who doubtless well knew what had been the conduct of Jesus, both before and at the time of his apprehension, was satisfied, but the Jews were not. They exclaimed: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Caesar." "We have no king but Caesar."

You and I understand the words in question very differently. Is there the least reason to infer from the belief and conduct of the disciples, that they were restrained from fighting by the consideration that their Master's kingdom was *not of this world*? On the contrary, did they not believe and expect that he had come to restore one of the kingdoms of *this* world to Israel? The fact is, that they were ready and willing to fight. Did they not ask him: "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" It was *his* will, therefore, and not their will, which restrained them from fighting; and for that restraint he assigned a very conclusive reason, viz., because his kingdom was not of this world.

To the advancement and support of his *spiritual* sovereignty over his *spiritual* kingdom, soldiers and swords and corporeal exertions were inapplicable and useless. But, on the other hand, soldiers and swords and corporeal exertions are necessary to enable the several temporal rulers of the states and kingdoms of this world to maintain their authority and protect themselves and their people; and our Saviour expressly declared that *if* his kingdom had been of *this* world, *then* would his servants fight to protect him; or, in other words, that *then*, and in that case, he would not have restrained them from fighting. The lawfulness of such fighting, therefore, instead of being denied, is admitted and confirmed by that declaration.

This exposition coincides with the answer given by John the Baptist (who was "filled with the Holy Ghost") to the *soldiers* who asked him what they should do, viz.: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be, *content* with your *wages*." Can these words be rationally understood as meaning that they should receive wages for *nothing*; or that, when ordered to march against the enemy, they should refuse to proceed; or that, on meeting the enemy, they should either run away, or passively submit to be captured or slaughtered? This would be attaching a meaning to his answer very foreign to the sense of the words in which he expressed it.

Had the gospel regarded war as being in every case sinful, it seems strange that the apostle Paul should have been so unguarded as, in teaching the importance of *faith*, to use an argument which clearly proves the lawfulness of war, viz.: "That it was through faith that Gideon, David, and others waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of aliens"; thereby confirming the declaration of David, that it was God who had "girded him with strength to battle; and had taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight."

The gospel appears to me to consider the servants of Christ as having two capacities or characters, with correspondent duties to sustain and fulfil.

Being subjects of his *spiritual* kingdom, they are bound in that capacity to fight, pursuant to his orders, with *spiritual* weapons, against his and their spiritual enemies.

TWO KINDS OF JUSTIFIABLE WARFARE AROSE: ONE AGAINST DOMESTIC MALEFACTORS; THE OTHER AGAINST FOREIGN AGGRESSORS.

Being also subjects and partakers in the rights and interests of a temporal or worldly state or kingdom, they are in that capacity bound, whenever lawfully required, to fight with weapons in just and necessary war, against the *worldly* enemies of that state or kingdom.

Another view may be taken of the subject. The depravity which mankind inherited from their first parents, introduced wickedness into the world. That wickedness rendered human government necessary to restrain the violence and injustice resulting from it. To facilitate the establishment and administration of government, the human race became, in the course of Providence, divided into separate and distinct nations. Every nation instituted a government, with authority and power to protect it against domestic and foreign aggressions. Each government provided for the internal peace and security of the nation, by laws for punishing their offending subjects. The law of all the nations prescribed the conduct which they were to observe towards each other, and allowed war to be waged by an innocent against an offending nation, when rendered just and necessary by unprovoked, atrocious, and unredressed injuries.

Thus two kinds of justifiable warfare arose: one against domestic malefactors; the other against foreign aggressors. The first being regulated by the law of the land; the second by the law of nations; and both consistently with the moral law.
As to the *first* species of warfare, in every state or kingdom, the government or executive ruler has, throughout all ages, pursued, and often at the expense of blood, attacked, captured, and subdued murderers, robbers, and other offenders; by force confining them in chains and in prisons, and by force inflicting on them punishment; never rendering to them good for evil, for that duty attaches to individuals in their personal or private capacities, but not to rulers or magistrates in their official capacities. This species of war has constantly and universally been deemed just and indispensable. On this topic the gospel is explicit. It commands us to obey the higher powers or ruler. It reminds us that "he beareth not the sword in vain"; that "he is the minister of God, and a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Now, if he is not to bear the sword in vain, it follows that he is to use it to execute wrath on evil–doers, and consequently to draw blood and to kill on proper occasions.

As to the *second* species of warfare, it certainly is as reasonable and as right that a nation be secure against injustice, disorder, and rapine from without as from within; and therefore it is the right and duty of the government or ruler to use force and the sword to protect and maintain the rights of his people against evil–doers of another nation. The reason and necessity of using force and the sword being the same in both cases, the right or the law must be the same also.

We are commanded to render to our government, or to our Caesar, "the things that are Caesar's" that is, the things which belong to him, and not the things which do not belong to him. And surely this command cannot be construed to intend or imply that we ought to render to the Caesar of another nation more than belongs to him.

In case some powerful Caesar should demand of us to receive and obey a king of his nomination, and unite with him in all his wars, or that he would commence hostilities against us, what answer would it be proper for us to give to such a demand? In my opinion, we ought to refuse, and vigorously defend our independence by arms. To what other expedient could we have recourse? I cannot think that the gospel authorizes or encourages us, on such an occasion, to abstain from resistance, and to expect miracles to deliver us.

A very feeble unprepared nation, on receiving such a demand, might hesitate and find it expedient to adopt the policy intimated in the gospel, viz: "What king, going to war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against

him with twenty thousand; or else he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace"—that is, makes the best bargain he can.

If the United States should unanimously RESOLVE never more to use the sword, would a certified copy of it prove to be an effectual Mediterranean passport? Would it reform the predatory rulers of Africa, or persuade the successive potentates of Europe to observe towards us the conduct of real Christians? On the contrary, would it not present new facilities, and consequently produce new excitements, to the gratification of avarice and ambition?

It is true that even just war is attended with evils, and so likewise is the administration of government and of justice; but is that a good reason for abolishing either of them? They are means by which greater evils are averted. Among the various means necessary to obviate or remove, or repress, or to mitigate the various calamities, dangers, and exigencies, to which in this life we are exposed, how few are to be found which do not subject us to troubles, privations, and inconveniences of one kind or other. To prevent the incursion or continuance of evils, we must submit to the use of those means, whether agreeable or otherwise, which reason and experience prescribe. It is also true, and to be lamented, that war, however just and necessary, sends many persons out of this world who are ill prepared for a better. And so also does the law in all countries. So also does navigation, and other occupations. Are they therefore all sinful and forbidden?

However desirable the abolition of all wars may be, yet until the morals and manners of mankind are greatly changed, it will be found impracticable. We are taught that national sins will be punished, and war is one of the punishments. The prophets predict wars at so late a period as the restoration of the Israelites. Who or what can hinder the occurrence of those wars?

I nevertheless believe, and have perfect faith in the prophecy, that the time will come when "the nations will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning–hooks; when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." But does not this prophecy clearly imply, and give us plainly to understand, that in the meanwhile, and until the arrival of that blessed period, the nations will not beat their swords into plough shares, nor their spears into pruning–hooks; that nation will not forbear to lift up sword against nation, nor cease to learn war?

It may be asked, Are we to do nothing to hasten the arrival of that happy period? Literally, no created being can either accelerate or retard its arrival. It will not arrive sooner nor later than the appointed time.

There certainly is reason to expect, that as great providential events have usually been preceded and introduced by the intervention of providential means to prepare the way for them, so the great event in question will be preceded and introduced in like manner. It is, I think, more than probable, that the unexpected and singular co–operation and the extraordinary zeal and efforts of almost all Christian nations to extend the light and knowledge of the gospel, and to inculcate its doctrines, are among those preparatory means. It is the duty of Christians to promote the prevalence and success of such means, and to look forward with faith and hope to the result of them.

But whatever may be the time or the means adopted by Providence for the abolition of war, I think we may, without presumption, conclude that mankind must be prepared and fitted for the reception, enjoyment, and preservation of universal permanent peace, before they will be blessed with it. Are they as yet fitted for it? Certainly not. Even if it was practicable, would it be wise to disarm the good before the wicked cease from troubling"? By what other means than arms and military force can unoffending rulers and nations protect their rights against unprovoked aggressions from within and from without? Are there any other means to which they could recur, and on the efficacy of which they could rely? To this question I have not as yet heard, nor seen, a direct and precise answer. These remarks would have been written and sent sooner had my health been better. Expedition not being requisite, I attended to them only at intervals which allowed and invited me to do so.

We differ in opinion, and, I am persuaded, with equal sincerity. With real esteem and regard, I remain,

Your friend,
JOHN JAY.

BOOKS AND ARTS

The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience: A Review

MICHAEL RIGGINS

When I was sixteen, I took a friend to a revival meeting put on by a traveling evangelistic ministry. After an evening of Christian rock music, emotional testimonies, and vague promises of Christianity's power to improve one's quality of life, the event sponsors asked who was ready to make a "decision for Christ." The whole evening was like a modern parody of a Billy Graham crusade. To my surprise, when they gave the altar call, my friend answered. Afterwards, as we walked to the car, my friend turned to me and said "I don't feel any different. Is something supposed to happen?" I searched for a theologically satisfactory answer, but eventually settled for "No, Christianity isn't about *feelings*, it's about faith; just have faith something happened in there." But I was troubled. I had a dramatic conversion experience to Christianity as a pre–teen and never looked back. In the Christianity of my youth (Charismatic and Pentecostal churches where emotional experiences were the norm) the burden of generating the emotion was on the worshippers; the easier the tears came, the more the Holy Spirit was said to be present over the service. Though I eventually became an Anglican, I never could understand why Christianity wasn't emotionally moving for most people most of the time. In other words, even in denominations and movements centered upon individual emotional experience, it seems that the proper emotional states do not come easily to parishioners; if they wish to "feel moved," they must move themselves.

It appears I am not alone. Simeon Zahl's new book, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*,[1] takes as its starting point the problem of the disjointed relationship between Christian doctrine and lived experience. Two theses guide Zahl throughout the book. First, the relationship between doctrine and experience is a two way street: on the one hand, doctrine exerts an emotional influence on us and colors our experiences, and in turn, theological ideas are shaped by the "affective texture and atmosphere in which we encounter them, by our personal history and temperament, by our social context, even by our mood" (14). Second, Zahl notes that Christianity contains its own unique theological framework for understanding religious experience in the ways we speak about the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Thus, Christians need not appropriate the terms and concepts used by general philosophers of religious experience like William James, Ruldoph Otto, and Wayne Proudfoot, who tend to lump all religious experience

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together as part of the same phenomenon. Rather, Christians should pay close attention to the passages of the Biblical text that describe the Holy Spirit's work in manifesting the Father and Son to us. This occurs not only in the "dramatic and episodic (e.g., conversion experiences), but also [in] the Spirit's involvement in longer term affective–dispositional change (for example, the kindling of the affections and dispositions that St. Paul calls the 'fruit of the Spirit'), as well as specific, less easily categorizable instances of guidance, gifting, calling, and healing" (53).

One advantage of Zahl's book is its unwillingness to accept vague language about the ways in which we experience the Holy Spirit. Zahl is particularly suspicious of accounts of religious experience that start with the "presence" of the Holy Spirit, in which whatever the worshipper happens to feel (so long as *something* is felt) is regarded as sufficient indication of this "presence," without the term ever being really defined. Zahl means to develop a pneumatology that pinpoints the working of the Spirit in ways that are "'practically recognizable' in bodies and in time" (49) and any theology of the Holy Spirit that does not meet this criterion is "pneumatologically problematic" (49). Zahl notes that Scripture often tends to focus on the work rather than the person of the Spirit, writing "The New Testament authors as a whole are substantially more interested in the particular effects the Spirit has on human beings in the world, especially in salvation, in sanctification, and in mission [than in trinitarian questions about who the Spirit is or how the Spirit relates to the Father and Son]" (67). Thus, Zahl spends the majority of the book working out a constructive account of salvation and sanctification that makes clear and unmistakable the work of the Spirit in the Christian life. In the final three chapters Zahl demonstrates how the Holy Spirit makes use of our subjective experience to shape our desires and thus bring about our salvation. Building his account in large part around the Spirit's use of the Law to strike fear and the Gospel to console, he writes:

> Faith thus represents a key moment, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in a practically recognizable affective sequence of moving from existential terror over sin and death to a new state of consolation, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And as a set of affective experiences, and therefore something irreducibly dependent on human embodiment, the sequence is not just conceptual or metaphorical: it is something that takes place in time, in the actual historical experience of a given individual (127).

Zahl undergirds his account with insights from the writings of Philip Melancthon, Martin Luther, and St. Augustine, and more than once makes reference to how these insights are beautifully and pastorally expressed in the liturgies of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Useful to pastors and academics alike, Zahl's treatment of Christian experience brings theology into conversation with the increasingly prevalent modern disciplines of the cognitive sciences and critical theory, bridging the gap between our understanding of the Holy Spirit and the role experience plays in shaping our theology.

SOME PROTESTANT THEOLOGIANS HAVE MOVED AWAY FROM THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF FORENSIC JUSTIFICATION IN FAVOR OF A THEORY OF JUSTIFICATION BY PARTICIPATION.

The book is not without its weaknesses, however. One such point lies not in Zahl's constructive account, but in his historical review. Zahl makes note of the recent turn in Protestant theology to try to reintroduce experiential theology into our vocabulary. As a result, some Protestant theologians have moved away from the Reformed doctrine of forensic justification in favor of a theory of justification by participation, in which an individual is *made* righteous by God (on an ontological level, which may or may not have any bearing on lived experience) as opposed to merely *declared* righteous. In seeking to recover and defend forensic justification, Zahl deals with T. F. Torrance and Kathryn Tanner's accounts of justification by participation, attempting to show that they get us no closer to an experiential account of salvation than they imagine the standard account of forensic justification does. However, particularly in the case of Torrance, Zahl perhaps makes too much of his refusal to give the experiential correlate of his ontological account, attributing his unwillingness to do so to an inability to do so. Zahl writes:

> Torrance makes no attempt to answer these questions. Again and again he describes the saving activity of the Spirit in terms that could be read as implying some sort of experiential correlate, but then fails to specify what such experiences might be in practice…Faced with his near total silence on the relationship between participation and experience, and trying to understand the affective salience of his soteriologi-

> cal scheme, we are presented with two equally unsatisfactory possibilities: (a) the work of the Spirit in salvation never affects actual human bodies in time; or (b) there are experiential correlates of participation, but the task of theologically analyzing or describing them is so laden with problems that it should never be attempted (97).

One is left scratching his head to see exactly how one can conclude either of the possibilities Zahl draws from Torrance's silence, particularly as Zahl gives a compelling portrait of the theological landscape in which Torrance was working earlier in the book. In short, following Barth, thinking about experience was deeply unfashionable. Torrance's silence on the experiential consequences of his theology might be better explained by trends in academic theology rather than his hitting a theological wall. Zahl deals with Tanner more gently, entertaining the possibility that Tanner's account, which differs from Torrance by drawing the distinction between salvation and sanctification more sharply, might be extended to have some experiential correlates, though Zahl does not clarify what he thinks they might be.

Despite his disagreements with Tanner and Torrance, Zahl maintains that any adequate soteriology must accommodate the New Testament's participation language. However, rather than take this language as his starting point, Zahl argues that forensic justification accounts for it better than recent accounts of salvation by participation. Drawing on Eastern theologians like Maximus the Confessor and Didymus the Blind, Zahl posits that the site of participation must be in the material body, in the affections and desires, not in an abstract, ontological register. Forensic accounts address this best for Zahl, as in these the Holy Spirit shapes our desires by causing us to understand our sin in light of the Law, before consoling us with the Gospel.

If this seems like a fairly minor point of critique, that's because it is. As a whole, the book is rich and cohesive. Most importantly, Zahl has given us a theological model which can *do things,* and make sense of what we are *already* doing. Zahl's work provides us with a framework by which to interpret our experiences of God in the world, as well as a framework by which to evaluate what Zahl refers to as the "affective salience of doctrines," i.e., why some doctrines seem to affect us emotionally while others fall flat. Central to the book is Zahl's use of affect theory, which Zahl uses quite poignantly to rescue the idea of the "troubled conscience" from our modern cultural apathy toward religion in general. Zahl argues that our conception of sin has narrowed from a pervasive force restricting the freedom of men to a question of where to assign guilt. He writes, "It is not so much that we no longer undergo the sorts of experiences that earlier Christians associated with the burden of sin, the desire for forgiveness or the longing for redemption and healing. It is that we tend not to associate these experiences with God or with sin anymore" (162). In other words, our experiences and emotional responses have not changed, only the way we interpret them. Thus, one takeaway from Zahl's book, which he does not make explicit but which is clear in the writings of Tim Keller and others, is that in the course of the Spirit shaping our affections, our mental categories of "things that have to do with God" and things that do not will begin to blur together as we recognize the Spirit beginning to touch every area of our lives as all of our concerns find their root in our relationship to Christ.

While not everyone will agree with every particular, Zahl's argument is compelling, clear, and insightful. If nothing else, this book carves out an important place for experience in theology and refuses to accept theological accounts that skirt real pastoral issues with vague language. In this, Zahl's book should be a model for future theologians, particularly as theologians begin seeking to bridge the gap between academic and pastoral theology. Perhaps the greatest evidence of his success lies in his having helped me interpret my own experiences more fruitfully: even if my friend's conversion did not feel how he thought "being saved" should feel, the Spirit was at work. And, as the Spirit continued to shape his affections, he grew to recognize the presence of God even in those first moments.

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