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Editorial Introduction

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I am pleased to introduce the second issue of the second volume of the *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* (JOGTS).

This is a special edition of the journal based on the post-graduate conference *Cities of God: Politics, Theology and Ethics*, which I helped to convene. This conference, organized by the *Society for the Study of Christian Ethics* (SSCE), took place on 12 March 2021, and contained a wide variety of papers discussing themes such as protest, freedom of conscience, trauma, inequality, environmentalism, urbanization, literature, law, public accountability, virtue ethics, political theology, and more. The diverse range of perspectives from the conference are published here, not to endorse any specific view, but to promote further debate, since all the papers were inspired by the common conviction that Christianity informs our political realities. As the event took place during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was conducted entirely online. However, thanks to hard work of my fellow co-convenors, David Bennett and Gillian Chu, as well as our keynote speakers Professor Joshua Hordern (University of Oxford) and Professor Wai Luen Kwok (Hong Kong Baptist University), the conference attracted over 100 attendees and 29 presenters. All the graduate students who gave papers at the conference were eligible for inclusion in this issue, and I am delighted that we have 15 of these papers available for you to read here.

I would like to thank all the editors at the JOGTS who volunteered their time to make this issue possible, and my wife Audrey Hooks for her tenacious work in copyediting. This volume would also not have been feasible to organize without the generous assistance of Dr Sarah Apetrei, the Graduate Studies Coordinator. Funding was provided by the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Oxford and its alumni. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the SSCE, especially the president Professor Esther Reed, for kindly allowing us to publish these papers from the conference.



Thinking Outside the Crowd

Kierkegaardian and Arendtian Resources for Resistance

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Abstract

Despite their differences in time and situation, Søren Kierkegaard and Hannah Arendt offer surprisingly similar analyses of the evils of their times. Writing in nineteenth-century Denmark, Kierkegaard is concerned with the threat of “the public.” As an amorphous entity that is both everyone and no one at the same time, the public evades responsibility because it is not made up of real individuals who can be called to account. Writing post-Holocaust, Hannah Arendt takes up similar themes as she seeks resources for resistance to totalitarianism. Arendt sees the most dangerous evil as that which has no memory of what it has done and no one who can be held accountable. This paper argues that both Kierkegaard and Arendt identify the subjectivity of the ethical agent as the most fundamental site of resistance. For Kierkegaard, this subjectivity is developed through faith, whereas, for Arendt, it is formed by engaging in inner dialogue with oneself through thinking. Both Kierkegaardian faith and Arendtian thinking prepare the individual to make ethical choices that are unsupported by previously established moral frameworks. Having cultivated the capacity to improvise in the face of ethical difficulties, such a subject is capable of resisting dehumanizing evil in all its forms.

In the years following the Holocaust, German-Jewish-American writer Hannah Arendt faced the problem of totalitarianism head on. She wanted to understand not only why it was seemingly so easy for the citizens of Germany to be caught up in the evil of the Third Reich, but also how those few who refused to participate were capable of such refusal. When horrifying evil had become both legally and morally acceptable, how did they resist?



Carolyn Mackie, 'Thinking Outside the Crowd',
JOGTS 2.2 (2021), pp. 4-11

A little more than a century earlier, Danish writer Søren Kierkegaard was living in a very different world, one that had not yet witnessed what Arendt identified as the ‘unprecedented’ evil of the Holocaust.¹ But, like Arendt, Kierkegaard was keen to diagnose the evil of his time and suggest how that evil could be resisted or overcome. Despite their differences in time and situation, Kierkegaard and Arendt present surprisingly similar analyses of both the problem and the solution.²

For both Kierkegaard and Arendt, the greatest threat is posed by evil that becomes non-human by divorcing itself from personal responsibility or accountability. And for both thinkers, the only way to resist such evil is to develop the subjectivity of the ethical agent, thereby cultivating the ability to improvise when faced with ethical difficulties. In this paper, I will first consider Kierkegaard's and Arendt's analyses of the evils of their respective times, before comparing the ways that Kierkegaardian faith and Arendtian thinking each provide the ethical agent with the capacity to resist evil.

Evils of the times

Writing in mid-nineteenth-century Europe, Kierkegaard identified the times he lived in as ‘an age of publicity.’³ Whereas the previous era, ‘the age of revolution,’ was characterized by ‘action,’⁴ Kierkegaard saw his own time as caught in ‘reflection.’⁵ This was not the kind of reflection that gathered strength and wisdom in order to act, but the kind of reflection that dissipates itself in possibilities and abstractions.⁶ It was idle, yet talkative: ‘nothing happens, but still there is instant publicity.’⁷

For Kierkegaard, the great danger of an age of publicity is ‘the public’ itself. Fueled by the media, the public is a ‘phantom,’ an ‘abstraction’ that is both everyone and no one at the same time.⁸ It

¹ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 255, 273.

² There is surprisingly little research on connections between Kierkegaard and Arendt. Marcio Gimenes de Paula gives a good overview of Arendt's familiarity with and use of Kierkegaard: “Hannah Arendt: Religion, Politics and the Influence of Kierkegaard,” in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Social-Political Thought*, edited by Jon Stewart (London: Routledge, 2011). Gabriel Guedes Rossatti offers insightful comparison between Kierkegaard's assessment of modernity and Arendt's study of Eichmann: “Kierkegaard, Hannah Arendt and the Advent of the ‘Hollow Men’ or Towards a Kierkegaardian Reading of *Eichmann in Jerusalem*” in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* 19 (2014): 301-28.

³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Two Ages: The Age of Revolution and the Present Age, A Literary Review*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 77, 96.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 90-93.

carries the weight of authority, but is impossible to locate, because the public does not correspond to any actual person or group of persons.⁹ Instead, 'one may speak to a whole nation in the name of the public, and yet the public is less than one ever so insignificant actual human being.'¹⁰ It is this dual nature that makes the public both 'dangerous' and 'meaningless.'¹¹ It acts 'on principle,' yet it may change sides overnight and still be exactly what it was before, for it is always simply the public.¹² It can be blamed for everything but held accountable for nothing.

The public is a collective, but it is the very opposite of community. Community requires relationships between real, concrete individuals, and cannot be formed in the abstract. Kierkegaard writes, 'Contemporaneity with actual persons, each of whom is someone, in the actuality of the moment and the actual situation gives support to the single individual. But the existence of a public creates no situation and no community.'¹³ Although everyone belongs, none of the members of the public are in relation to one another, for the public is an abstraction that cannot be pinned down.

It is a similar dehumanizing elusiveness that Arendt worries about in her analysis of totalitarianism. She writes, 'The greatest evil... has no roots, and because it has no roots it has no limitations, it can go to unthinkable extremes and sweep over the whole world.'¹⁴ Like Kierkegaard's public, the totalitarianism that Arendt examines is both everyone and no one at the same time. It has no memory of what it has done, no accountability, 'no person left whom one could ever forgive.'¹⁵ It, too, is a phantom.

Arendt confronts this dehumanizing aspect of totalitarianism in her report on the 1961-62 trial of Nazi official Adolf Eichmann. In this report, Arendt famously emphasizes the 'banality of evil'—that Eichmann was not a 'monster,' but a rather ordinary bureaucrat who nevertheless participated in heinous crimes.¹⁶ He was, as his lawyers emphasized, a 'cog' in the larger wheels of the totalitarian Nazi regime, a regime that legitimated those heinous crimes both morally and legally.¹⁷ But the advantage of the legal system, Arendt insists, is that even a cog can be put on trial:

⁹ Ibid., 91.

¹⁰ Ibid., 93.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 101-102, 92.

¹³ Ibid., 91.

¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy" in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 95.

¹⁵ Ibid., 94-95.

¹⁶ Arendt, *Eichmann*, 287, 276.

¹⁷ Arendt, *Eichmann*, 289; 'They acted under conditions in which every moral act was illegal and every legal act was a crime' (Hannah Arendt, "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship" in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn [New York: Schocken Books, 2003], 41). See also, Arendt, "Personal Responsibility," 42-43.

In every bureaucratic system the shifting of responsibilities is a matter of daily routine, and if one wishes to define bureaucracy in terms of political science... bureaucracy unhappily is the rule of nobody and for this very reason perhaps the least human and most cruel form of rulership. But in the courtroom, these definitions are of no avail. For to the answer: "Not I but the system did it in which I was a cog," the court immediately raises the next question: "And why, if you please, did you become a cog or continue to be a cog under such circumstances?"¹⁸

Although a bureaucratic totalitarian system obscures individual agency, Arendt reminds us that even a bureaucrat has a choice—to participate or not.

Kierkegaard's remedy: faith

The emphasis that Kierkegaard places on human subjectivity is arguably the most definitive aspect of his philosophy. Rather than allowing personhood to be reduced to membership in the public or 'the crowd,' Kierkegaard wants to see individuals become fully existing subjects and agents with all the ethical requirements that this entails.¹⁹ For Kierkegaard, the mode in which this happens is faith. Relationship with God simultaneously grants significance to the individual and places an ethical demand upon her. Throughout his writings, Kierkegaard tries to make his reader aware of the existential claim that this relationship with God has upon her life.

The individual who embraces his relationship with God may find his relation to the rest of the world problematized. Characteristic of this is Abraham, the classic Kierkegaardian exemplar of faith who is asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham is no Agamemnon, Jephthah, or Brutus required to kill his child for the greater good, or to fulfill a vow or the requirements of law.²⁰ Instead, he is alone with the ethically incomprehensible demand to kill his son; he is 'either a murderer or a man of faith.'²¹ Abraham's choice to follow God's voice takes him outside any previously understood ethical framework. Kierkegaard sees this kind of tension as necessary for developing subjectivity:

If we were able with unconditioned truth to judge every human being according to a universally given criterion, then the God-relationship would be essentially abolished, then everything would be oriented exteriorly and find its completion paganly in political or social life, then living would become too easy but also exceedingly empty, then the effort as well as the self-deepening that develop the God-relationship in a human being in the most difficult collision of infinite

¹⁸ Arendt, "Personal Responsibility," 31.

¹⁹ See, for example, Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 121.

²⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 57-59.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

misunderstanding would be neither possible nor necessary, and yet precisely in the most difficult collision of infinite misunderstanding the God-relationship develops in a person.²²

A relationship with God is developed in fear and trembling precisely because it steps outside of the universal into the particular. It cannot be accounted for by any universal criterion.

The universal therefore becomes almost a temptation, for Kierkegaard. And the public, with 'its alienating, abstract equality' is the universal taken to its extreme.²³ However, in this way, the public ironically poses an opportunity for the individual to pursue instead the self-deepening of a relationship with God.²⁴ By combining everyone into one amorphous, unidentifiable group, the public represents precisely the opposite of the particularizing significance that is bestowed on each individual called into relationship with God. And by removing external distinguishing marks, the public forces the individual to look deeper, to become an individual not by relying on external differences but rather by developing inwardly in faith.

Arendt's remedy: thinking

Arendt is preoccupied with the 'nonparticipants'—those who refused to cooperate in the Nazi regime, even if it meant a complete abdication from the communal sphere.²⁵ She believes it was the capacity to dialogue with oneself, a capacity that she simply calls 'thinking,' that enabled these nonparticipants to resist the evil around them.²⁶ Thinking is grounded in a relationship with oneself, an active 'living-with-myself.'²⁷ Arendt finds a philosophical resource for this in Plato's Socrates, who says:

It would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I direct were out of tune and loud with discord, and that most men should not agree with me and contradict me, rather than that I, being one, should be out of tune with myself and contradict myself.²⁸

²² Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 230.

²³ Kierkegaard, *Two Ages*, 92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

²⁵ Arendt, "Personal Responsibility," 44, 34.

²⁶ Arendt, "Some Questions," 98.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 97, 98.

²⁸ Plato, *Gorgias*, 482, quoted in Arendt, "Some Questions," 90.

Arendt sees in this passage an affirmation of an inner duality that allows for the possibility of either 'harmony or disharmony with the self.'²⁹ It is within this intra-subjective 'two-in-one'³⁰ relation with oneself that Arendt identifies the act of thinking³¹

And it is in this intra-subjective relation that Arendt identifies the non-participants' refusal to become cogs in the Third Reich:

[T]he nonparticipants, called irresponsible by the majority, were the only ones who dared judge by themselves, and they were capable of doing so not because they disposed of a better system of values or because the old standards of right and wrong were still firmly planted in their mind and conscience. On the contrary, all our experiences tell us that it was precisely the members of *respectable* society... who were the first to yield. They simply exchanged one system of values against another. I therefore would suggest that the nonparticipants were those whose consciences did not function in this, as it were, automatic way—as though we dispose of a set of learned or innate rules which we then apply to the particular case as it arises, so that every new experience or situation is already prejudged and we need only act out whatever we learned or possessed beforehand. Their criterion, I think, was a different one: they asked themselves to what extent they would still be able to live in peace with themselves after having committed certain deeds.... To put it crudely, they refused to murder, not so much because they still held fast to the command "Thou shalt not kill," but because they were unwilling to live together with a murderer—themselves.³²

The capacity to resist evil that Arendt identifies is not found in adherence to an ethical system. Rather, it is located in the intra-subjective relationship of the ethical agent with herself. Those who have developed this capacity are motivated to resist evil because they cannot live with themselves otherwise. And they are able to resist evil because their consciences do not lazily rely on established moral frameworks. Arendt sees the crimes perpetrated by the totalitarian Nazi regime as an unprecedented evil, and the unprecedented nature of these crimes demands not a recourse to moral (or legal) precedents, but the courage to take the 'risk' of human judgment, thereby setting new precedents for the future.³³

Subjective, improvisational agents

For both Kierkegaard and Arendt, the most serious dangers are those posed by dehumanizing forces that evade accountability by means of their collective structures. The form of resistance

²⁹ Arendt, "Some Questions," 90. Arendt's statement here, 'I have a self and I am related to this self as my own self' (90) is reminiscent of Kierkegaard's self-relating self (Kierkegaard, *Sickness*, 13).

³⁰ Arendt, "Some Questions," 90.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

³² Arendt, "Personal Responsibility," 44.

³³ Arendt notes that although the judges of Nazi war crimes invoked 'legal precedents,' in truth 'they judged freely' and 'solely on the basis of the monstrous deeds', Arendt, *Eichmann*, 294, 297.

that both thinkers turn to is the reassigning of personal agency by developing subjectivity. For Kierkegaard, this is the process of cultivating inwardness through a relationship with God. For Arendt, it is the development of a relationship with oneself through thinking. Both invite the individual to step out from the crowd and become a fully responsible ethical agent who is accountable to others within concrete relationships.³⁴

For both thinkers, a proper ethical response is subjective and directed to particular situations and contexts. Kierkegaard's Abraham finds himself stranded between universal ethics and the voice of God, with faith as the only way forward. Although Arendt does not share Kierkegaard's religious horizon, the nonparticipants she studies are, like Abraham, caught in the chasm between established moral frameworks and the horrifying particularity of the unprecedented. Here, the heightened tension between the universal and the particular necessitates a choice unsupported by the stability and certainty of previously understood ethical systems. Arendt describes those who refused to go along with the Nazi regime as 'the few who were "arrogant" enough to trust only their own judgment.'³⁵ With moral frameworks turned inside out all around them, "they had to decide each instance as it arose, because no rules existed for the unprecedented."³⁶ Instead of putting their consciences on autopilot or, like Kierkegaard's public, acting 'on principle' without nurturing any personal commitment to those principles, the nonparticipants were able to improvise ethical responses and judge for themselves.³⁷

Arendt and Kierkegaard spoke to the evils they saw in their own times. Yet their analyses carry continued relevance for us, as we face dehumanizing powers of our own. Whether in the form of totalitarian dictatorships, institutions that shift responsibility, or the abstracted power of an anonymous internet, the abdication of personal responsibility is a significant ethical challenge for our times. Kierkegaard and Arendt suggest that resistance of these dehumanizing powers begins with ourselves. The key to ethical response is the cultivation of subjectivity through heeding God's call in faith or through developing a relationship with myself such that there are certain actions I cannot commit and still live with myself. The individual who develops such inner resources becomes capable of resisting dehumanizing evil in all its forms.

³⁴ 'And when Socrates said that in his opinion no greater good ever befell Athens than his arousing the city as a gadfly arouses a large, well-bred but rather sluggish horse, then he could have meant only that nothing better can ever befall a multitude than to be broken up into single men again who can be appealed to in their singularity' (Arendt, "Some Questions," 103). Arendt's language here is so Kierkegaardian that it is hard to read this as anything but a conscious or unconscious echo of Kierkegaard, himself an ardent admirer of Socrates. Rossatti identifies a shared ideal of 'Socratic citizenship' as the source of Kierkegaard and Arendt's affinities (Rossatti, 324-328).

³⁵ Arendt, *Eichmann*, 295.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Kierkegaard, *Two Ages*, 100-102.

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Acts of God and Men

Addressing the Tension Between Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility in Christian Ecological Ethics¹

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Abstract

Amidst diverse contexts, belief in the sovereignty of God tends to reduce Christians' sense of ecological agency and responsibility. As of 2016, an estimated 15% of U.S. Americans agreed with the statement that, 'God controls the climate, therefore people can't be causing global warming.' Qualitative studies reveal that many Christians in Africa espouse similar positions. The potential effects of these viewpoints on climate policy are obvious.

This paper addresses some Christians' theologically motivated eco-ethical apathy by arguing that a robust understanding of human freedom and responsibility can be integrated with a meticulous view of divine sovereignty. To make this argument, I employ Timothy O'Connor's account of human responsibility and demonstrate that, under this agency theorist's account, it is possible for two *human* persons to be responsible for the same event. I then supplement O'Connor's account by employing Mackie's analysis of causes and conditions to develop a formal definition of *control*, a concept which lies at the center of O'Connor's theory of human responsibility but of which he does not provide a formal definition. Once augmented in this way, it becomes clear

¹ I presented a version of this paper for the New Directions in Religious Ethics Unit of the American Academy of Religion 2020 Annual Meeting. I am grateful to the moderators and attendees of this unit for their feedback, as I am to an anonymous reviewer for the *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society*.



that O'Connor's account of human agency allows for human actions to be *implicitly* conditional on divine agency, thus allowing God to control the same ecological events for which humans are responsible.

Beliefs about the sovereignty of God reduce some Christians' sense of ecological agency and responsibility. As of March 2016, an estimated 15% of Americans held that it is 'definitely' or 'probably' true that 'God controls the climate, therefore people can't be causing global warming.'² In Uganda, a Christian woman provided theological justification for her feelings of ecological powerlessness: 'Some problems are God-made because he is the one who gives [rain]... man cannot do anything about it.'³ However, belief in divine sovereignty can contribute, not only to eco-ethical apathy, but also to *antipathy* towards ecological engagement. One American evangelical put it this way: 'It's almost arrogant to think that, well, I have more power than God almighty, that we collectively can change the climate.'⁴ If ecological issues are the prerogative of God alone, then attempting to control them is an irreverent infringement on a divine right.

Ecological issues are the focus of many political initiatives at local, national, and international levels. A vast number of people in those localities and nations consider themselves Christians. Assuming that humans are, in fact, responsible for many ecological issues, it is highly politically significant if even 15% of those Christians think that humans cannot, or ought not, attempt to address ecological issues. This political significance holds whether one supports or opposes governmental environmental regulation. Theologically motivated eco-ethical apathy and antipathy will concern those who support governmental environmental regulation because these feelings will reduce Christians' support for that regulation. On the other hand, those who oppose governmental environmental regulation will find these feelings concerning because they reduce Christians' willingness to take non-governmental steps to address ecological issues. And if non-governmental action does not occur, the case for government-mandated action becomes more persuasive.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to address the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility within the politically significant context of Christian ecological ethics. There are two basic ways of addressing this tension:

1. Convince eco-apathetic Christians that either God is not sovereign or that God's sovereignty means something rather different than they supposed. Open Theism, which

² Roser-Renouf et al., "Global Warming, God, and the 'End Times,'" *Yale Program on Climate Change Communication*, July 26, 2016. <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/global-warming-god-end-times/>.

³ Lucy Neville, David Musiime, and Allan Alana, "Uganda Talks Climate: The Public Understanding of Climate Change" *BBC World Service Trust*, 2010, 13.
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b09e5274a31e000091c/11-Uganda-Talks-Climate.pdf>.

⁴ Katherine Wilkinson, *Between God and Green: How Evangelicals are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 100.

holds that God does not know or control the outcomes of free human choices, is one option here.

2. Show that eco-apathetic Christians' extant understandings of divine sovereignty are compatible with human responsibility for ecological issues. This approach can take at least two forms:
 - a. Reasoning by analogy with other areas where eco-apathetic Christians recognize divine sovereignty and human responsibility as compatible. (E.g., if divine sovereignty over resource distribution does not eliminate your responsibility to care for the poor, why should it eliminate your responsibility to prevent ecological problems?)
 - b. Developing a philosophical account that demonstrates the compatibility of human responsibility *for* and divine sovereignty *over* the same events.

Both of these basic approaches will have proponents—the Open Theist, convinced of the truth of her position, will naturally endorse applying it to this practical issue. However, for reasons that are not germane to this paper, I am not convinced of the truth of Open Theism. *Apropos* to this paper, I fear that advocating for a fundamental reworking of a person's theology within the already fraught context of ecological ethics is more likely to alienate than convince. So, I favor working *within* eco-apathetic Christians' extant understandings of divine sovereignty (option 2).

2a, while promising, encounters substantial difficulties. Speaking of the tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility, Douglas Hall wrote that ambiguity about the significance of human actions produces "the kind of theological mystification that leads unerringly to an ethical hiatus," so "Christians are challenged by the crisis of planetary existence to come to terms with this ancient, unresolved problem of belief."⁵ Apathy-inducing understandings of divine sovereignty predate contemporary ecological issues and affect other areas of responsibility (e.g., belief in divine sovereignty, intervention, and the possibility of miraculous healing discourages some Christians from seeking medical care). This general effect is simply highlighted and perhaps amplified in the specific case of what even actuaries call 'acts of God'—weather, after all, has long been seen as one of the signature ways that God exercises sovereignty. Analogical reasoning may persuade Christians who have a generally robust sense of responsibility and do not place ecological issues in a unique category. Yet, 2a will not persuade those whose understanding of divine sovereignty produces general ethical apathy or those who place ecological issues in a unique theological category.

⁵ Douglas Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 45, 50.

Thus, while 2a is worth pursuing, it seems 2b is also necessary. On the other hand, philosophical speculation about divine sovereignty and human responsibility can easily fail to impact how someone lives her life. If 2b is to be of any practical value, it must both (a) employ an intuitively plausible account of human moral responsibility and (b) propose an intuitively plausible account of how human responsibility for ecological issues is compatible with divine sovereignty over the same ecological issues. Moreover, if 2b is to be academically respectable, these accounts must be not only intuitively plausible but also intellectually rigorous.

To begin to satisfy these conditions, I will first propose a hypothetical scenario in which it is intuitively obvious that two human persons have control over and are responsible for the same event. I will then describe Timothy O'Connor's theory of human responsibility and analyze that thought experiment according to his theory—this will reveal how *two human* people can control and be responsible for the same event. Finally, I will extend O'Connor's account to explain how *one human* and *one divine* person can control and be responsible for the same event. Thus, my argument is focused on meticulous views of divine sovereignty, both because this perspective seems to lie behind many Christians' eco-ethical apathy and because it presents the hardest testcase for my argument.

A Thought Experiment

Here, then, is the thought experiment: Consider John and Hans, diminutive partners in terrorism. Due to his small stature and poor planning, John is unable to reach the detonator for a bomb the duo has planted in a crowd. So he says to Hans, 'Boost me up so I can set this thing off and finish the job.' Hans hoists John, and John detonates the bomb. When hauled into court, Hans pleads innocence: 'I didn't control whether the bomb was going to go off! John did that part; all I did was hold him up.' To this we would respond, 'But you knew what he was going to do, so you could have stopped it. You had control over whether the bomb went off.'

O'Connor's Theory of Human Responsibility

O'Connor is an agency theorist: he thinks humans are responsible if and only if they act freely and that humans are free if and only if they exercise a faculty called *agent causation*. The core of causality is, for O'Connor, the *derivativeness* of effect from cause, the *flow* from cause to effect.⁶ Thus, a compelling account of agent causation must explain 'how a particular piece of behavior is

⁶ *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 68. All citations without the author's name are to O'Connor's work.

connected to, or an “outflowing of”, the agent.”⁷ Because he is concerned to uphold human responsibility, O’Connor’s understanding of this ‘outflowing’ centers on the idea of *control*—if an agent has no say in her behavior, it is not clear how it can be ultimately attributed to her in a way that renders her *accountable* for her actions.⁸ Thus, an agent is responsible if and only if she possesses control.

For O’Connor, an agent is free if she is the ‘ultimate source, or originator, of [her] choices’.⁹ In humans, satisfying this condition requires that the ability to do otherwise remains present, but to be able to do otherwise is not itself the core of freedom or responsibility.¹⁰ The immediate effect of agent causation, the thing that an agent possesses direct control over, is an intention. O’Connor writes, ‘Any agent having the relevant internal properties will *have it directly within his power* to cause any of a range of states of intention delimited by internal and external circumstances.’¹¹ Actions, in the sense of *behaviors*, are then caused by these states of intention.

The *delimited* nature of human agency is probably the distinctive element of O’Connor’s account. He thinks choices *flow* from the agent’s whole person, so the causal possibilities open to an agent are shaped by who she is and what she cares about. For O’Connor, the fact that, because I am human, I cannot fly to the window like Superman does not infringe upon my freedom to walk to the window. Further, an agent’s choices are delimited by the *reasons* she has. He speaks of human causal capabilities as having a ‘triadic structure,’ according to which: ‘person *S* causes intention *i* for reason *r*.’¹² O’Connor uses the term ‘reason’ to denote both the strict ‘cognitive rational’ and the more general ‘motivation.’ An agent’s causal capabilities are limited by the reasons available to her, but these reasons also *enable* the agent to form the corresponding intentions.

The confines of concision will not allow me to describe O’Connor’s intriguing account of agency in any more detail, so I will merely note four implications of O’Connor’s emphasis on intentions. Consider the prelude to a bar fight, where one ruffian says to another, ‘If you touch me one more time, I’ll knock your block off.’ The intention communicated by this statement is:

- 1) Conditional—it takes an if-then form.

⁷ “Indeterminism and Free Agency: Three Recent Views” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53, no. 3 (September 1993): 500.

⁸ “The Agent as Cause,” in *Metaphysics: The Big Questions*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 466-467.

⁹ *Theism and Ultimate Explanation: The Necessary Shape of Contingency* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 121.

¹⁰ *Ultimate Explanation*, 121.

¹¹ *Persons and Causes*, 72. *Italics* original.

¹² “Freedom with a Human Face,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29, no. 1 (2005): 216, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4975.2005.00113.x>

- 2) Fixed—so long as the speaker is not bluffing, if the antecedent is satisfied, the consequent will follow.
- 3) Communicated—one ruffian has informed the other of his intention.
- 4) Known—both the ruffian and his opponent know his intention.

However, setting aside the possibility of intoxication, there is no reason to doubt that this intention satisfies O'Connor's criteria for a free, responsible, exercise of agent causation. None of these four attributes of the ruffian's intention minimize his control over it.

Analysis of Thought Experiment

With these implications in mind, we are prepared to analyze the thought experiment involving John and Hans per O'Connor's account of agent causation. In that thought experiment, John formed the intention to detonate the bomb, and then, because this intention was *implicitly* conditional on Hans's help, he communicated his intention to Hans by saying, 'Boost me up so I can set this thing off and finish the job.' In turn, Hans formed the intention *I will lift John up so that he can detonate the bomb*. Because John and Hans each controlled his own intention, each was responsible for the object of that intention, the detonation of the bomb.¹³

Now, O'Connor thinks that divine and human agency operate in fundamentally the same way, although divine agency would have a much broader scope.¹⁴ With this in mind, I believe we have largely satisfied our intuitive plausibility criteria. I take O'Connor's modest, delimited account of human agency and his explication of responsibility in terms of control to be intuitively appealing, and I think we can explain divine control over responsible human choices by saying that all human choices are implicitly conditional on divine permission and enabling. I think that something like this approach would resonate with many Christians and bring them towards a place where they can accept responsibility for their ecological decisions in tandem with their belief that ecological events are controlled by God. However, we have yet to render these intuitive explanations academically rigorous.

Towards Academic Rigor

The first step is to analyze O'Connor's portrayal of agent causation according to J. L. Mackie's terminology of an 'INUS condition.' For Mackie, when we speak of a cause, we often mean 'an

¹³ "Degrees of Freedom," *Philosophical Explorations* 12, no. 2 (June 2009): 122.

¹⁴ "Freedom with a Human Face," 213 and 226. "Theism and the Scope of Contingency," in *Oxford Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 146.

insufficient but *necessary* part of a condition which is itself *unnecessary* but *sufficient* for the occurrence of an effect.¹⁵ This seems to be what is going on in the scenario of John and Hans: The explosion in the crowd could have been brought about through another set of conditions (e.g., different terrorists could have executed the same plan), so, as a whole, the scenario involving John and Hans is an unnecessary but sufficient condition for the explosion. Neither John's nor Hans's exercise of causality was enough to bring about the explosion on its own: each agent's causality was insufficient to bring about the explosion. Nevertheless, each agent supplied something that, in the above scenario, was necessary for the explosion to occur. John and Hans's intentions were mutually dependent INUS conditions of the explosion.

The question then becomes whether there is a plausible model that allows divine and human agencies to function as mutually dependent INUS conditions. I believe that conceiving of agent-control through a possible-worlds analysis can provide this model. Suppose that human agent *A* agent-causes intention *I* at time *T* in possible world *P*. I propose that *A* has control over *I*, if

- I. *A*'s exercise of agency at *T* is an INUS condition of *I*, and
- II. There is at least one other possible world *P** in which, at *T**, *A* either causes a different intention *I** or does not cause any intention whatsoever, and
- III. *P* and *P** are identical except for those differences emerging from *A*'s exercise or non-exercise of causal capabilities at *T/T** and all dependent differences.

By 'dependent differences' I mean those mental and physical states of affairs caused by *I*, the intentions available to both *A* and other agents that depend on *I*, and the truth of propositions about *A*'s exercise of agency at *T*.

Let me re-state this definition of control descriptively, rather than conditionally. Agent *A*'s exercise of agency at time *T* is the first point where possible worlds *P* and *P** branch, it is what defines *P* and *P** and differentiates them from each other. *P* and *P** correspond to two different ways *A* could exercise her agency, and in each *A* could have directed it the other way—both causal pathways exist and are open to *A* in each world. In *P*, *A* has reason(s) to cause *I** as well as *I*; and in *P**, *A* has reason(s) to cause *I* as well as *I**. Causally speaking, *A* can do otherwise in each world.

Under this definition of control, God can control whether *A* causes *I* or *I** by actualizing *P* or *P**. While this does fix whether *I* or *I** come to be, it does not causally determine them. God's actualization of *P* is an INUS condition of *I*, but so is *A*'s exercise of agency. *A*'s exercise of agency remains an INUS condition of *I* because God does not cause *I*, *A* does. God picks whether *P* or *P** will be real, so *I* and *I** are each implicitly conditional on God's choice, but *A* brings *I* about.

¹⁵ J. L. Mackie, "Causes and Conditions," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2, no. 4 (October 1965): 245.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20009173>.

God's control over III^* is *implicit*—within the frame of reference of each possible world, A possesses complete control over III^* and need not hamper her agency with concerns about 'the will of the Lord.'

This account does, of course, rely on the idea that the truth about A 's exercise of agency within P/P^* can be known (conceptually) before T/T^* without infringing on A 's freedom. Arguments about dynamic and static theories of time call into question whether this is metaphysically possible—according to some thinkers (including, it seems, O'Connor), the truth about A 's exercise of agency does not exist until A exercises her agency.¹⁶ While the metaphysics of time and truth-makers are beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear that God's knowledge of the truth about A 's exercise of agency need not infringe on A 's control.

God's knowledge about A 's exercise of agency poses a threat to A 's control because it suggests that A 's choice is logically determined: if God accurately believes that, for instance, the proposition " A causes I at T " is true, then it follows by logical entailment that A does, in fact, cause I at T and does not cause I^* . In other words, if God knows that A causes I , it is not logically possible for A to cause I^* . Logically speaking, A could not do otherwise, and this seems to violate one of O'Connor's criteria for a free, responsible exercise of human agency.

However, the *logical* inability to do otherwise is quite different from the *causal* inability to do otherwise. If a choice is causally determined, then the agent lacks the causal capacity to do otherwise. If a choice is logically determined, the agent may have ample causal capacity to do otherwise—the *agent* is not limited in any way. Rather, logical determinism is about a limitation on reality: reality cannot contain two, contradictory yet true propositions. The fact that there can only ever be one truth about A 's exercise of agency at T does not constrain A 's exercise of agency, *provided A controls that truth*. And, per the account above, she does.

In his critique of accounts similar to the one I have developed, O'Connor finds 'the distinction between "harmless" logical necessitation and freedom-negating causal determination' insufficiently probative.¹⁷ It seems to me that this perspective is due to imprecision in his understanding of *control*, for which he does not provide a formal definition. Once O'Connor's account is supplemented with the definition of control supplied above, the probativity of the distinction between causal and logical determinism becomes clear: according to that definition of control, P and P^* must be identical except for those differences emerging from A 's exercise or non-exercise of causal capabilities at T/T^* and all dependent differences. These dependent differences *include the truth of propositions about A's exercise of agency at T/T^** . In both P and P^* , A controls the truth

¹⁶ *Ultimate Explanation*, 139.

¹⁷ *Ultimate Explanation*, 138 (quote) and 137.

of propositions describing her exercise of agency at *T/T**, and *God's actualization of a particular expression of this control does not eliminate that control*.

Thus, understanding O'Connor's account of agent causation through the lenses of a possible-worlds analysis and Mackie's INUS account of causality in general indicates one way for God to have control over the same outcomes for which humans are responsible. Acts of God may also be acts of men. In light of the 'moral, psychological, and social implications' of beliefs about divine sovereignty and human responsibility, this is a significant conclusion.¹⁸

Put differently, recognizing that what Ellen Charry identifies as the 'disposition'-shaping power of theology has often engendered an attitude of eco-ethical apathy among Christians raises the question of whether theology may also be able to foster a disposition of eco-ethical *engagement and responsibility*.¹⁹ By sketching the outline of an intuitively accessible model of divine control over human choices that does not infringe on the responsibility of those choices or the significance of their ecological effects, this paper sketches one path to an affirmative answer to that question: yes, theology can foster a disposition of eco-ethical engagement and responsibility. In service of this practical conclusion, this paper integrated three theoretical models: O'Connor's account of human agency, Mackie's account of causality, and possible-worlds analysis. While this theoretical integration was not the focus of this paper, pursuing it further may shed additional light on the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

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¹⁸ Ellen Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 233.

¹⁹ Charry, *Renewing of Your Minds*, 5.

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Divine and Earthly Jurisdictions

The Spirit Lost in Secular Law

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Abstract

It is no accident that the first systematic legal treatise of the Western world was ecclesiastical, yet the law in England has since become increasingly secularised. With reference to the High Middle Ages, when both canon and secular legal systems were operational in England, this paper begins by establishing the historical foundations of the two different systems: juxtaposing the temporal circularity of secular law with the salvation-oriented meaningfulness of canon law. Through the increasing secularisation of the legal realm, the central question for citizens has shifted from ‘how should I live righteously?’ to ‘why should I obey the law?’. In tracing this shift, this paper postulates that secular and canon law respectively embody consequentialist and virtue ethics positions. While both legal systems seek to instantiate what is *right*, only the canon law is built on a legitimate foundation for determining *what* is right. The normative aspect is missing in secular law. This paper argues that the law should be regarded more deeply than as a temporal tool for the enforcement of civil obedience. If a meaningful justice system is to be attained and maintained, ‘law’ cannot be defined by an abstract system of rules alone, but requires mediation through moral individuals who have as their aim not just the maintenance of social and political order, but also the inner moral life of the citizen. Because secular law lacks the transcendent morality enjoyed by Christian ethics, there arises the vital requirement for the secular and religious spheres to work together to do justice to the legacy of the canon law.



Introduction

It is no accident that the first systematic legal treatise of the Western world was ecclesiastical, yet the law in England has become increasingly secularised since the High Middle Ages. Understanding the theological, philosophical and historical foundations of the canon law reveals the value of the type of legal system which is concerned with citizens' inner moral lives as well as with social and political order.

This paper explores the differences between canon law and secular law, drawing upon examples from the Middle Ages in England when both religious and secular legal systems were operating. The cultural, practical, and spiritual importance of the law in medieval England is emphasised throughout this study, with the intention of urging the reader to regard the law more deeply than as a temporal tool, and to consider what is lost when the legal sphere gives priority to temporal outcomes.

It must be kept in mind that canon law is but one example of a legal system which acknowledges a higher morality than that which forms the basis of secular systems such as social contract theory. The central argument of this paper is that secular law (which aims at maintaining social and political order) is consequentialist, while canon law (an example of a legal system which is also concerned with the inner moral lives of citizens) is founded upon virtue ethics.

Law and Religion

Harold Berman presents the interaction of law and religion as follows: 'the religious and legal beliefs and practices of a particular community are always intimately related to the unique *experience* of that community, its unique history'.¹ This notion is strongly Hegelian, that the requirements and solutions of both community and individual within the community are not incidental but instead evolve according to the nation's particular spirit.² Furthermore, a society's religious and legal realms should work together for their development and continued meaningfulness, for 'the two need each other – law to give religion its social dimension, and religion to give law its spirit and direction as well as the sanctity it needs to command respect'.³ We require a marriage of the two, such that law and religion are separate entities working together in the husbandry of society. The problem with secular law is that it is missing its other half, and therefore cannot promote individual moral development.

¹ Harold J. Berman, *The Interaction of Law and Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 50.

² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction* trans. Hugh Barr Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 96.

³ Berman, *Interaction*, 25.

There are two fundamental texts of medieval canon law: Gratian's *Decretum* published around 1140, and the Papal Decretals compiled by Pope Gregory IX in 1234. Both texts draw heavily upon Christian Scripture – for example, 'Gratian employed references to Nebuchadnezzar in no fewer than five places in his treatment of blasphemy in the *Decretum*'.⁴ The reason for this is that canonists were seeking to create laws which reflected how God teaches us to conduct ourselves – indeed any statute which 'contradicted the Scriptures was not true law'.⁵ However, canonists 'did not treat biblical texts as direct sources or as statutes; they did not take passages from the Bible and call them a *canon*... Instead, they drew legal lessons and legal principles from them'.⁶ This indicates the importance of law being mediated through human beings, according to their own context. There are, then, two interweaving components to the canon law: the content (legal treatises and statutes), and the individuals who administer the law. The importance of the latter lies in the certain yet understated (and often overlooked) truth that 'law must grow through the re-interpretation of the past, for only in such ways do judges and lawyers solve the paradox that law must be stable yet never stand still'.⁷ Thus we come to understand the necessity for the principle of conscience: that 'law is to be found not only in scholastic *reason* but also in the *heart* of the lawgiver or judge'.⁸

Secular Law vs Canon Law

This section explores the natures of secular and canon law, proposing that secular law embodies consequentialism and canon law embodies a virtue ethics morality.

Secular Law

Led by the aim of ensuring social and political order, secular law is by nature a consequentialist endeavour – creating legislation on the basis of desired outcome(s), rather than on a sense of objective morality or with consideration of the spiritual or internal lives of the individuals to whom it applies. One difficulty arising as a result of this is the problem of how to establish obligation to the law – that is, a legal system which is not grounded in objective morality is focussed not on the

⁴ Richard H. Helmholz, "The Bible in the Service of the Canon Law," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* (1994): 1568.

⁵ Helmholz, "Bible," 1564.

⁶ Helmholz, "Bible," 1565.

⁷ Samuel E. Thorne, "Sir Edward Coke 1552-1952," in *The Selden Society Lectures 1952-2001* (New York: William S. Hein & Co., 2003), 13.

⁸ Berman, *Interaction*, 60.

question of ‘*how best can I live?*’, but instead the question of ‘*why should I obey the laws?*’⁹ Dostoyevsky, who considered in great detail questions of legal and moral obligation, poses the question:

Now suppose that there is no God, and no personal immortality... Tell me then: Why am I to live decently and do good, if I die irrevocably here below? ... And if that's really so (and if I am clever enough not to let myself be caught by the standing laws), why should I not kill, rob, steal, or at any rate live at the expense of others?¹⁰

To combat this problem, consequentialists and social contract theorists have tended to pursue systems of laws whereby the numerical majority of people benefit from each law and authority is established through threat of punishment.¹¹ While such systems enjoy varying degrees of success in maintaining social and political order, they have no normative force behind them – neither for the formation of moral laws nor for political obligation, as Hegel has demonstrated.¹² The laws of secular systems function purely pragmatically toward the goal of civility, employing fear and coercion as the best deterrents against citizens taking up Dostoyevsky’s rhetorical challenge. While fear and coercion are, broadly speaking, *effective* ways of managing a population, they do not allow individual human beings to develop and exercise their own power of morality, to take responsibility for themselves, or to do the right thing *according to the right motivation*. While it might be objected that civil punishments can condition habits, this remains a type of behaviourism which does not engage with individuals’ *moral* lives or the motivations for their actions, but only with actions themselves. This approach has the effect of restricting moral development, because individuals have no reason to develop what Berman terms “legal emotions”: ‘the sense of rights and duties, the claim to an impartial hearing, the aversion to inconsistency in the application of rules, the desire for equality of treatment, the very feeling of fidelity to law... [and] the abhorrence of illegality’.¹³ He concludes that since these legal emotions ‘cannot obtain sufficient nourishment from a purely utilitarian ethic,’¹⁴ secular law, which takes its reference internally (from social and political order) is ‘tenable in the classroom but not in the courtroom or in the legislature.’¹⁵

⁹ Stephen G. Salkever, “Virtue, Obligation and Politics,” *The American Political Science Review* 68, no. 1 (1974): 83.

¹⁰ Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Letters of Fyodor Michailovitch Dostoyevsky to His Family and Friends*, trans. Ethel Colburn Mayne (London: Chatto & Windus, 1917), 221-2.

¹¹ See, for example, Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651).

¹² Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 91.

¹³ Berman, *Interaction*, 25.

¹⁴ Berman, *Interaction*, 25.

¹⁵ Berman, *Interaction*, 25.

Canon Law

What distinguishes the law of the Church from secular law is that it aimed not only for social and political order, but also to nurture the spiritual and moral life of the community. Katherine Christensen observes that ‘while “integrating human jurisprudence into the divine order of salvation,”¹⁶ using the tools of the law to foster the salvation of souls, canon law also served to define and regulate the Church as a distinct and fully constituted (though humanly weak and flawed) society’.¹⁷ Speaking both normatively and descriptively, salvation – or even moral development – cannot be achieved through coercion, but instead only by the individual understanding how to act morally, and choosing freely to do so. This is reflected in the canonists’ aim of bringing the law into alignment with Christianity,¹⁸ such that to live in accordance with the law *is* to live as a good Christian.

What is entailed by this responsibility of the canonists for the moral life of all people within their jurisdiction is that ends do not justify means. Canonists could never meaningfully devise a system of law which contains immoral statutes in order to achieve a higher end, for that would be self-defeating. Furthermore, it *matters* how the law is practiced, devised, and lived. The way that law should be practiced is directly related to the nature of God in his capacity as ‘a merciful judge, a loving legislator,’¹⁹ and we are hereby reminded of the importance of the grounding provided by transcendent morality, rather than taking as our basis the temporal *circularity* of maintaining order, which could be done well under a number of different regimes and with any number of different rule sets. The problem with secular law is that it has no transcendent basis for determining which rule set is better, provided that the outcome – social and political order – is achieved. It may well seem to secular lawyers that there is something wrong if the jails are full and peace is maintained through fear and coercion, but there is nothing *normative* in a consequentialist system that finds this to be immoral, because there is no basis upon which to found the conviction that one way is right and the other wrong.²⁰ By contrast, Dostoyevsky’s answer to what prevents human beings from disadvantaging our comrades is that humans are subject to a law ‘which transcends the earthly,’²¹ indicating the value of a higher, objective reference for morality.

¹⁶ Stephen Kuttner, *Harmony from Dissonance*, Wimmer Lecture 10 (Latrobe: Archabbey Press, 1960), 45.

¹⁷ Katherine Christensen, ‘Introduction’ in *Gratian: The Treatise on Laws (Decretum DD. 1 - 20)*, trans. Augustine Thompson, with the *Ordinary Gloss* trans. by James Gordley (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), xi-xii.

¹⁸ R. Jason Richards, “A Primer on the Origins and Implications of the Thomas Becket Affair,” *Lincoln Memorial University Law Review* 1, no. 2 (2014): 148.

¹⁹ Berman, *Interaction*, 15.

²⁰ Smith, *Hegel’s Critique*, 68.

²¹ Dostoyevsky, *Letters*, 222.

Cases from the High Middle Ages demonstrate that the secular law's reliance on evidence can have the disadvantage of preventing justice from being administered. For example, where debt was owed but the contract had been verbal (thus there existed no written proof of the agreement), the civil courts refused to become involved. Church courts, however, recognised the validity of a verbal contract – the solemn giving of one's word – and would seek to determine the true story and pursue a resolution.²² In this way and others, the canon law can be seen as a more humane legal system,²³ working primarily in the interest of administering justice, as opposed to dealing only with what could be proved evidentially. The devastating consequence of seeking certainty through material evidence is that it does not foster or respect honesty – indeed it may encourage dishonesty where it can be got away with, as Dostoyevsky exposes. Conversely, in the sphere of canon law, the value of law is best understood as not primarily consequential or outcome-dependent, but instead as virtue-oriented: it is valuable in proportion to its effectiveness in fostering increasingly moral individuals who freely choose virtuous, Christian lives. The realisation thus becomes apparent that the two institutions of secular and canon law embody the consequentialism vs. virtue ethics debate, and that while both are seeking to do what is *right*, it is canon law and not secular law which has grounds to determine *what* is right.

Lost Along the Way

In order to see what is lost in the increasing secularisation of law, we must trace the development from canon law to civil (secular) law. The first systematic body of law in Europe was Gratian's *Decretum*, in which Gratian (a canon lawyer from Bologna in Italy) sought to synthesise and make sense of different streams of law to provide a coherent, authoritative treatise. Later, in 1234, Pope Gregory IX's collation of Papal Decretals added to the authoritative body of legal writings. The various systematic bodies of secular law that evolved across Europe and that remain with us today were, so to speak, created in the image of the Church's legal system: 'medieval canon law constituted a fundamental formative force in the creation of some of the elemental ideas and institutions that continue to this day to characterize Western societies.'²⁴ The canon law's influence on civil law does not end at general inspiration, but extends to, for example, secular lawyers using the exact wording of the canon law on the earliest defamation pleadings, and in some instances, whole sets of laws would be adopted into secular law from canon law.²⁵ This direct influence

²² W. R. Jones, "The Two Laws in England: The Later Middle Ages," *Journal of Church and State* 11 (1969): 125.

²³ Jones, "Two Laws," 126.

²⁴ James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1995), 189.

²⁵ Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland. *History of English Law before the Time of Edward I: Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895), 114-5.

continued into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁶ However, while secular legislators drew heavily and directly upon canon law, this does not mean that the secular intentions and interests were the same as ecclesiastical ones: it means only that secular authorities identified statutes in the canon law which could be used to serve the secular aim of maintaining civil order. By transferring the abstracted statutes of canon law into a secular system without also understanding and retaining their foundations, secular legal systems had no chance of maintaining the true importance of the legal realm for the development of moral virtue.

Marriage law cases from the High Middle Ages (for example, disputes regarding the legitimacy of conflicting contracts) provide a valuable demonstration of what we give away in the acceptance of unfounded secular law. Many of the cases brought to canon courts during this period failed ‘for want of proof’,²⁷ prompting the question of why they were taken to court in the first place. Helmholz posits that although the accuser knew there was no proof, they hoped that the pressure of being under oath – of having sworn to God that they would be honest – would cause the defendant to confess the truth of the situation. The religious morality upheld by believers is a far stronger motivation than the threat of temporal punishment and so, under oath, the true story should be exposed.

More astonishingly, though, Helmholz observes that ‘what cannot be proved cannot be enforced, and where one party had a change of heart or remembered the events differently and therefore denied the contract, the courts of the church would dismiss the couple “to their consciences.”’²⁸ It seems that by extending conscience and honesty outside of the courtroom in this way, the Church courts remind us of Proverbs 5:21: ‘human ways are under the eyes of the Lord, and he examines *all* their paths’²⁹ – not only their conduct under oath. Thus, Church courts performed the double duty of maintaining social order and encouraging individuals to develop their own powers of morality, truth and justice.

Conclusion

In England, as in much of the Western world, legal jurisdiction has passed gradually from the responsibility of spiritual authorities into the hands of secular ones, and what we thereby risk losing is a humane, human-mediated divine justice which seeks to develop the moral lives of individuals. While it would be wrong to suggest we rekindle a past time from which we have irreversibly

²⁶ Richard H. Helmholz, “Canon Law and the English Common Law,” in *The Selden Society Lectures 1952-2001* (New York: William S. Hein & Co., 2003), 522.

²⁷ Richard H. Helmholz, *The Oxford History of the Laws of England: Volume I: The Canon Law and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction from 597 to the 1640s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 528.

²⁸ Helmholz, *Oxford History*, 529.

²⁹ Proverbs 5:21 (NRSV).

moved on, we might seek to rescue the objectivity and honesty *out of which the canon law emerged*. Given the increasing distance between the institutions of Church and state, this morality might most successfully now be mediated into secular legal systems through its practitioners and by each individual in society in all of our endeavours. The aforementioned marriage of law and religion need not entail any denominational religious claims, but instead indicates the need for law to take its reference from a transcendent morality. What this looks like practically, in a modern, pluralistic society, is of course very much in the hands of each individual person: it can no longer be decreed by external legislative authority but must arise from internal moral authority. If each individual freely chooses to act and judge in and for morality, rather than for fear of the consequences of breaking their arbitrary legal obligations, then we have a chance to maintain the type of virtue ethics upheld by the canon law and to re-moralise the legal sphere, such that it cannot be reduced to a consequentialist ethic.

As an indication of where we might begin, let us recall two important notions from what has been said: the principle of conscience (that 'law is to be found not only in scholastic reason but also in the heart of the lawgiver or judge'),³⁰ and the dismissal of couples to their consciences to resolve their disputes through honesty. To bring these two together – to unite good laws and good judges with a community of good individuals – would be to truly do justice to the legacy of the canon law.

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An *Ethos* of Sacrifice and True Life

Christos Yannaras on the Eucharistic Heart of Human Freedom

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Abstract

This essay considers the connection between the eucharist and true human freedom—the latter defined as the relational transcendence of natural necessity—through the ‘personalist ontology’ of Greek Orthodox theologian and philosopher Christos Yannaras. The primary claim is that the impetus for a truly Christian social *ethos* is found in an asceticism that is idiosyncratically eucharistic and communal. Split into two sections, the paper first considers the foundation of Yannaras’s eucharistic vision in Maximus the Confessor’s metaphysical distinction of *logos* and *tropos* in regards Christ’s renewal of the cosmos. Here the *logos* (principle) of a thing is seen to persist in its creational integrity, while its *tropos* (mode) is malleable, that which is subject to divine activity. The second section lands this reading of Maximus in broad reference to the story of Christ’s transfiguration on Mount Tabor, which Yannaras reads as the ‘first’ transfiguration in which all eucharistic celebration is grounded as the central means of human participation the cosmos’s *ongoing* ‘transfiguration’. The essay will have argued in favour of Yannaras’s claim that the eucharist is the ontological basis of a social *ethos* that is radically Christian, wherein the human person that shares in the Christic *tropos* is freed from the individualistic bonds of natural necessity and able to live in self-sacrificial love for the other.

All serious ‘political theology’ must reject the impulse to hold its constitutive parts separately, for it is easily demonstrable that Christian theology has always been political. Oliver O’Donovan put



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it best in his classical study, arguing that ours is the ‘one public history which is the theatre of God’s saving purposes *and* mankind’s social undertakings’.¹ However we might want to judge the results today, the continuous ‘ecosystems’ of Scripture and earlier Christian tradition—from Bronze Age worship of *YHWH* by the tribes of Israel, to the Christianised empires of Rome and Byzantium—all developed from the metaphysical soil of unified theo-political concerns. This paper is situated in light of recent scholarly objection to the banishment of the resurrected Christ from the late-modern *polis*, and it is specifically concerned with the interplay of ontology and ethics.² Its aim is to reconfigure a *sine qua non* of modern liberal politics, namely the human person considered as ‘free’. This reconfiguration is conducted with explicit reference to the eucharistic practice of the Church, inasmuch as this theme is presented by the influential Greek Orthodox theologian and philosopher Christos Yannaras.

Our thesis is that Yannaras’s Christology is cosmic, enjoining a social *ethos* characteristically sacrificial and communal because it is formally eucharistic. *The ecclesial celebration of Christ’s sacrificially given body and blood is for Yannaras the beginning of an ascetic life that seeks the radical freedom of self-sacrifice in love and communion.* Splitting our investigation into two parts, we first consider the foundation of Yannaras’s eucharistic vision in St. Maximus the Confessor’s metaphysical distinction of *logos* and *tropos*. Through this distinction we then go on to suggest something of the ethical, and by implication political, power Yannaras sees in eucharistic transfiguration.

A Maximian Christ

Yannaras’s most ‘ethical’ monograph is *Hē eleutheria tou ēthous* [*The Freedom of Morality*], a work which hinges upon the assertion that the two poles ‘of Christian ethics’ are repentance and the eucharist.³ Neither can go without the other. Repentance, as ‘the personal awareness of our failure and our fall’, is the beginning of the path which leads to the eucharist, ‘our dynamic participation in the new mode of existence which transfigures man and the world, making them into the Church and the Kingdom of God’.⁴ This language of transfiguration is what allows Yannaras to position his ‘Christian ethics’ within a discursive sphere that is distinctively ontological, and thus explicitly connected to the matter (*materia*) of a salvation that is wholly cosmic. Indeed, playing with relevant covenantal imagery, Yannaras speaks of salvation *as* ‘passover’ from death to life, and *as* ‘the

¹ Oliver O’Donovan, *Desire of the Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

² In the UK, the best-known examples come from ‘Radical Orthodoxy’, especially John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

³ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, trans. Elizabeth Briere (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1984), 89.

⁴ *Ibid.*

paschal feast of the eucharist'.⁵ The believer's penitent participation in the incarnate Christ's body and blood is the beginning of true life.

When Yannaras speaks of salvation in these terms of ontological transfiguration *via* the eucharistic elements, he has in mind Maximus the Confessor's own 'Christological cosmology'. It is an important characteristic of Maximus's thought that his vision of the cosmos is conceived in terms close to those of the 'hypostatic union'. Patristic scholar Paul Blowers has recently argued that Maximus is treading the essentially Irenaeian line that creation is only properly seen in the fullness of Christ.⁶ Blowers and his fellow Maximus translator Robert Wilken elsewhere describe how, for Maximus, 'the world—the natural world and the "world" of scriptural revelation—is the broad and complex theatre in which God's incarnational mission is playing itself out to full completion'.⁷ In his own context of high-stake ecclesial and political controversy over the identity of Christ, Maximus held fast to what Andrew Louth calls the 'Chalcedonian logic' of ontological harmony between created and Uncreated, both in the person of Christ and the cosmos generally.⁸ For Louth, Maximus nails his Chalcedonian colours to the mast in a preference for language that steers clear of 'confusion', 'change', 'division', or 'separation'.⁹ For Maximus, the full union of creation with God always has been the whole point of things— 'the divine purpose conceived before the beginning of beings', as he puts it—and that in the person of Christ we see nothing less than the *telos* 'on account of which all things exist'.¹⁰ In the coming of Christ, the Second (and true) Adam, the formal possibility of creation's communion with God—through the mediation of the human person—is restored.

Yannaras adopts Maximus's Christological cosmology with aplomb. In another monograph, *To prosōpo kai ho erōs* [*Person and Eros*]—Yannaras's most ambitious and technical work—he channels both Maximus and St. Paul in asserting that this restored possibility of human communion with the divine in Christ is 'the unification of the created with the uncreated *logos*', a metaphysical unification that manifests 'the Incarnate Logos as the reality "of all things in all things" [Col. 3:11]'.¹¹ Yannaras's language of unified *logoi* is a deeply Maximian way of talking about the cosmic renewal

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Paul M. Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor: Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 102-9.

⁷ Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken, "Introduction", *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 17.

⁸ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, The Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 1996), 49.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Person and Eros*, trans. Norman Russell (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 95. Yannaras refers to *Ad Thalassium* 65 (PG 90:760a).

brought about in Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection.¹² And for both Maximus and Yannaras, properly understanding this renewal involves drawing attention to an ontological distinction between the essential principle, or *logos*, of a being, and its mode of existence, its *tropos*. Maximus asserts that cosmic renewal 'is manifested in relation to the [*tropos*] of the thing innovated, not its natural principle', its *logos*.¹³ This is no insignificant distinction, for any 'innovation' (*kainotōmia*) of a created *logos* by divine power would mean the annihilation of nature and its replacement with something fundamentally new. But by speaking of 'innovation' in regards the *tropos*, not the *logos*, Maximus thinks he can preserve the integrity of God's creation at the same time as he allows for the possibility of the Creator's renewing action. 'The mode thus innovated', says Maximus, 'while the natural principle is preserved, displays a miraculous power, insofar as the nature appears to be acted upon, and to act, clearly beyond its normal scope'.¹⁴ Jesus Christ, who is revealed to us as the *Logos* in whom all *logoi* are found, renews the *logoi* in terms of their *tropoi*. Or, to put it more simply, Christ transforms not so much the *what* of the cosmos as the *how*.

The critical line of inquiry for Yannaras's soteriology—and therefore for his eucharistic ethics—is how Maximus's vision of 'logical' cosmic renewal works in the human person. Unsurprisingly, Yannaras's answer begins with a Chalcedonian flourish: Christ is the hypostatisation of divine and human essences 'in a single existence, in one person'.¹⁵ But for Yannaras this principal assertion of creedal Christology also indicates the more general ontological truth that essence (*ousia*) or nature (*physis*), defined as it is by its *logos*, does not exist apart from the 'effective event' of the unique instantiation in the person (*prosopon*).¹⁶ There is no 'human nature' that exists somehow apart from the person as they are in their concrete existence. What is radically distinctive about the 'particular existential event' of the incarnate Christ, however, 'is his personal otherness and freedom which summarizes and manifests the energies of the two natures', divine and human, without confusion or division.¹⁷ Christ's restoration of human nature into 'living communion with the uncreated cause and fullness of life' is eschatological *because* protological, and Yannaras directs us towards this end, asserting that hypostatic 'communion is [itself] the *logos* of existence, its meaning, its cause and, at the same time, the goal and fullness of its truth'.¹⁸ This line of argument culminates in a Christo-centric crescendo that could easily be Maximus's own; Yannaras concludes: '[Christ] is the Logos-hypostatic revelation of God, but also the *logos* of created beings, the

¹² See, Jordan Daniel Wood, "Creation is Incarnation: The Metaphysical Peculiarity of the *Logoi* in Maximus Confessor", *Modern Theology* 34:1 (January 2018).

¹³ *Ambiguum* 42.26 (PG 91:1341d), in Blowers and Wilken, 89.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵ Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology*, trans. Keith Schram (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 94.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁸ *Person and Eros*, 268.

disclosure of God's personal creative energy. He is [...] the *logos* of human existence, its existential *telos* and meaning—the recapitulation of the “logical” harmony of the world and the *logos* of history in God's relation with humanity.¹⁹ It is in this dynamic movement of *Logos* to *logoi* that Christ is found to be the reality ‘of all in all’. This is Yannaras's Maximian vision of salvation.

In sum, Yannaras is an enthusiastic adherent of Maximus's *Logos-logoi* pairing for how it holds together divine and mundane within a universal, Christological frame. In Christ, says Yannaras, “there exists a Person who sums up [...] human nature in the free realization of life”, one in whom “human nature shares by means of the will of the Son in the life of the Trinity”.²⁰ Our task now is to elucidate what Yannaras sees as the tangible and radical site in and by which the human person inhabits and advances this new cosmic reality: the eucharistic celebration.

Eucharistic Community and Transfiguration

So far, we have seen how, with Maximus, Yannaras understands God's renewal of creation. It is a story of how the paschal Christ, revealed as the divine *Logos*, embraces and recapitulates the universal *logoi* of creation on the level of their *tropos*, their modes of existence, and thereby returns them from the ‘dead-end’ of adamic self-interest. At the same time, it is vital not to understate how this cosmic vision remains an ongoing story of faithfulness and repentance. ‘The union of the two natures’, Yannaras reminds us, ‘the [...] relation and communion of Godhead and humankind, has resulted in a definitive change in humanity's existential capabilities’.²¹ To be sure, although Christ has eternally conquered death and saved humanity from the mortal grip of sin, there is a clear sense in which the human person must himself conquer his own sinfulness and be ever more closely conformed to the likeness of Christ. To anticipate our conclusion, we might say that this ‘existential transformation’ of the human person—as Yannaras describes his understanding of asceticism—is realised ‘by drawing its life not from its own vital possibilities (which are transitory and perishable) but by reference to and surrender to the love of God and by communion with him—as the created flesh of the uncreated Word, the Body and Blood of Christ’.²² Recalling our earlier claim that the ‘beginning’ of Christian ethics is repentance, we are now ready to examine how the eucharist is its ‘end’, an end that necessarily entails an ascetic posture within the *polis*. The advent of Christ does not annihilate the adamic *tropos* so much as displace its finality and make a way beyond it with the ‘new’, Christic *tropos* of self-giving love.

¹⁹ Ibid., emphasis added.

²⁰ *Elements of Faith*, 96.

²¹ *Person and Eros*, 268.

²² *Elements of Faith*, 128-129.

This general notion of metaphysical renewal and movement is most vividly conveyed in Yannaras's distinctive reading of Christ's transfiguration on Mount Tabor. The appearance of the glorified Christ to Peter, James, and John is 'the prefiguration of liturgical space and time', by which Yannaras means the 'restoration of nature to its true character as relationship'.²³ On Tabor, space and time became wholly relational. Standing before the heavenly vision of Jesus, the disciples were in a *space* newly 'defined by the immediacy of the relationship, by the inseparable nearness to Christ and communion with him', and a *time* wherein 'past and future are contracted into the present moment of participation in God's glory: a present, once again, of personal presence'.²⁴ It is crucial we do not miss the import of what is being said here, for Yannaras's metaphysical reading of Tabor not only explicates an important relational truth of the eucharistic celebration, but also sheds further light on the ethical implications of a distinctively Christological cosmos. Under the banner of a Taborite 'spatiality', Yannaras can refer to the Church's 'eucharistic synaxis' as 'the inseparable gathering of the faithful into the oneness of the life of the world, which becomes the *place* for the personal union of created and uncreated—the body and blood of Christ'.²⁵ This means that the event of the eucharist is the living *where* of divine and human communion, a *where* that holds together past and future 'in the immediacy of presence'.²⁶ So too is the 'past' represented by Moses and Elijah—the *communio sanctorum*—standing alongside the 'eschatological future' of the 'glorified Jesus', he who is 'the clothing of humanity in divine glory'.²⁷ Christ holds together past and future. In other words, Yannaras thinks that to go before the altar is to stand with Peter, James, and John, for here we encounter a new mode of being human.

The Catholic claim is that the eucharistic liturgy is a reconfiguration of space and time. Indeed, so says the ecumenically recognised Strodach-Reed anaphora: that all forgiven sinners who partake of Christ's body and blood 'may be sanctified in soul and body' and thus have their 'portion' with all the 'saints' of God.²⁸ It is in this vein that Yannaras's Maximian vision is also sacramentally 'maximalist', since every ecclesial assembly can commune 'in the fact of the "physical" union of humanity and God', in the *Logos* who opens himself to us.²⁹ A commitment to the eucharist as a socially or politically transformative power is born from the belief that, as divine-human communion, 'the Eucharist dissolves the past and future in the immediacy of *presence*', in a manner that defies all existential boundaries, to make *all* 'present *here* and *now* "before" Christ and "in

²³ *Freedom of Morality*, 89.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 90, emphasis original.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Lutheran Book of Worship: Minister's Desk Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 225.

²⁹ *Person and Eros*, 152.

Christ”’.³⁰ The eucharist is never without this distinctively ‘apocalyptic’ aspect for the Church, and just as ‘the disciples do not remain on Tabor’ after their vision of the heavenly Christ, so too must Christians go back into the world, empowered in the Christic *tropos*.³¹ Motivated by their experience of the divine, the disciples ‘go down into the world with the experience and the certainty of the transfiguration’, where they take up the cross ‘of the fall and of sin in the certainty of the resurrection’.³² Yannaras is emphatic that this worldly return is no departure from the ‘fullness’ of the divine encounter, but is actually the indispensable next step of ‘the struggle of freedom to be transfigured into love, to *transfigure every corner of life into eucharist*’, into Christ, by loving self-sacrifice.³³ Yannaras’s eucharistic ethics is this everyday transfiguration of our false, adamic ‘freedom’ into the self-giving love of Christ, the true freedom by which Christ’s *tropos* emerges yet more fully from that of Adam.

In conclusion, Yannaras wishes to hold together ontology and ethics, and to do so according to the freedom that *is* Christ. The underlying criticism at play is that the *ethos* of communion into which the Church and its members must grow is one that demands a firm rejection of the parochial or individualistic. Yannaras is adamant that to partake in the eucharist is to ‘partake in Christ’s sacrifice, to partake in that death of individual demands and claims which [thereby] raises life up into the miracle of communion’.³⁴ The self-sacrifice of Christ, that is itself the heart of communion between God and humanity, is extended in the *askesis* of believers, the continual struggle to transcend the ‘natural’ impulse of self-elevation. And crucially for Yannaras, the eucharistic matrix of participation and transfiguration cannot be excised from the *polis*, even as the Church, which must be *more* than another earthly institution, also stands over against the *polis*. He asserts that Christians ‘care for those in need not in order to overcome and exterminate poverty [...] not in order to fight evil, not because we wish to “improve” or ease the conditions of life rationally or systematically, but just simply because we love’, clearly demarcating the socially located motivations and activities of Christ’s followers from ‘every state provision and moralistic “philanthropy”’.³⁵ As Yannaras summarises elsewhere: ‘Experience of true communion among human beings, like the encounter with the personal reason and meaning in natural reality and the discovery of the personal God in history, requires the ascetic self-transcendence of individuality and the reality of personal relationship and self-offering’.³⁶ It is in *repentance*, in the learned

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Freedom of Mortality*, 90.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., emphasis added.

³⁴ Ibid., 217.

³⁵ *Elements of Faith*, 139.

³⁶ *Freedom of Mortality*, 218.

transcendence of the individualistic *tropos*, in the willingness to be in and like Christ in his servanthood, that we find true freedom in love of the other.

The suggestion of this essay has been that Yannaras's eucharistic vision is both 'cosmic' and 'ethical', and that the heart of his thinking on the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Church is a metaphysics of transfiguration. Theologian William Cavanaugh has said of the connection between eucharist and ethics that 'The church practices the politics of Jesus when it becomes an alternative way of life that offers healing for the wounds that divide us'.³⁷ Yannaras's proposal for a more Christ-like communion can help with this healing.

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³⁷ William T. Cavanaugh, "The Body of Christ: The Eucharist and Politics", *Word & World* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2002), 177.

In Defence of Single-Issue Voting on Abortion

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Abstract

Voting only on the basis of a party putting legal restrictions on abortion has long been criticised as an unsophisticated, unbalanced approach to politics, neglecting other important causes and even the real causes of abortion: poor access to contraception, welfare, and sex education. In this paper, I argue that there are strong reasons for voting solely on the basis that one party or politician supports legal abortion, while another opposes it. I argue, first, that single-issue voting on large-scale human rights abuses of historic proportions is defensible, and second, I contend that according to Christian teaching, abortion is such a human rights abuse. I then respond to objections, suggesting that even if pro-life politicians have bad characters or hypocritically support unborn children's rights without supporting provisions for born children, there are still strong reasons for voting for them. I argue that it is difficult to identify any other policies which could outweigh a strong political position on abortion except for concerns regarding existential risk, and that the latter are, for various theoretical and practical reasons, usually not a promising basis for voting. Finally, I respond to concerns that pro-abortion politicians or parties are likely to do a better job of reducing abortion rates by provision of contraception, welfare, and sex education. I argue that, contrary to popular belief, the empirical basis for this claim is weak to non-existent. In summary, single-issue voting against abortion is often a perfectly defensible approach to politics.



Introduction

Those who let the issue of abortion determine their vote in elections are often derided as myopic, lacking nuance, or even hypocritical because of their ostensible disregard for other issues. In this paper, I shall offer at least the rudiments of an argument that single-issue voting on abortion is, at least in many contexts, entirely defensible.

Despite the monolithic impression of the term, 'single-issue voting' refers to a reasonably diverse set of stances. One can single-issue vote negatively by refraining from voting for any politician supportive of abortion. This need not entail positive single-issue voting, that is, voting for the more pro-life candidate. Negative single-issue voting may conclude with not voting at all, for example. I argue that both forms are defensible, and that there are strong reasons in favour of both, but I do not claim that positive single-issue voting is obligatory (since, for example, I think refraining from voting entirely can be permissible).

Likewise, different political systems and cultures generate many different voting permutations, and I do not claim that single-issue voting is justifiable or obligatory to the same extent across all scenarios. For simplicity, I will assume that there are two realistic options in voting, and that there is a substantial difference between them on the issue of abortion. Where this assumption does not hold, things obviously become more complicated. The precise conclusion, however, is less important: the arguments I will offer strengthen the *concept* of single-issue voting in its variety of forms.

The Argument

The basic argument is relatively simple. Define a 'large-scale human rights abuse' as a human rights abuse of historic proportion – for example, hundreds of thousands of lives being taken a year in an individual country. To avoid gratuitous offence I have sought to avoid mention of any specific atrocities, but the reader is encouraged to substitute in historical cases to amplify the analogy. The argument then runs thus:

- 1) If a large-scale human rights abuse occurs with the imprimatur of the state, it is permissible to vote solely on that basis.
- 2) If orthodox Christian ethical teachings are correct, then abortion constitutes a large-scale human rights abuse (with the imprimatur of the state in many cases).

Therefore,

- 3) If orthodox Christian ethical teachings are correct, it is permissible to vote solely on the basis of abortion.

Though 3) is a conditional statement, it is clearly an important one for those committed to orthodox Christian teaching.

Abortion as a Large-scale Human Rights Abuse

Substantiation of premise 2 requires both theological and empirical foundations: firstly, that according to orthodox Christian teaching, abortion is morally very seriously wrong; and secondly, that abortions occur on a large scale.

Regarding the former, a fuller treatment is beyond the scope of this short paper, but I offer an overview of the evidence. Although Judaism at the time of Jesus already prohibited abortion except where the mother's life was at risk, and certain Jewish writers (e.g., Josephus) refer to abortion as 'murder', it was not very frequently discussed.¹ The prevalence of abortion within the wider Roman world led to significantly more discussion of it in early Christian writings. Perhaps as early as the first century, it was condemned (possibly twice) as murder in the *Didache*, and it is likely that Galatians 5:20 and Revelation 9:12, 21:8, and 22:15 refer to abortion drugs, at least inclusively, as *pharmakeia*.² Beyond that, abortion was consistently and frequently condemned specifically as murder – often as parricide – in the first few centuries AD. It was almost always grouped together with infanticide in both Jewish and Christian texts from the time of Jesus and shortly afterwards. The prohibition was repeated by at least sixteen Christian writers prior to Augustine, plus two early Councils, with the canons against abortion being re-affirmed at the Council of Chalcedon. No author offers a contrary position during this period, and even when later writers doubted whether early abortion was *murder*, it was still universally seen as seriously morally wrong.³ Hence, as I have suggested, and others have evidenced in more detail, the evidence is early, myriad and unanimous.

¹ Michael Gorman, *Abortion & the Early Church* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1982), Chapter 3.

² Ibid., Robert Arner, "Abortion," in *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. David Hunter, Paul van Geest, and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (forthcoming).

³ Gorman (*Abortion & the Early Church*, 1982) offers a comprehensive account of early teaching, while David Albert Jones (*The Soul of the Embryo* (London: Continuum, 2004)) considers the Biblical material in some detail. I argue elsewhere that attempts to identify a lesser status for the foetus in Exodus 21:22-25 and Number 5:11-28 fail, the primary reason being that there is no exegetical basis for supposing that either passage refers to miscarriage. See Calum Miller, "Why Biblical Arguments for Abortion Fail" (under review).

Abortion is extremely common; in the UK, there are over 200,000 abortions a year.⁴ In the USA, there are somewhere between 800,000 and 1,000,000 abortions a year.⁵ This easily outstrips any other cause of death in either country.⁶ Indeed, if the standard estimates of abortion frequency globally are accurate,⁷ deaths from abortion are equal to the number of deaths from every other cause combined. Compared to other deaths from *human agency*, which we generally take to be far more serious politically, abortion is many orders of magnitude more common. There are around 3,000 children killed by firearms in the US each year⁸ – a tragically large number, but broadly comparable to the number of partial birth abortions before they were banned,⁹ these constituting a tiny proportion of abortions overall. The death of children from firearms is rightly at the forefront of political discourse in the US – but the number of abortions is about 300 times higher still. Premise 2 therefore seems secure.

Single-Issue Voting

Premise 1 likewise seems plausible. Consider a thought experiment I will call The Purge. Suppose your country's conservative party approves of the killing of hundreds of thousands of 'undesirables' each year – infants, short people, or disabled people, for example.¹⁰ Not only do they allow it, but they go so far as to fund it and to encourage the spread of this Purge overseas.

Most of us would think that – barring truly exceptional circumstances – the obvious course of action is to vote against the conservative "Purge" party independently of any other considerations.

⁴ Department of Health and Social Care, *Abortion Statistics for England and Wales: 2019*. London: Department of Health and Social Care.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/891405/abortion-statistics-commentary-2019.pdf

⁵ Guttmacher Institute, *The U.S. Abortion Rate Continues to Drop: Once Again, State Abortion Restrictions Are Not the Main Driver*. Washington, D.C.: Guttmacher Institute, 2019.

<https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2019/09/us-abortion-rate-continues-drop-once-again-state-abortion-restrictions-are-not-main>

⁶ Of course, it may be that these deaths are morally insignificant or otherwise morally permissible. I am not at this stage making the *moral* claim that these are, for example, hundreds of thousands of *murders* – only the biological and descriptive claim that there are this many *deaths*.

⁷ These should be treated with caution, since they usually rely on the Abortion Incidence Complications Method for determining numbers of abortions where abortion is illegal. This method is fraught with serious problems and likely vastly overestimates the number of abortions in pro-life countries.

⁸ Rebecca Cunningham, Maureen Walton and Patrick Carter, "The Major Causes of Death in Children and Adolescents in the United States," *New England Journal of Medicine* 379 (2018): 2468-75.

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmsr1804754>

⁹ William Robert Johnston, "Data on 'Partial-Birth' Abortion in the United States," available online at <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/pba.html>. Accessed 25th March 2021.

¹⁰ The author lays claim to two of these categories, and formerly the third.

We certainly would find it difficult to justify voting *for* a Purge politician, and at the very least, we certainly would not call someone *unreasonable* for following either of these approaches. While some of us might refrain from single-issue voting in this case, it strains credulity to believe that we would think others are myopic, unsophisticated, or hypocritical for doing so. Importantly, even if the “Purge” party were otherwise competent, sincere, decent people – perhaps they have read and found unanswerable the writings of a sophisticated moral philosopher from Oxford – and are sincerely persuaded that something like the Purge can be compassionate and ethical,¹¹ we would still think voting against them is reasonable on this basis alone. Likewise, if the liberal anti-Purge party were mostly nasty hypocrites, we would still mostly think that voting for them, or at least abstaining, is defensible. Premise 1 therefore seems defensible.

Having set up the argument very briefly, I will now defend it at greater length by responding to some objections. I will argue that each objection is either untrue, irrelevant, or both.

Politicians' Character

Suppose we are faced with a choice between good character and good policy – a pro-abortion politician seems to be decent and polite, while a pro-life politician appears vulgar and callous.

In these cases, the Purge is still instructive: where the ‘bad policy’ is not just a minor disagreement but a large-scale human rights abuse, it seems clear that most people would prioritise preventing the Purge in their voting, despite their misgivings about the character of the liberal party politicians.

Take any given large-scale human rights abuse from history. Suppose you found out that the perpetrators were truly sincere, genuine, and in many ways virtuous people who really were (albeit deludedly) convinced they were doing the right thing. Most of us would not consider this sufficient to vote for them, or to withhold our vote from their opponent. Extending the same reasoning to abortion is not unreasonable.

In practice, this setup is probably rare. While many pro-life politicians have bad characters, this is just as plausibly true of most politicians in general, including those who support abortion – especially where the abortion policy supported is particularly radical and seemingly indefensible, such as partial birth abortion without analgesia. We therefore have two options:

- 1) Consider bad character disqualifying, and abstain from voting.
- 2) Do not consider bad character disqualifying, and vote liberal/anti-Purge.

¹¹ Of course, most people do not think that short people lack a right to life; but many prominent philosophers have given sophisticated arguments that infants and certain disabled people lack a right to life.

The overwhelming majority of us do not opt for 1, which leaves 2, single-issue voting.

Politicians' Hypocrisy

The same response broadly holds to the claim that pro-life politicians are hypocritical, by only caring about the welfare of unborn children, but not children after birth. But on reflection, the same allegation in reverse can be made even more easily towards pro-choice politicians, who (often explicitly) only care about children after birth, but not before.¹² So either this is a reason to vote for neither (which few will accept, and which would be a kind of single-issue voting), or it is not a compelling comparative reason not to vote on abortion alone. Even if liberal anti-Purge politicians were hypocritical in the sense that their policies towards other marginalised groups were unimpressive, few of us would hesitate to vote for such politicians given the gravity of the Purge.

The allegation is also to a large extent untrue. Pro-lifers expend enormous amounts on charity outside of the pro-life label, and even under the pro-life label, support nearly 3,000 crisis pregnancy centres in the US, the overwhelming majority of which support mothers regardless of whether they were considering abortion, and continue to support mothers and their children for a significant period after birth.¹³ This is despite the consistent attempts to defund, discredit and shut down such centres, or even force them to refer for abortions (in ways which would lead to them being shut down if legally enforced). Indeed, 'more individuals are involved in volunteering more time in the individual outreach stream than in any other [pro-life] movement activity. The number of organizations involved in individual outreach is greater than the number involved in all the other streams combined'.¹⁴ Importantly, this does not even include all the charitable work done by pro-lifers outside of the pro-life label. Christians – who compose the overwhelming majority of the pro-life movement in the US – give far more money and do far more volunteer work than non-Christians,¹⁵ and adopt at over twice the rate of the average citizen.¹⁶ In fact, adoption of newborns

¹² And sometimes not even then, as the increasingly prevalent practice of passive neonatal infanticide after abortion demonstrates.

¹³ Laura Hussey, "Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Poverty, and the Expanding Frontiers of American Abortion Politics," *Politics & Policy* 41 (2013): 985-1011, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/polp.12054>; Laura Hussey, *The Pro-Life Pregnancy Help Movement* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2020).

¹⁴ Ziad W Munson, *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 113.

¹⁵ Karl Zinsmeister, "Less God, Less Giving?" *Philanthropy Roundtable*, 2019. Available online at <https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/philanthropy-magazine/less-god-less-giving>. Accessed 17th May 2021.

¹⁶ Barna, "5 Things You Need to Know about Adoption," 2013. Available online at <https://www.barna.com/research/5-things-you-need-to-know-about-adoption/>. Accessed 9th May 2021.

is vastly oversubscribed: even in the UK, with a threadbare pro-life movement, it is almost impossible to adopt a newborn because of the abundance of willing parents and scarcity of newborns available for adoption.¹⁷ In the US, there are waiting lists to adopt children with Down Syndrome.¹⁸

Perhaps you think ordinary pro-lifers are not hypocritical, but policies supported by pro-life politicians are. Of course, empirical disagreements about the best way to solve poverty and hardship are not indices of hypocrisy in and of themselves. But even if they were, this is surely just as true, if not more so, for politicians who support abortion. Indeed, this disparity between their views is surely precisely what is alluded to by the familiar claim that “I don’t agree with them on everything [abortion], but...”. Either way, policies will be ‘hypocritical’, but this is obviously not a disqualifying reason against voting for most people. It is therefore difficult to see how the ‘hypocrisy’ charge has any weight against single-issue voters, on either theoretical or empirical grounds.

Outweighing Policy Factors

One might agree that large-scale human rights abuses are in theory sufficient for single-issue voting, but object that in practice voters are faced with other issues of comparable gravity. The problem here is that, if the orthodox Christian position on abortion is correct, it is difficult to see what could be comparable to tens of millions of abortions globally each year. Let us return to the Purge. Most ordinary voting considerations would seem thoroughly pedestrian and trivial by comparison. It is difficult to believe that we would consider, for example, economic issues to be of comparable importance.¹⁹ If the Purge were ongoing in a country, almost nothing would be sufficient to persuade us to vote for politicians who support it, when there are alternatives who oppose it.

The only issues which seem to compare to the Purge – and hence which seem to compare to abortion – are existential risks to humanity itself, whether through artificial intelligence, nuclear warfare, antimicrobial resistance, or other causes.

There are four main problems with this approach. The first is that, in practice, hardly anyone actually votes based on these issues. This suggests that existential risk is, for most people, less

¹⁷ Prue Leith, “The Waiting Game,” *The Spectator*, 26th May 2018. <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-waiting-game>

¹⁸ Heidi Lindh, Robin Steele, Jane Page-Steiner and Alan Donnenfeld, “Characteristics and Perspectives of Families Waiting to Adopt a Child with Down Syndrome,” *Genetics in Medicine* 9 (2007): 235-240; Hussey, “Crisis Pregnancy Centers.”

¹⁹ Unless, of course, the economic policies of one party are so bad as to lead to the starvation of millions.

important than relatively mundane political considerations like crime rates or taxes. If so, existential risk is *a fortiori* less important than abortion or the Purge.

Secondly, one might worry about something like Pascal's mugger, where someone threatens an infinitely bad outcome unless you hand over your money. No matter how implausible the threat, as long as there is a non-infinitesimal probability that they are right, expected utility theory seems to say that you should hand over your money because of the potential infinite loss. If existential risk is conceived in this way, then it will swamp any other consideration, including more mundane political considerations. This will be unattractive to those who use more mundane political considerations in their voting decision – and particularly to people who oppose single-issue voting. Indeed, it is a kind of single-issue voting in itself.

Thirdly, and relatedly, the Christian tradition has rarely emphasised existential risk, and has even more rarely prioritised it as the central social or political issue. But if the sort of expected utility framework needed for existential risk to outweigh abortion as a voting issue is adopted, then it is difficult to see how Christians could justify spending any resources on anything other than existential risk, and this seems plainly inconsistent with Christian teaching.

This is not to say that voting on the basis of existential risk could never be reasonable. If a policy offered a 30% chance of human extinction, then voting against it regardless of abortion seems at least defensible. But the kinds of situations with which we are actually faced are much more speculative. And indeed, there are so many diverse existential risks, which each depend on so many different factors, that it is impossible to suppose that the average person would have a sufficient grasp of them and their relative probabilities on each election outcome to come to a reasonable expected utility judgment.²⁰ By contrast, the goods secured by voting for pro-life politicians are relatively concrete and predictable.

Reduction of the Abortion Rate

More recently, it has been argued that voting for pro-choice candidates is preferable because, as an empirical matter, they often do more to reduce the abortion rate through contraception, welfare, and sex education, while laws restricting abortion access do relatively little.

²⁰ Helpful overviews of the myriad categories of global catastrophic risk are available at Global Challenges Foundation and Global Priorities Project, "Global Catastrophic Risks." Accessed 11th August 2021. <http://globalprioritiesproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Global-Catastrophic-Risk-Annual-Report-2016-FINAL.pdf>; Shahar Avin, Bonnie Wintle, Julius Weitzdörfer, Seán Ó hÉigeartaigh, William Sutherland and Martin Rees, "Classifying Global Catastrophic Risks," *Futures* 102 (2018): 20-26. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328717301957>

Similar arguments have been made in the past. It was argued by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century slavers, for example, that legalisation of slavery regulated the practice better and led to better conditions on slave ships for slaves kidnapped from Africa and taken in captivity to the Americas.²¹ Most of us would rightly object to this argument that, firstly, the empirical claim is *prima facie* highly implausible, and secondly, that of comparable importance to the consequences is the *expressive* function of the law in declaring whether or not slaves are human.

The same is true in the case of abortion: it is *prima facie* difficult to impossible to believe that raising the cost of abortion does not deter anyone, and of central importance is the declaration of the law that fetuses, or unborn babies, are humans with basic rights.

Where the humanisation policy increases abuse rates, and the dehumanisation policy decreases abuse rates, it may be difficult for human rights advocates to decide for whom to vote – though it is by no means a foregone conclusion that they should vote for the dehumanisation policy.

As it happens, however, in the case of abortion, we need not choose, because the empirical evidence that humanisation policies limiting abortion access reduce abortion rates is far beyond decisive. By contrast, the evidence that contraception, welfare, and sex education reduce abortion rates is nuanced (in the first two cases) to non-existent (in the latter case).

Pro-life laws have consistently been shown – by both pro-life²² and pro-choice²³ authors – to reduce abortion rates. Sex education has consistently been shown in randomised controlled trials to fail at reducing teen pregnancy rates,²⁴ in many cases increasing them.²⁵ Abstinence programmes,

²¹ William Hague, *William Wilberforce* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), 434-435.

²² Michael New, “How the Legal Status of Abortion Impacts Abortion Rates,” *Lozier Institute*, 2018. Available online at <https://lozierinstitute.org/how-the-legal-status-of-abortion-impacts-abortion-rates/>. Accessed 25th March 2021.

²³ Diana Greene Foster, “Stop Saying That Making Abortion Illegal Won’t Stop People From Having Them,” *Rewire News*, 2018. Available online at <https://rewirenewsgroup.com/article/2018/10/04/stop-saying-that-making-abortion-illegal-doesnt-stop-them/>. Accessed 25th March 2021.

²⁴ Amanda Mason-Jones, David Sinclair, Catherine Mathews, Ashraf Kagee, Alex Hillman and Carl Lombard, “School-Based Interventions for Preventing HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and Pregnancy in Adolescents,” *Cochrane Library* (2016), <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD006417.pub3/full>; Chioma Oringanje, Martin Meremikwu, Hokehe Eko, Ekpereonne Esu, Anne Meremikwu and John Ehiri, “Interventions for Preventing Unintended Pregnancies Among Adolescents,” *Cochrane Library* (2016), <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD005215.pub3/>

²⁵ David Paton, Stephen Bullivant and Juan Soto, “The Impact of Sex Education Mandates on Teenage Pregnancy: International evidence,” *Health Economics* 29 (2020): 790-807. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/hec.4021>

by contrast, sometimes show very impressive results.²⁶ Welfare appears to reduce abortion rates, but only where the state policy and culture are already pro-life. In pro-choice states, welfare appears to *increase* abortion rates.²⁷ Finally, while there is an enormous amount to say on the relationship between abortion and contraception, the relationship is far more complex and varied than usually assumed.²⁸ Increases in contraceptive access are frequently associated with increases in abortion rates.²⁹ In sum, the empirical evidence militates heavily in favour of legal protections as the most effective way to prevent abortions.³⁰

Conclusion

I have argued that orthodox Christianity teaches that abortion is murder or something close to it. If so, abortion in the modern world appears to qualify as a large-scale human rights abuse. Reflection on other large-scale human rights abuses suggests that single-issue voting in such cases can be reasonable or even obligatory, at least in the negative sense. The sorts of considerations used to justify voting for pro-abortion candidates would not seem reasonable in other contexts, nor does the empirical evidence support the claim that pro-abortion candidates can be better at reducing abortion rates. In conclusion, there are powerful reasons for Christians to single-issue vote on the issue of abortion.

²⁶ Carlos Cabezón, Pilar Vigil, Iván Rogas, Eugenia Leiva, Rosa Riquelme, Waldo Aranda and Carlos García, "Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention: An abstinence-centered randomized controlled intervention in a Chilean public high school," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 36 (2005): 64-69.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15661598/>

²⁷ Laura Hussey, "Is Welfare Pro-Life? Assistance Programs, Abortion, and the Moderating Role of States," *Social Service Review* 85 (2011): 75-107.

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²⁸ John Cleland, "The Complex Relationship Between Contraception and Abortion," *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 62 (2020): 90-100. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31196674/>

²⁹ Cicely Marston and John Cleland, "Relationships Between Contraception and Abortion: A Review of the Evidence," *International Family Planning Perspectives* 29 (2003): 6-13.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12709307/>; Paton et al., "Impact of Sex Education."

³⁰ For reasons of space, this is necessarily the briefest of overviews. A more detailed overview of the evidence will be provided in future papers; see, for example, Calum Miller, "The Most Effective Way to Reduce Abortion Rates: Contraception, welfare, sex education, or the law?" (working paper).

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Trauma and Recovery in the Didache

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Abstract

The era in which the Didache was written was one dominated by Roman occupation. This paper seeks to interpret the Didache in the light of this plight and illuminate the presence of trauma and trauma recovery within the text. Placing it in the context of the traumatic environment of subjugation to a foreign rule enables insight into the community's response to its turbulent surroundings. The community offered the supportive and safe environment necessary for recovery from trauma, where a person was able to move beyond their injuries and reconnect with society. The hypothesis is that the unique level of intimacy offered by the Didache's Two-Way model and the subsequent acceptance into a community with a clear sense of ethical boundaries made the Didache particularly relevant and beneficial to people affected by trauma. Previous engagement with trauma by theologians has focused primarily on biblical texts and research conducted on the Didache has not considered this angle. This paper defines trauma by drawing on research from the field of psychological trauma theory and the insights gained from the field of trauma theology. It extends prior work on the Didache by interpreting it in the light of the trauma of Roman occupation, thereby introducing the new methodology of the lens of trauma. Looking at the Didache through this lens not only extends our perception of the Didache but also contributes to our understanding of trauma.



The Context of the Didache

The general consensus amongst scholars is that the Didache, one of the texts included in the corpus of writings known as the Apostolic Fathers, was most likely written in the first century CE as an Early Christian treatise.¹ Whilst the location of the Didache community is uncertain, what is known is that the text they created would have been written in an environment where violence and conflict were widespread for some time.² Unrest in the region where the Israelites lived was not uncommon in the period leading to the creation of the Didache. In the second century BCE, persecution of the Jews of Judea and Samaria had culminated in the Maccabean Revolt. Violent attacks on the population continued under Herod, the first century BCE governor of Galilee. Following Roman expansion into Judea in the sixth century CE, a bid for independence led to further unrest and bloodshed.³ Despite setbacks the revolts continued, only to be repeatedly repressed.⁴ By the time of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE tensions had been brewing for many years, with regular outbreaks of rebellion and fighting. Any hope there may have been of the Israelites regaining power and independence over their land and lives ended with the establishment of Roman rule. Oblivious to – and uninterested in – local traditions, the Roman governors ruled purely for the benefit of the Romans.⁵ Within this atmosphere of indifference and subjugation to a superior force, the Israelites found themselves defenceless and disenfranchised. With the loss of control over their lives and land, exacerbated by the destruction of their religious centre, came feelings of powerlessness and humiliation. Apocalyptic writings increased between the era of the Maccabees and the Bar Kochba revolt in the early second century, indicating a constant prevailing uneasiness about the future.⁶ The period and environment in which the Didache was created and used, therefore, was one familiar with violence and uncertainty. In this climate of occupation, repression and social unrest it is easy to imagine an environment where the populace would regularly experience, witness or participate in conflict. The conditions and circumstances for trauma, therefore, were ripe.

¹ Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the earliest Christian communities, 50-70 C.E.* (Mahwah, N.J.: The Newman Press, 2003), ix, proposes a mid-first Century date, and Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A window on the earliest Christians*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: SPCK Baker Academic, 2010), 10 proposes a date not beyond the first Century.

² For an outline of the various conquerors, see: Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: history and religion of the Jews in the time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel and Jesus*, (London: T&T Clarke, 2010), xv-xvi.

³ Grabbe, *Second Temple Judaism*, 70-72.

⁴ Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: the Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 68.

⁵ Grabbe, *Second Temple Judaism*, 69.

⁶ Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, 82.

Trauma and trauma recovery

When considering trauma at this époque, it is important to be cognisant that, whilst the effects and manifestation of trauma were well documented in antiquity, it was not medically defined as it is today. In the ancient world, descriptions of what we would now term post-traumatic reactions are to be found in myths, literature, philosophical writings, historical events and personal accounts rather than in medical contexts. As Menachen Ben-Ezra has argued, whilst the origin of 'psychological trauma was known in antiquity, no connection was made between psychological trauma and medicine'.⁷ It is not until the nineteenth century that the first detailed medical study of traumatic stress in Western Europe is to be found in the work of neurologist and psychiatrist Pierre Janet.⁸ The field evolved considerably throughout the twentieth century, in large part as a response to the effects of the two World Wars and the Vietnam War on combat soldiers. Our understanding of trauma continues to be enriched in the twenty-first century with the inclusion, for instance, of studies on the impact of Moral Injury⁹ and role of shame and guilt in trauma.¹⁰ These advances also open up new avenues for exploration within theology. Inspired by the new insights gained by medical and psychological research into trauma, theologians are able to revisit biblical texts with a fresh understanding, thereby stimulating new interpretations and theological propositions. Theologian Shelly Rambo, for example, identifies within the Johannine Gospel a witnessing and testifying at the foot of the Cross on Holy Saturday, which can generate 'alternative theological visions of healing and redemption'.¹¹ Similarly, Karen O'Donnell uses insights into somatic memory gained by trauma theory to revisit the Annunciation-Incarnation event.¹² Equally, Jan Grimell has identified the description of symptoms of moral injury and post-traumatic stress disorder in Books 1 and 2 of Samuel.¹³ Contemporary trauma theory tells us that trauma is caused by a challenge to the self, and in particular a challenge to the core beliefs one has about oneself.¹⁴ Due to the traumatic event, a trauma survivor's belief system is undermined and their sense of self in relation to others is shattered, leaving them feeling detached as an individual and from

⁷ Menachem Ben-Ezra, "Traumatic Reactions from Antiquity to the 16th Century: Was There a Common Denominator?" *Stress and Health* 27.3 (2011): 229-231.

⁸ Pierre Janet, *L'Automatisme psychologique* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1889).

⁹ For an overview of the field of Moral Injury see: Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon, "Mapping Moral Injury: Comparing Discourses of Moral Harm", *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 44 (2019): 175-191.

¹⁰ James Gilligan, "Shame, Guilt, and Violence", *Social Research* 70 (2003): 1149-1180.

¹¹ Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: a Theology of Remaining*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 11.

¹² Karen O'Donnell, *Broken Bodies: The Eucharist, Mary and the Body in Trauma Theology*. (London: SCM Press, 2018), 14-19.

¹³ Jan Grimell, "Contemporary Insights from Biblical Combat Veterans through the Lenses of Moral Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder". *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 72.4 (2018): 241-50.

¹⁴ Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, (London: Pandora, Rivers Oram Press, 2001), 51.

society.¹⁵ As their self-understanding is affected, their ability to interact with others is also impacted, resulting in relational difficulties.¹⁶ Trauma, therefore, is a deep injury which affects one's capacity to connect with others, leading to a sense of detachment and inability to interact with society.

One important aspect of trauma is to realise that it is not limited to the event itself. Trauma is not fixed in time as a past event. It continues to invade the present, unresolved. It returns, to inhabit what theologian Rambo terms the 'middle' space, 'the perplexing space of survival'.¹⁷ The visceral emotions which exist as a result of the traumatic event do not subside over time; the event continues to be incomprehensible; the survivor cannot process the experience and it remains unresolved. There exists instead a 'continual return of something that was not understood',¹⁸ a feeling of 'not being fully alive in the present', but rather a sense of being 'trapped in the life-death situation' of constantly reliving the trauma through fear, panic and anger, where nothing makes sense.¹⁹ Trauma, therefore, can be described as an experience of being overwhelmed to the point that there is a feeling of disconnection between a person and 'ordinary' life where self-perception and core beliefs are challenged.

To address this situation, psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman in her seminal book *Trauma and Recovery* identifies three stages to recovery. First, a safe space is needed within which to understand the traumatic event. Secondly, the survivor needs to be able to envisage a future beyond the trauma. Lastly, there is the need for a mutually supportive community in order to reconnect.²⁰ Herman identifies that reconnection to society is an important step to take, as a connection with others is a significant factor in rebuilding the sense of self.²¹ Theologian Jennifer Beste and psychologist Bessel van der Kolk, however, contend this cannot be done alone. Beste argues that the intervention of a dependable person is imperative for an individual to be able to develop a sense of trust again.²² Van der Kolk proposes that this is best done with the aid of a trustworthy guide.²³ This trustworthy guide, he argues, is able to create a safe space where a survivor can explore their feelings and come to terms with the events which caused the trauma. In this safe space where they feel heard, seen and valued, growth in connection and sympathy towards others

¹⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 51.

¹⁶ Jennifer Erin Beste, *God and the Victim Traumatic Intrusions on Grace and Freedom*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 87; Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 19-20.

¹⁷ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 7.

¹⁸ Dirk G Lange, *Trauma Recalled Liturgy, Disruption, and Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 7.

¹⁹ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 223, 97.

²⁰ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 155.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

²² Beste, *God and the Victim*, 101.

²³ van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 213.

can take place.²⁴ Once a feeling of trust on an individual level is established then trust in a whole can happen. Yet, a positive and supportive response of the wider community is also paramount to the success of recovery. It is, therefore, not simply on an individual level that the reconnection needs to take place, but also on a wider community level as trust in others includes an element of trust in society as a whole. This is what this paper argues the Didache community was trying to achieve.

The Didache in the light of trauma

This study places the traumatic event as the Roman occupation, including the disruption to local cultural values brought about by its pagan belief system. The Didache community, a group wishing to follow Jesus' example, experienced this trauma as a challenge to their core beliefs. The way the community found to heal from this trauma was to create an environment with clear ethical boundaries. Building on work by Judith Herman, Bessel van der Kolk, and Richard Tedeschi, this section of the paper will use the definition of trauma as a challenge to the self, and in particular a challenge to the core beliefs one has about oneself in relation to others. It will then apply it to the Didache, thereby enabling a new understanding of the role of core beliefs within the text.

When viewed through the lens of trauma, it is possible to see that a survivor coming into contact with the Didache community could find a place where violence and intolerance were unwelcome. As will be demonstrated, it offered a safe place that valued self-awareness and agency. The opening juxtaposition of the Way of Life and the Way of Death, with its emphasis on core beliefs, was predisposed to help a survivor make sense of their trauma and envision a future different from the reality that they lived. At the outset of the document, the newcomer is exposed to two contrasting lifestyles: a righteous life based on Jesus' teaching (Did 1.2) and an immoral life, including some specifically Greco-Roman values such as pederasty, divination, use of magic potions, abortion and exposure of children (Did. 2.2). This attention to correct living continues to be expressed throughout the document, creating clear boundaries between what is considered acceptable and not acceptable as the community mitigates unscrupulous behaviour, promoting instead generosity, kindness and respect. Whilst it is not argued that the Didache was intentionally created as a trauma recovery process, it is proposed that – nonetheless – it innately answers the three trauma recovery stages identified by Herman, thereby meeting a need specific to the time. Herman's research recognises that, first and foremost, a traumatized person needs to find a place where they feel safe. The Didache, with its strong ethical bias, was such a place. Secondly, in order to overcome the traumatic past, a survivor must also create a new future, with a new self and new relationships. The choice offered by the two-way section provides the opportunity to reassess core beliefs and

²⁴ Ibid., 113.

establish new boundaries of what is acceptable and not acceptable behaviour. This is done with aid of a trustworthy guide. Finally, the solidarity of a mutually supportive group as 'the strongest antidote to a traumatic experience' offers a survivor an opportunity to reconnect with society.²⁵ The special meal gatherings of the Didache community were just such occasions. A person engaging with the Didache community's way of life, therefore, would find themselves in an intimate safe space where they are guided systematically through a process of internal transformation, from a past 'self' to a new 'self', culminating in the reconnection with like-minded people who have chosen to live a righteous life as demonstrated by Jesus. This way of addressing trauma could account for the existence of the Didache and for its value to both Israelites and Gentiles alike.

Consideration will be given now to the Didache in more detail by examining the role played by core beliefs, identifying the presence of a trustworthy guide and drawing attention to the particular perspective of the community meal. Researching into post-traumatic growth, psychologist Tedeschi has identified that reassessing one's core beliefs in light of a traumatic event can prove beneficial for the processing and resolution of trauma.²⁶ Core beliefs are at the centre of the Didache community, as they are the fundamental principles which the community associate with Jesus. Theologian Thomas O'Loughlin has observed that it is through identifying with and demonstrating shared values and behavioural ethos that community members are able to inspire others who have chosen the same inner journey of growth.²⁷ He argues, being in the company of others who subscribe to the core beliefs of Jesus one is able to transform their inner being.²⁸ Yet, the core beliefs within the Didache also serve an additional purpose. These core beliefs, I propose, also act as boundaries to safeguard the environment. By so doing they create the safe environment needed to recover from trauma and provide the fertile conditions for post-traumatic growth. Furthermore, this desire to protect the environment is also observable elsewhere in the document beyond the two-ways section. As is stated in Didache 15.2, members may gently admonish each other for erring, and Didache 15.3 describes the action which might be taken by the community in cases where the erring member refuses to listen. These directives, I suggest, demonstrate that collective attention is paid to the ethical conduct of community members, and they are to be recalled and reinforced when required. This community, therefore, was a gathering of like-minded people committed to a way of treating each other with the respect due to individuals who are capable of personal growth. Looking at the Didache through the lens of trauma enables us to see the Didache as also providing a safe environment for post-traumatic growth.

²⁵ Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 214.

²⁶ Richard Tedeschi, "Posttraumatic Growth in Combat Veterans", *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings* 18 (2011): 137-138.

²⁷ Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Missionary Strategy of the Didache", *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 28 (2011): 77-92.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, "The Missionary Strategy of the Didache", 80.

Tedeschi further notes that, with the aid of the correct emotional support, a coherent trauma narrative can be created and a new view of the self, one's own relationship to others and a new way to live can be constructed.²⁹ With the free will to develop their own inner being and choice of how to respond to life, a survivor gains new skills which lead to growth in self-esteem and self-respect. As will be demonstrated, the Didache provides this opportunity for growth with the aid of a knowledgeable guide. Theologian Aaron Milavec argues that the Didache was intended to be heard orally, passed from master to apprentice.³⁰ O'Loughlin agrees with this observation and elaborates it to define the purpose of the Didache as a one-to-one inner journey of discipleship.³¹ Viewing the Didache from this perspective one can discern an intimate supportive environment, where a newcomer can be guided by someone who themselves experienced the transformative process that reassessing their core beliefs brings. Most importantly, it is with the aid of this trustworthy guide that a survivor coming into contact with the Didache community can overcome the temporal limbo caused by trauma. By joining this self-aware community that practices regular self-scrutiny, a survivor can reassess their core beliefs within a safe environment that acknowledges the acts and behaviour which can lead to the creation of trauma and which focuses on preventing the reoccurrence of these behaviours.

The final element in the recovery process is for the survivor to be able to reconnect with others, and ultimately, society. As at the time of the Didache violence was commonplace, reconnecting to wider society was problematic. When considered in this context, it is possible to see that the Didache community sought to establish its own society - an environment free from the taint of violence - offering a peaceful, non-violent way to connect with others, and with God. This is most noticeably expressed through their shared meal. The meal described within the text has neither reference to the sacrifice of Jesus nor to the Last Supper. Instead, we find a 'Davidic Christology' (Did. 9.2) concerning the drink they consume and, with respect to the loaf, thanksgiving for 'life and knowledge' (Did. 9.3) and hope for a future 'gathered together into your (God's) kingdom' (Did. 9.4).³² The meal, therefore, has a dynastic-messianic significance and is symbolic of the shared identity of the community as kin in the renewed kingdom,³³ with thanksgiving at the fore.³⁴ Furthermore, there is no reference to a Passion narrative, demonstrating the different concerns

²⁹ Tedeschi, "Posttraumatic Growth in Combat Veterans", 139.

³⁰ Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life, Xii-xvii and??* Aaron Milavec, *To Empower as Jesus Did: Acquiring Spiritual Power Through Apprenticeship*, (Toronto Studies in Theology) (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982).

³¹ O'Loughlin, "The Missionary Strategy of the Didache", 79.

³² O'Loughlin, *The Didache*, 161-171.

³³ Jonathan A. Draper "Ritual Process and Ritual Symbol in Did. 7-10", *Vigiliae Christianae* 54 (2000): 147-150.

³⁴ Andrew McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford Early Christian Studies Ascetic Eucharists) (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 247.

of the Didache community. Living and surviving in the present time, in the face of a violent imperial power, what mattered was to have hope for a better future rather than remembering the violence around them.³⁵ It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that at their meal gatherings, the Didache community was thanking God for the hope of restoration which the life of Jesus had offered them.

Conclusion

Using the lens of trauma, it is possible to see within the Didache text a community's reaction to the traumatic loss of agency and freedom of religious expression brought about by the Roman occupation. Not only was their way of life under threat, but also their connection to God. These were integral to their identity and affected their sense of who they were. New ways of connecting to each other and to God had to be found. What they saw as God's life-giving knowledge, as made known through Jesus, gave survivors the skills to grow closer to Him and to each other. Furthermore, with its emphasis on a Davidic Christology, the Didache aided trauma recovery by denoting a hope for a better future, united in God's kingdom 'at the end of time' (Did 16.2).³⁶

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³⁵ Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of this World for Crucifixion and Empire*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), xiv.

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T. Edmund Harvey and the Moral Theology of Conscientious Objection

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Abstract

The British Quaker politician T. Edmund Harvey (1875–1955) responded to the introduction of military conscription in 1916 by helping to enact and administer a scheme of non-military national service for conscientious objectors. Underpinning his political work was a moral theology that a conscientious objection entailed a conscientious obligation to serve by alternative, non-military means. The paper draws on a passage from Harvey of 1937 to break down his theology of conscientious objection into four elements: personalism; the Christian citizen, which is an idea from the philosopher T. H. Green; the two kingdoms or cities, from the book of Luke and St Augustine; and moral pioneering. Harvey's moral theology, it is argued, was a cogent amalgam of Christian deontic ethics and a liberalism which vested the individual in society with rights and obligations. Harvey lived his own theology, which put him in the political centre-ground between the British war state and absolutist pacifists.

Harvey is a unique figure in British history, a Quaker pacifist who was one of only sixteen members of Parliament to have sat in the House of Commons during both world wars. Born of a well-to-do Quaker family in Leeds, he was educated at Oxford and was warden of Toynbee Hall 1906–1911. He grew up at a time when the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) was undergoing a renaissance. This entailed a freshly evolving liberal theology and an optimistically minded social activism allied, in the case of Harvey and his family, with support for the Liberal party. The theology



of the Quaker renaissance involved a newly reclaimed knowledge of, and attachment to, traditional Quaker beliefs which had been discarded by the evangelicals who had led the Society in the middle of the nineteenth century. Central to these reclaimed beliefs was the concept of the inward light of Christ, which meant prioritising personal and collective spiritual experience over scripture. For the leaders of the Quaker renaissance the light of Christ was not only the means by which God revealed Himself but it also justified the Society's historic refusal of any military requirement. As well as affirming their tradition never to fight with carnal weapons the Quakers acted positively to transform conflicts through peace-building and intermediation. Britain's entry into war in August 1914 starkly confronted the Quakers with the implications of their peace testimony. Harvey, for his part, felt bound to resign a position he held as a parliamentary private secretary. He remained a member of Parliament but attended only occasionally, spending much of the First World War leading Quaker relief work in war-torn France except when, between November 1915 and July 1916, he was drawn into the crisis of conscription.

In December 1915, when the governing Liberal party reluctantly took steps towards conscription necessitated by the deteriorating military situation, Harvey responded by opposing the principle of compulsion and calling for an exception to be made for those with a religious objection. The government's Military Service Bill of the following month introduced conscription but allowed exemptions on various grounds including conscience. Harvey successfully moved an amendment which clarified that exemption from military service, non-combatant as well as combatant, could be granted on grounds of conscience to an applicant engaged in work of national importance. A problem immediately arose about what constituted such work so the government set up a committee, which became known as the Pelham committee, to which Harvey was appointed. The committee worked throughout the war, advising conscription tribunals on policy and practice and, according to Harvey, helping to place some 4,000 exempted men in suitable posts.¹

Harvey's practical work for the conscientious objector was underpinned by a theology which he set out succinctly in a passage dated to 1937. Reflecting on ideas he had expressed earlier in the First World War, and was to express later, in the Second, he claimed:

We have [...] in our Quaker history a lesson for our own lives of the meaning of Christian citizenship. You can see there a two-fold strand constantly interwoven: one, respect for the state as representing authority in the community: and the other, desire to serve the community through the state and in other ways, but along with that, the desire above all to serve the Kingdom of God: this means that we must be willing, when loyalty to the Kingdom of God demands it to refuse the demands of the state and show the highest loyalty to the state and the best citizenship by refusing

¹ T. Edmund Harvey, 'Records of Conscience': Review of John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916-1919* (*Friends Quarterly Examiner* vol 223 (1922)) pp 185-200.

demands that are wrong, because it is only in that way that the conscience of our fellow citizens can be reached, and in the end a better law come into being.²

This passage contains a number of interrelated ideas of which I have picked out four: personalism, the Christian citizen, the two kingdoms, and moral pioneering. I will deal with each of these in turn.

Harvey subscribed to personalism, a cluster of ideas that makes personhood or personality central to the understanding of reality. It was an axiom of the liberal Quaker theology of Harvey's day and is a concomitant of the idea I have already alluded to that God is revealed to each and all in the light of Christ. In an address he gave in America in 1922, Harvey said of personalism, linking it with mysticism, that:

[T]he keyword for the life and thought of today is found in the idea of personality. In the mystery of human personality there is also involved the mystery of God's revelation of himself to man. As we come to discover the divine worth of human personality, all life takes a deeper meaning; problems international and racial, social and industrial are illumined by its light; and that light for us as Christians streams not only through the one tiny eyelet within our own souls, but through the great window of the personality of Jesus Christ.³

I turn now to the second component, the Christian citizen. A Christian perspective on personalism leads in the civic sphere to the notion of the Christian citizen, which Harvey adopted from the Oxford academic, Thomas Hill Green. Green's influential brand of welfarist, statist liberalism entailed the notion of citizenship not as a mere legal status but as a consciousness of the moral ends of life as embodied in the structures of the state and liberal Protestantism. Green conceived of the Christian citizen as an active, self-realising being and complementarily of the civic state as ethical, enabling and educative. Green's influence made itself felt less through his academic writings as in a personal example to his students by his Christian activism. Harvey cited him as an influence without having known him personally. The personal connection came by way of Samuel Barnett, one of Green's acolytes and the founding warden of Toynbee Hall who in 1906 appointed Harvey as his successor.

I turn now to the third component in Harvey's theology of the two kingdoms, or two cities, of earth and heaven which are the interwoven strands Harvey spoke of in his passage of 1937. He would have had in mind Jesus' remarks in the Book of Luke where, as Harvey explained in a lecture of 1921, Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God as something now rather than to come.⁴ Harvey

² Quaker Faith & Practice passage 23.88, <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/23-88/>.

³ 'Heart of Quakerism: The substance of an address delivered by T. Edmund Harvey at Guilford College, North Carolina, 19, ix. mo., 1922.' [unpublished] Section ii.

⁴ T. Edmund Harvey, *The Long Pilgrimage: Human Progress in the Light of the Christian Hope* (The Swarthmore lecture; Woodbrooke Extension Committee; London: Robert Davis 1921) pp 29-34. The passage is Luke 17: 20-21.

interprets the preaching of Jesus in this instance as moral not eschatological, as setting a higher than ordinary standard of morality for his disciples in the now and not just in end-times. Also evident from Harvey's lecture of 1921 is his awareness of St Augustine's use of the dual image of the earthly city and the city of God to express the tension between the world and Christianity. This famously is the subject of Augustine's book, *City of God*, from which Harvey quotes in the same lecture. These are the words that Harvey quotes in Augustine's Latin:

We see then the two cities were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city was created by self-love reaching the point of contempt for God, the Heavenly City by the love of God carried as far as contempt for the world. In the former the lust for domination lords it over its princes as over the nations it subjugates; in the other both those put in authority and those subject to them serve one another in love, the rulers by their counsel, the subjects by obedience.⁵

Harvey takes the imagery of duality found in the words of Jesus and Augustine to resolve the tension between the Christian pacifist and the secular state. He saw the British state of his day as a morally mixed body, which is why he resigned as a parliamentary private secretary rather than be part of its war effort. However, he also claimed the two cities could be made complementary if the state enabled the Christian pacifist to follow the higher law of duty to God. Harvey claimed that the state, in releasing the Christian pacifist from military duty, is entitled to expect him to act in accordance with his religious principles. In other words, Harvey believed that if a person must in conscience refuse to undertake military service, he must endeavour to do even more than is ordinarily required in fulfilling an alternative task. The Christian citizen who is granted exemption from military service on grounds of conscience is bound by that conscience and by divine law to offer the state another, higher form of service.

The two strands which Harvey referred to in our key passage – the earthly and the heavenly – are interwoven by a social contract. Harvey wrote that 'the disciple's obligation to the kingdom of God as he has learned it in the school of Christ comes first; but along with it the disciple recognises his debt and his obligation to the country whose laws have given him the freedom to live in accord with his deepest convictions.'⁶ The social contract in the sense found in classic liberal political thought means that the rules-based, liberal state—at least in the form of the British parliamentary regime of Harvey's day—is worthy of service by the Christian pacifist, who is bound by the light of Christ to honour the social contract with a higher form of service. The Christian pacifist must act as a disciple of Christ in an arrangement which respects both kingdoms, the earthly and the heavenly, the now and the not-yet.

⁵ Ibid p.8.

⁶ T. Edmund Harvey, 'Christian Citizenship in the Crisis Of War' (*Friends Quarterly Examiner* Vol.75; no.299 (Seventh Mo. 1941).

This brings me to the fourth component of Harvey's ethics or theology of conscientious objection, which is the peace activist as a moral leader. In Harvey's conception, higher service is no easy option. It is not a negative action or an act of political protest for the Christian pacifist to refuse a demand of the state to which he has a conscientious objection. Still less is it a matter of shirking burdens other men are willing to shoulder, which was an accusation popularly levelled against conscientious objectors. Harvey insisted that the individual renunciation of war had to be bound up with a positive contribution of service and 'contagious good will'.⁷ He also wrote, 'The blessing in the Beatitudes is given not to those who abstain from war but to the makers of peace. [...] Peacemaking is not a question of refusing or declining or objecting but a positive and creative act, arousing in others a positive response and an answering witness of soul.'⁸ What Harvey calls the contagion of good will is spread person to person. As he suggested in his study of St Aelred, who was the twelfth-century Abbot of Rievaulx and author of a book on spiritual friendship, person-to-person influence may extend mysteriously even across time.⁹ As Harvey made clear in his address of 1922, the ultimate spiritual influencer and moral pioneer is Jesus Christ, 'the Master'.¹⁰ The parliamentary historian Josiah C. Wedgwood embarrassed Harvey by suggesting that he was a saint in politics. Nevertheless it may be argued that Harvey was a moral pioneer and exemplified his own principles. He resigned as a parliamentary private secretary, which meant sacrificing the prospects of a ministerial career, because conscience would not allow him to contribute directly to the war effort. Instead, on the one hand, he served Christ by doing relief work in France and, on the other, served the British state by helping to set up an orderly system for legitimating conscientious objection.

To conclude, Harvey's moral and political theology of conscientious objection put him in the centre ground between the war state and absolutist pacifists and was a cogent amalgam of Christian personalism and secular liberalism. As I have shown, Harvey's theology was based on the notion of the Christian pacifist who could reconcile his duty to God with his duty as a citizen. Legitimated conscientious objection granted by the Military Service Acts was a privilege in the strict sense that it was special status in law. For the philosophical liberal such as Harvey rights and privileges brought with them duties and obligations. Harvey's phrase that a conscientious objection entailed a conscientious obligation encapsulated his deontic ethics of liberalism and moderate pacifism. He disagreed with the purists and absolutists who felt 'that they cannot agree to undertake any specific service which the State may require of them in war time, lest by so doing they should contribute

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ T. Edmund Harvey, *Saint Aelred of Rievaulx* (London: H.R.Allenson 1932) pp 5-6.

¹⁰ T. Edmund Harvey, 'Heart of Quakerism' (Unpublished address delivered at Guilford College, North Carolina, 19, ix. mo., 1922).

to its greater efficiency in war.’¹¹ In so saying he had in mind the leading Quakers of his time who declared that ‘It is for Christians a paramount duty to be free to obey and to act and speak in accord with the law of God, a law higher than that of any state, and no government official can release men from this duty.’¹² This was a direct repudiation of Harvey’s belief in the government’s regulated system of exemptions conditional on alternative service which he had helped set up. His terse response was that the 1,500 conscientious objectors of the First World War who would accept nothing but absolute exemption had by their actions won few friends for their cause.¹³ He criticised the stridency of the absolutists and others who in the name of peace were ‘proud, bitter and intolerant’ of those with whom they disagreed. More strongly, he said that not all those who resisted the claims of the state did so for the highest of motives, which was a thrust at those anti-war activists whose motives were political and not religious.

Harvey was not a professional theologian but a scholarly politician who validated his theology by living it. He understood that concrete problems required concrete solutions. He was impatient if we ‘shrug our shoulders at moral failures in our own lives and in society, and fancy that we can cure it all by means of a formula from Karl Marx.’¹⁴ He understood from the inside the relationship between individual and society, state and citizen, faith and action as complex and dynamic, as about empowerment rather than domination. He lived his own Christian ethics that a statutory exemption from conscription brought with it an enhanced obligation to serve the state and community by other, higher means. His theology proved itself in practice, because he was able to live it, to be the change he sought.

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¹¹ T. Edmund Harvey: Letter to *The Friend* 21 January 1916 (reproduced in a centennial article in *The Friend* 26 February 2016 p.12).

¹² ‘Statement issued by Meeting for Sufferings in 1917.’ Quaker Faith & Practice 23.90 <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/23-90/>.

¹³ T. Edmund Harvey, ‘Records of Conscience’: Review of John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916-1919* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1922) in *Friends Quarterly Examiner* vol 223 (1922) pp 185-200.

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Arcades of Analogy

The Theological Grammar of Walter Benjamin's 'Arcades Project'

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Abstract

The city is a library of analogy. Analogy is a form of grammar in which one thing is compared to another. The analogy of being (*analogia entis*) had been conceived among the Medieval Scholastics as a theological grammar of participation, in which any speech on being is spoken of in two or more senses, and from the higher ontological ground of a mediating proportion. However, from Dons Scotus to Gilles Deleuze, it has been reduced to an increasingly univocal grammar of aesthetic proportions. Once reduced, it ranges across the spaces of the earth, and the city. The first city was founded as a cybernetic engine of writing, and of calculation for computing the administration and allocation of productive surpluses. In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin rendered the Fourierist 'harmonies' of urban spaces as material traces of the symbolic forms of analogy. The production of symbolic commodities thereafter accelerates across successive virtual plateaus of civic designs and urban environments. Walter Benjamin's 'city of arcades' can recall Charles Fourier's 'theory of universal analogy', which gestures beyond the unfulfilled desires of the earthly towards an eschatological 'heavenly city'. Since analogy must be related from its extremes, the *analogia entis* should be spoken of, not as abstractly prior to, but concretely as it is spoken of in a theological grammar of analogy that shapes the spaces of the city of man, as of the city of God.



I. Cities of God

Analogy is a form of grammar that compares one thing to another. *Analogia* (αναλογία) was, for ancient Greek philosophy, a proportion of two ratios. The analogy of being (*analogia entis*) was, for the medieval Scholastics, a transcendental grammar of being, in which the senses of any speech on being are spoken of as given in and from the higher ontological ground of a third mediating proportion.¹

The *analogia entis* has since come to be acknowledged as a theological grammar of participation (*methexis*). From Duns Scotus to Giles Deleuze, the *analogia entis* has been sceptically reduced to an increasingly univocal grammar of aesthetic proportions.² Once reduced, it can be spoken of across the spaces of the earth, the environment, and the city.

The city can, I suggest, be studied as a library of the symbolic forms of analogy. The earliest cities were founded as cybernetic engines of writing to administrate the production of surplus commodities, and the allocation of labour to reshape the town and country.³ Each stratum of urban construction thereafter carries these ancestral traces of analogy.

This study of the city has previously been hinted at in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) was an eclectic German Jewish philosopher, associated with the Neo-Marxist Frankfurt School of critical theory. In 'The Arcades Project' (1927-40), he collected a 'palimpsest image' of the unfulfilled hopes of the city of Paris, which he styles as 'the capital of the nineteenth century'.⁴

Traces of analogy can be discovered in a city among the lateral axes of its streets, the vertical elevation of its towers, and even among its ornaments, markets, and altars. The production of symbolic commodities thereafter accelerates in the city through successive virtual plateaus of civic designs and urban environments. In its poetics of labour, it appears productive of symbolic media for ends both human and divine.⁵

The city carries the memory of many unfulfilled desires. It has previously been studied by Plato, Augustine, Dante, Kierkegaard, as well as, more recently, by Lewis Mumford, Harvey Cox, and

¹ Philipp Rosemann, *Omne Agens Agit Sibi Simile: A "Repetition" of Scholastic Metaphysics* (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1996).

² John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio, Opera Omnia* (Civitas Vaticana: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950), 1.3.1.1-3, nn. 1-201, 3:1-123; Giles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 35-42, 66, 303-4.

³ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1961), 31-35.

⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland & Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 14.

⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, trans. Mark Poster (St. Louis, MO: Telos Press, 1975), 17-51.

Graham Ward.⁶ Yet theologians have so far neglected to ask this more originary question of how the city has been shaped by the grammar of analogy, and how analogy has come to be shaped from within the city.

As an answer, we can read Walter Benjamin's 'city of arcades' to recall a theological grammar of participation of the symbolic forms of analogy in the city.⁷ The *analogia entis* has previously been held beyond the terrain of the city in a silent reserve of transcendental signification. Since, however, analogy must be related from its extremes, the *analogia entis* should be spoken of, not abstractly prior to, but concretely as it is spoken of in a theological grammar of analogy that shapes the spaces of the city.⁸

II. Analogy in the City

The analogy of being (*analogia entis*) can be discovered from among the material traces of its symbolic forms within the city. Since the time of the medieval Scholastics it has been conceived as a transcendental grammar, held apart from, and inscribed across, the spaces of the city. Yet it has from Scotus to Deleuze, also been reduced to an increasingly univocal grammar of flattened representations folded across the contours of urban environments.

The city can, for this reason, be studied as the concentrated site of a theological grammar. It exhibits a never-before-seen confluence of productive forces, a concentration of strife, as well as a singular circulation and production of desires.⁹ The city has thus furnished the dramatic stage for many of the pivotal events in the Christian story.

As Jacques Ellul has narrated, the first city was constructed in the cursed land of Nod by the descendants of Cain.¹⁰ God had brought the flood to renew the world to cleanse these cities.¹¹ The Tower of Babel crowned the new city of Nimrod.¹² Abraham fled from among the earliest cities of Ur to the land of Canaan, before Joseph was taken captive in the cities of Egypt.¹³

⁶ See Mumford, *The City in History*; Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968); Graham Ward, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁷ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 14.

⁸ See Proclus, *Proclus' Commentary on the Timaeus of Plato*, Volume 1, trans. Thomas Taylor (Frome, Somerset: Prometheus Trust, 1998), 432-65.

⁹ Ward, *Cities of God*, 53, 76-7, 104-8, 191-4.

¹⁰ Gen. 4:12-6. See Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, trans. Dennis Pardee (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

¹¹ Gen. 6:5-9:17.

¹² Gen. 11:1-9.

¹³ Gen. 12:1-13:6.

The city of Jerusalem was founded by David to house the Ark of the Covenant, and by Solomon to build the First Temple.¹⁴ Yet with the destruction of the Temple of Solomon, and the Jewish Exile in Babylon, its memory was dispersed to the margins of the past.¹⁵ And after their return from exile, the city of Jerusalem fell under the colonial rule of a succession of imperial cities: Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome.

The drama of sacred history has since been staged within the city. Yet the symbol of the Cross dramatically subverts every civic edifice of domination. Jesus returned to the city of Jerusalem.¹⁶ The scenes of the Passion were carried along the *Via Dolorosa*.¹⁷ And the Cross was then placed, not inside, but outside the city walls, at the liminal margins of its essential exterior, and in a sacrifice that subverts its symbolic foundations.¹⁸

We can look upon the city again as a *tableau vivant* – a ‘living picture’ of the testimony of scripture. Awaiting a world made new, its sets the stage of apocalyptic expectations. Its grammar, encoded in architectural spaces, gestures in and beyond any immanent frame of reference – harkening to a heavenly city that is yet to come.¹⁹

III. Arcades of Analogy

Walter Benjamin had, in *The Arcades Project* (1927/40), collected a ‘palimpsest image’ of the revolutionary hopes of the city.²⁰ His analysis is designed to discover the symptomatic traces of productive forces among the historic strata of the city. He studies the glass-covered shopping malls, the Arcades of Paris, as centres of commerce in luxuries where, he writes, ‘art enters into the service of the merchant’, creating a ‘world in miniature’, as a microcosm of the accelerating forces of science and industry.²¹

The present significance of the Arcades emerges from the transformation of material into semiotic production: in Eridu, we find the symbolic economy centred on the sacrifices offered in the temple; in Athens, we find the commerce of the world centred on speeches given in the agora; however, in Paris the production of all material commodities has in the Arcades been momentarily superseded by a new semiotic production that animates even as it exceeds the structural ambit

¹⁴ 2 Sam. 5:6-7, 6:1-12; 1 Kings 6:1-37.

¹⁵ 2 Kings 25:1-21.

¹⁶ Mt. 21:1-11; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk. 19:28-44; Jn. 12:12-19.

¹⁷ Mt. 26:57-27:38; Mk. 14:53-15:27; Lk. 22:54-23:33; Jn. 18:28-19:18.

¹⁸ Mt. 27:33; Mk. 15:22; Lk. 23:33; Jn. 19:17.

¹⁹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow And Its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York, NY: Dover, 1987), 249-301.

²⁰ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 1-26.

²¹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 15.

of material production, of a strictly materialist dialectic, and any secular foreclosure of transcendent signification.²²

The utopian imaginings of the French Socialists can then be read again to discover an ancestral expression of its hidden metaphysical significance. Benjamin finds in Charles Fourier's '*Phalanstère*' a 'clockwork mechanism' designed to automate human passions (*passions mecanistes*).²³ The construction of a psychological taxonomy can, as he describes, be technically automated in a 'theory of a universal analogy', in which the machinic operation of the passions can be orchestrated for the production of new habits, new desires, and, as Fourier suggests, new analogies.²⁴

Following Fourier, Benjamin had suggested the possibility of discovering in these 'harmonies' the ciphers of analogy. The grammar of analogy had been transcribed as deeply across the symbols of the page, as across the shapes of architectural designs. In each case, its elements can signify the higher ground of a mediating proportion in concrete media, in the circulation of commodities, and in the grammar of the city.

The construction of the Arcades is thus emblematic of the accelerating dynamics of capitalism. For, as Benjamin describes, the introduction of iron construction had added a new material signifier.²⁵ Its material signification marks an accelerating dynamic that terminates in an apocalyptic conflagration. He writes: 'The burning of Paris is the worthy conclusion to Baron Haussman's work of destruction'.²⁶ The Paris Commune then marks the completion of the annihilation of the technical channels of production and exchange: first in the Arcades, then in Haussmann's renovations, and finally at the siege, destruction, and cancellation of the revolutionary aspirations of Paris.

The city can then be observed to perform a dialectical leap, in which, as in Hegel, the gradual increase in quantitative magnitudes can be annulled and sublated to form a new qualitative state, a new configuration of shapes, and a new proportion.²⁷ This 'leap' is marked by an 'explosion', where, as in Le Corbusier's proposed demolition of the old city of Paris, the inherited shape of

²² Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 18.

²³ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 15-17, 626, 629.

²⁴ Simone Debout-Oleszkiewicz, "L'analogie ou «Le poème mathématique» de Charles Fourier", *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, Vol. 16, No. 60, 2 (1962): 176-199. Cf. Charles Fourier, *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier*, eds. trans. Jonathan Beecher & Richard Bienvu (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1971), 397-414; Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 66-7, 137-9, 332-52.

²⁵ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 15-16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 320-323.

human proportions can be abolished in a revolutionary transformation of the 'integration of the technological into social life'.²⁸

Benjamin's 'city of arcades' then appears as a spectaclist city of concrete poetics, in which all relations can be internalized, first by the loitering flaneur, and finally in a mimetic repetition of disintegrating production in any media consumer.²⁹ The decentring of space under the conditions of capitalism can also be recentred upon the arcades, and through the engines of commerce, in anticipation of Horkheimer and Adorno's 'culture industry'.³⁰

Yet in recollecting the Fourierist 'harmonies' as ciphers of analogy, Benjamin also gestures over its impossibility: not, as in Plato, to an ideal city 'of gods, or sons of gods'³¹; and not, as in Augustine, to the *Civitate Dei* of the Church as the transfiguration of the Roman empire; but rather as a deferred eschatological expectation, where the traces of its imperative are everywhere inscribed in a commercial spectacle among the present agony of its alternation – ever opening to an expected yet unfulfilled eschatological horizon.³²

IV. Portents of the Heavenly Jerusalem

The theological grammar of analogy has been transcribed across multiple civic domains. Yet in the concluding chapters of the *Apocalypse of John*, we also hear of a 'new heaven and a new earth' after 'the first heaven and the first earth was gone': 'Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them'.³³ The desire of the 'city of arcades', once dispersed across the virtual plateaus of the 'earthly city', is destined to be consummately satisfied in the 'heavenly city' of analogy.³⁴

What expressly distinguishes the 'heavenly' from the terrestrial Jerusalem is the final dissolution of any separation of the city from the temple. John reports that he 'saw no temple therein', for, he writes, 'the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof'.³⁵ The city is

²⁸ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 17. Cf. Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow And Its Planning*, 249-301.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 14-17. Cf. Max Horkheimer & Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94-136.

³¹ Plato, *Laws*, 5.739d.

³² Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God, Books I-VII*, trans. Demetrius B Zema S.J. & Gerald G. Walsh S.J. (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), Bk. 1, Preface, pp. 17-18.

³³ Rev. 21:1-3.

³⁴ Ez. 40-48, Zc. 2:4-5.

³⁵ Rev. 21:22.

transfigured into celestial lights: for 'they shall not need the light of the lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them'.³⁶

This 'heavenly' city is not of this world, and yet is nevertheless inscribed in the grammar of the earthly in anticipation of the heavenly city.³⁷ It is distinguished by an allegorical interpretation of the 'precious stones', where the saints are 'made a living stone, a stone elect and precious', in 'struggles of piety', with a 'truer and clearer knowledge', to 'not live by bread alone', but 'by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'.³⁸

The light of the stars then appears as but a pale reflection of the 'light' of the angelic spirits, or 'rational beings', as ultimately of the divine intellect that shines forth as it is shared across all of the strata of creation.³⁹ The 'precious stones' of the heavenly Jerusalem are allegorically emblematic of the *Logos*, where the ornaments of civic construction can signify the divine 'light' that glitters in stones.⁴⁰ This divine 'light' is, for Origen, no longer that of a physical fire, but, rather, the originary 'light' of an 'intellectual illumination'.⁴¹

Benjamin's empirical analysis of productive forces can, at this point, be recalled from the depths of the historical past to recollect the originary creative act of the divine *Logos*, and the dialectic of the *Logos* that supersedes any materialistic dialectic that would deny transcendent signification. The elements of analogy can then be discovered from among the dispersed traces of the intelligible *logoi* in nature, in grammar, and in the cybernetic writing that ever continues to be transcribed across the spaces of the city.

V. The City of Tomorrow

Around the globe, we now witness an unprecedented construction of new master-planned cities.⁴² What will most of all distinguish these new cities will be the use of AI-enabled digital computing

³⁶ Rev. 22:5.

³⁷ Origen of Alexandria, *Origen: On First Principles*, ed. trans. John Behr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.11.2-4., 269-271.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.11.3., 271.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.11.3., 271.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.11.3., 271.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1.1-4.5., 1.5.5., 1.7.2., 25-89, 101-105, 121-3; Augustine, *The City of God*, Bk. 5, Ch. 17, pp. 279-280.

⁴² Sarah Moser & Laurence Côté-Roy, "New Cities: Power, Prestige, and Profit", *Geography Compass*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2021): 1-15.

in their design, administration, and daily operations: from ‘smart roads’ to mile high towers; from social media to augmented reality; seamlessly connected in an ‘internet of things’.⁴³

In the ‘smart cities’ of tomorrow, the grammar of digital computing will be written as much across our bodies as across our minds. Computers will come to be embedded into the very furniture of the world. The distances that had previously separated the city from the country will gradually be dissolved, even as the entire country may be recreated across its virtual terrain. And digital media will become as ubiquitous as the air we breathe.

In the city of the future there may be no fixed separation between a user and a machine, as the form of computing will be interwoven in the deepest matter of all our surroundings, and we may, with the angels and the saints, create at will the space that we inhabit, and in which at last we may find our final home.

The city is, in this spiritual hermeneutic, not only the foundation of religious worship, but rather a centre of a sacrificial gift.⁴⁴ It is, Augustine states, the ‘foundation’ of the city, as the earthly city has as its ‘foundation’ a ‘wholly celestial city’, which saturates the ground, circulation, and ends of the earthly city.⁴⁵ The city can thus be studied as a site of revelation, where, as Jesus suggests, even ‘the stones would immediately cry out’ for joy.⁴⁶

The centre of the sacred is, we may say, radically dispersed, even as it is repeatedly concentrated, nowhere because it can now be anywhere, at every node of communication. Jesus speaks of ‘a city that is set on a hill’, which ‘cannot be hidden’⁴⁷; for, he teaches, ‘the kingdom of God is within you’⁴⁸; and ‘wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.’⁴⁹ The New Temple, like the New City, can, therefore, appear to be nowhere, because it can be anywhere, in the hearts of any who would believe.

The stones themselves will shout for joy with the grammar of analogy, as the melodies of its hope can still be heard echoing in the streets.

⁴³ Mark Shepard, “Sentient City: Ubiquitous Computing, Architecture, and the Future of Urban Space” (New York, NY: Architectural League of New York, 2011).

⁴⁴ Augustine, *The City of God*, Bk. 5, Ch. 18, pp. 283-288.

⁴⁵ Augustine, *The City of God*, Bk. 6, Ch. 4, p. 312.

⁴⁶ Origen, *On First Principles*, 2.11.3., 271. Cf. Lk. 19:40 KJV.

⁴⁷ Mt 5:14

⁴⁸ Lk 17:21

⁴⁹ Mt 18:20.

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A Case Study of Catholic Social Thought in Action

Giorgio La Pira, Politician, Jurist, and the Saintly Mayor of Florence

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Abstract

Several contemporary Christian ethicists and political theologians have expressed scepticism about how much Christians can contribute to the political affairs of the nation-state in a way that is consonant with and faithful to the specific calling of the Church (eg. Hauerwas, Cavanaugh, Bretherton). They have preferred to look to broad-based community organising, direct action, and forms of radical democracy for contexts in which the communion and solidarity of the Body of Christ can be displayed. But their pessimism regarding the nation-state has led them to be inattentive to examples from recent history of politicians showing the unique opportunities to be witnesses to the Gospel by exercising political authority. I will demonstrate this by considering the life of Giorgio La Pira, a Christian Democratic politician from the mid-twentieth century. His contributions to the drafting of the post-war Italian Constitution show that, following Catholic social teaching, he helped it avoid enshrining either individualism or authoritarianism, because it recognised a broad array of rights of individuals and of the ‘social groups where human personality is expressed’ (art. 2). By balancing rights with duties and individual rights with the rights of social groups, the Constitution enshrined solidarity, subsidiarity, and pluralism into the heart of Italy’s fundamental law. Although it was the product of cross-party and ideological compromises, I argue that La Pira’s contributions to the Constitution show us a model of Christian engagement with politics.



To see what Christian engagement in politics should look like, one ought to study some instructive examples of it from recent history. That may seem obvious. But the attraction of constructing grand theories or of tracing the genealogies of ideas over time has meant that political theologians have sometimes been slow to study commendable instances of Christian political engagement. This essay will look at a particular case of Catholic social thought put into practice by studying the contributions made to the Italian Constitution by Giorgio La Pira, a Christian Democratic politician from the mid-twentieth century. My aim is to present an instructive example of Christian political engagement, not because I wish to defend all of La Pira's actions, but because reflecting on such cases is essential for building up a credible theology of how the Gospel should inform politics. I am reacting against the influence of post-liberal theologians like Stanley Hauerwas or William Cavanaugh who have argued that Christians have participated in the political affairs of liberal democracies often at the cost of distorting or domesticating their faith.¹ Although there is much to learn from these critiques, examples like that of Giorgio La Pira give us reasons to be sceptical because they show us what Christians can achieve and have achieved in the imperfect realm of politics. Such accomplishments are real and worth preserving, and we should not dismiss them out of a habitual preference for critique and criticism.

I begin with a brief biography. Born in 1904, La Pira grew up in the poverty of Sicily but after much hard work eventually found himself studying jurisprudence at the University of Florence. Although he had to sell matchboxes on the street to pay for his education, he graduated and began to teach Roman Law from the age of 23. La Pira had matured in a fiercely anticlerical circle and was for a while influenced by the philosophers and poets that were most widely read by Italian fascists. But he gradually returned to the Roman Catholic faith and with the help of Father (later Cardinal) Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro, he developed a regular practice of contemplative prayer and participation in the sacraments, which sustained him throughout his life. A particularly powerful experience of joy after receiving the Eucharist on Easter 1924 led him to decide to consecrate himself completely to serve God as a lay apostle in the world. Later in 1938 he made the three life-long vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience when he joined a group of likeminded lay Catholics, each of whom continued to pursue lay professions but with the aim of being missionaries of the Gospel in different areas of society. La Pira's interest in entering politics arose from his experience of taking part in efforts to provide for the material and spiritual needs of those crushed by desperate levels of poverty in Florence. He not only helped the poor but, true

¹ E.g., Stanley Hauerwas, "A Christian Critique of Christian America," in *The Hauerwas Reader*, eds. John Berkman & Matthew Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 459-480; Hauerwas, *After Christendom? How the Church is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation are Bad Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999); William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

to his vow to live a life of poverty, he slept in a cold monastic cell when he lived for many years with the Dominican friars at the Convent of San Marco.²

La Pira had been an increasingly vocal critic of the Fascists, especially after they passed the laws of racial discrimination in 1938. He soon found himself in the centre of a group of Catholics who were to play a key role in the post-war reconstruction of Italy through the Christian Democracy Party. While hiding from Nazis or from Mussolini's henchmen, these Catholics had plenty of time to reflect on the disasters of the past few decades, and to consider what ideas and institutions were needed to prevent such disasters from recurring after the liberation of their country.

According to Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, two social scientists who have written much about Italian politics:

Scholars often insist that Christian Democracy, especially in its Catholic-Italian version, represented no real tradition of political thought, but was merely a means toward establishing strong ruling parties. This judgement might be affected by the undeniable dullness of Christian Democratic politicians; but more likely it is explained by the fact that scholars never took Christian Democracy seriously as a political idea.³

However, La Pira's writings from 1945 and '46 show us that Christian Democracy was a thoughtful attempt to reckon with the rise of totalitarian regimes and with the other unprecedented challenges of being a Christian in modernity. He had his opportunity to implement these ideas when he successfully stood for election on 2 June 1946 to be a deputy in what was called the Constituent Assembly. The deputies elected to the Assembly had the primary task of creating and approving a new Constitution. Of the 556 elected deputies, a commission of seventy-five, including La Pira, was selected to prepare a draft of the Constitution to be presented to the Assembly. The commission was divided into three sub-commissions to cover different aspects of the Constitution, and La Pira belonged to the sub-commission dedicated to defining the rights and duties of citizens.⁴ He and the other Christian Democrats on the sub-commission had learned from the writings of St. Thomas and from contemporary Thomists, such as Jacques Maritain, some clearly defined ideas about the rights and duties of citizens.⁵

² For further biographical details, see: Giorgio La Pira, *I miei pensieri*, ed. Riccardo Bigi (Florence: Società Editrice Fiorentina, 2007), 9-20.

³ Rosario Forlenza & Bjørn Thomassen, "Catholic Modernity and the Italian Constitution," *History Workshop Journal* 81, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 235, <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/2102/10.1093/hwj/dbv039>.

⁴ Giulio Alfano, *Giorgio La Pira: Un Domenicano alla Costituente* (Chieti: Edizioni Solfanelli, 2016), 15.

⁵ For a discussion of La Pira's intellectual debt to Maritain, see Jean-Dominique Durand, "Giorgio La Pira-Jacques Maritain: dialogo per un'Europa Cristiana (giugno-luglio 1946)", *Studium* 97, no. 6 (November-December 2001): 893-912. La Pira mentions Maritain's *The Primacy of the Spiritual* (1927) and *True Humanism* (1936) as having a particular influence on him in a letter cited in Vittorio Possenti, *La Pira: Tra*

La Pira's conception of Christian democracy was developed by arguing against the neo-Hegelian political thought of Giovanni Gentile, who was called *the* philosopher of Fascism, because of his role as chief ideologue and Minister of Education in Mussolini's regime.⁶ For Gentile, the Fascist state's aim was to absorb the whole of civil society into itself, by striving to eliminate all conflicts between classes, and between state and society.⁷ Gentile considered individuals as parts of the organic substance of society, with no loyalties below or beyond the state encouraged.⁸ No individuals or social rights were recognised except those granted by the sovereign state.⁹ In the first part of *The Doctrine of Fascism* (1932), attributed to Mussolini but ghost-written by Gentile, we read that 'for the Fascist, everything is in the State, and nothing human or spiritual exists, much less has value, outside the State'.¹⁰ In Mussolini's often-quoted words: 'all in the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State'.¹¹

However, La Pira was also critical of bourgeois constitutions of the eighteenth century inspired by Enlightenment thought, such as the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the United States Constitution. He criticised their individualism because they recognised only the natural rights of the *individual*, without regard for the social context in which individuals live and flourish. Society as such did not appear in such constitutions. Their concern was only for atomised individuals and for the state above them protecting their personal and property rights. What the totalitarian statism of Gentile and the individualism of the Enlightenment had in common, La Pira argued, was the rejection of a third approach, which was the Gospel's pluralistic vision of society.

In classically Thomistic fashion, La Pira argued that the Gospel not only reveals our supernatural calling to share God's life by grace, but the Gospel also restores our understanding of human nature.¹² Therefore, in a book containing lectures given during World War II, he wrote that a

Storia e Profezia con Tommaso maestro (Milan: Marietti, 2004), 19. For more on the intellectual influences on La Pira, especially during the key decade of the 1930s, see: Possenti, *La Pira*, 81.

⁶ Rosario & Thomassen, "Catholic Modernity," 237.

⁷ Darrow Schecter, "Gramsci, Gentile and the Theory of the Ethical State in Italy," *History of Political Thought* 11, no. 3 (Autumn 1990): 491-508, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26213815>.

⁸ Giorgio La Pira, *Premesse della Politica e Architettura di uno Stato democratico* (Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 2004), 35-60, 203-207.

⁹ Thomas, Clayton, "Introducing Giovanni Gentile, the 'Philosopher of Fascism,'" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 41, no. 6 (2009): 644-646, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2008.00497.x>. Also see: Augusto del Noce, "Notes towards a Historical Definition of Fascism," in *The Age of Secularization*, ed. & trans. Carlo Lancellotti (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 108-117.

¹⁰ Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," in *The Social and Political Doctrines Of Contemporary Europe*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 166.

¹¹ Mussolini, *Scritti e Discorsi*, 1927, as cited in Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 279.

¹² Possenti, *La Pira*, 30-34. On Aquinas' understanding of the need for grace after the Fall to heal, as well as to elevate, human nature, see especially: *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.109, a.2.

political society must be built on Christian foundations, for only they are truly human.¹³ On this view, human beings are not the parts of an evolving idealistic or materialistic dialectic but they are individual persons, created by God in His image, and ordained to pursue a hierarchy of different goals by associating with others through free and rational actions. The calling of human beings to be like God confers on them a unique dignity at the apex of creation, which is only heightened by God's work to redeem humanity by the Incarnation. As the origin and goal of all things, God by his providence moves history towards its purpose and end, which is the flourishing of human beings by participating in a series of increasingly important communities, starting with the family, and then moving to the city, and then the political community, and international community, and then by grace to the Church on earth, and ultimately to communion with God in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The first key principle La Pira draws from this Thomistic framework is that the supernatural orientation of human beings prevents any temporal communities on earth from being the ultimate goal or place of perfect flourishing.¹⁴ Therefore any community, including the political community, must be seen to hold only an instrumental value for achieving one of the partial goals of human nature. Hence, for La Pira, the state cannot demand a complete loyalty from the citizen, nor should citizens sacrifice everything for the state, which is summed up in the proposition that 'man does not exist for society and the state but, in an orderly fashion, society and the state exist for man'.¹⁵

The second key principle for La Pira is that our flourishing depends on our participation in a series of natural and supernatural communities that should surround each person like concentric circles.¹⁶ The reference of each of these communities to the flourishing of persons ensures, firstly, that human freedom is not considered absolute or without direction, but is meant to be used to share in the social life and solidarity of a variety of communities. And secondly, rooting the purpose of each community in human nature and freedom means that these communities are not the organs or extensions of the state, for the state to use and interfere with for its own purposes. Communities, such as the family, or a trade union or some other professional association, are not created by the state but are created by individuals to serve a particular aspect of their flourishing. Therefore, each community ought to possess a degree of autonomy and a protected legal status.

On the basis of this Thomistic framework, La Pira had a very clear idea, according to Vittorio Possenti, of how the Italian Constitution should be built 'on a solid base of personal and collective liberty; on values such as solidarity, [and] social and institutional pluralism'.¹⁷ We can see how

¹³ La Pira, *Premesse*, 235.

¹⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q.21, a.4, ad.3.

¹⁵ La Pira, *Premesse*, 234. Cf. Possenti, *La Pira*, 67-68.

¹⁶ La Pira, *Premesse*, 212-216.

¹⁷ Vittorio Possenti, *Profili del Novecento* (Torino: Effatà Editrice), 68. Cf. Possenti, *La Pira*, 74-74.

successfully La Pira imparted these ideas to the Constitution by considering briefly some of its articles.

The Constitution begins with a declaration of fundamental principles. In the first article we read that Italy is 'a democratic Republic founded on labour'.¹⁸ Some of the left-wing deputies wanted to declare Italy to be a republic of workers, but La Pira argued this conflated citizenship with the more narrowly defined community of those who work for a living. 'A democratic Republic founded on labour' instead recognises that each citizen should work to contribute to the common good, without unduly restricting that contribution to what is of use to economic production.¹⁹

Then in the second article, we have what La Pira has called 'the corner stone'²⁰ of the Constitution because it gives the key to understand the rest of the text. It states:

The Republic recognises and guarantees the inviolable rights of the person, both as an individual *and in the social groups* where human personality is expressed. The Republic expects that the fundamental duties of political, economic, and social solidarity be fulfilled.²¹

The recognition this article gave to the legal rights of both individuals and of social groups gave a pluralistic spirit to the subsequent articles. Article three stated the equal social dignity of all citizens and their equality before the law. Articles thirteen to twenty-eight gave a broad list of the inviolable rights of individuals to personal liberty, privacy, free movement, assembly, religious liberty, free speech, and so on. But these rights are crucially never described by the Constitution as being natural rights or human rights,²² nor are they absolute rights but they are accompanied by correlative duties that are expected of all citizens.²³

For example, article four states:

The Republic recognises the right of all citizens to work and [it] promotes those conditions which render this right effective. Every citizen has the duty, according to personal potential and individual choice, to perform an activity or a function that contributes to the material or spiritual progress of society.²⁴

¹⁸ "Constitution of the Italian Republic," Senato della Repubblica, accessed 16 March 2021, Article 1, https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf.

¹⁹ The debate between the members of La Pira's submission over this point can be found in Alfano, *Giorgio La Pira*, 71-75.

²⁰ La Pira, *Premesse*, 219.

²¹ "Constitution," Art. 2. For the debate over how article two should be worded, cf. Alfano, *Giorgio La Pira*, 76-85.

²² Alessandro Pace, "From the Rights of the Citizen to the Fundamental Rights of Man: the Italian Experience," in *The Universalism of Human Rights*, ed. Rainer Arnold (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2013), 271.

²³ Forlenza & Thomassen, "Catholic Modernity," 242-243.

²⁴ "Constitution," Art. 4.

The accent of the Constitution is firmly on combining individual freedom with correlative duties and solidarity. Individual rights are not absolute but balanced by the reciprocal duty of each citizen to exercise freedom responsibly to contribute to wider society. By these more republican features, the Constitution avoids enshrining liberal individualism into Italy's fundamental law and it takes a different course than the bourgeois constitutions of the eighteenth century.

The recognition already mentioned in the second article of the rights of 'social groups where human personality is expressed' is further elucidated later in the text. Immediately after discussing the rights of citizens, the Constitution recognises, 'the rights of the family as a natural society founded on marriage'.²⁵ The next article goes further: 'The Republic assists the formation of the family and the fulfilment of its duties, with particular consideration for large families, through economic measures and other benefits'.²⁶ Yet this is balanced by a previous article that states one's personal home is inviolably protected from unnecessary interference.²⁷

Further signs of the Constitution's pluralism can be seen in its recognition of the right of any entity or individual 'to establish schools and institutions of education'²⁸ independently of state schools. In the economic sphere, the Constitution recognises the right to private property²⁹ and to the freedom of private economic enterprise³⁰, thus, according to La Pira, avoiding state socialism or corporatism.³¹ But it also recognises a broad array of workers' rights, the legal personhood of trade unions, the imposition of 'obligations and constraints on private ownership of land',³² and 'the rights of workers to collaborate in the management of enterprises'.³³

While the Republic is said to be 'one and indivisible' in article five, it also 'recognises and promotes local autonomies, and implements the fullest measure of administrative decentralisation in those services which depend on the State'.³⁴ By an almost federal system, the republic is divided into regions, provinces, and cities, each of which 'are autonomous entities having their own statutes, powers and functions'³⁵ with 'revenue and expenditure autonomy'.³⁶ Moreover, each of these different levels of authority must 'promote the autonomous initiatives of citizens, both as

²⁵ Ibid., Art. 29.

²⁶ Ibid., Art. 30.

²⁷ Ibid., Art. 14.

²⁸ Ibid., Art. 33.

²⁹ Ibid., Art. 42.

³⁰ Ibid., Art. 41.

³¹ La Pira, *Premesse*, 223-225.

³² "Constitution," Art. 44.

³³ Ibid., Art. 46.

³⁴ Ibid., Art. 5.

³⁵ Ibid., Art. 114.

³⁶ Ibid., Art. 119.

individuals and as members of associations... on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity'.³⁷ La Pira comments that these provisions are a 'fruit of the pluralistic vision'³⁸ because they seek to position the state not as being identical with society (as in the neo-Hegelian system) but as an institution with a more limited function of co-ordinating the various communities below it.

One of the reasons why the Christian democrats were able to succeed in giving the Constitution this pluralistic spirit is because many of the Socialist deputies also recognised the importance of preventing the state from ever again making an attempt to absorb society into itself.³⁹ Nevertheless the Constitution was the product of a compromise between socialists, communists, liberals, and Christian democrats, with perhaps nothing to unite them but their desire to prevent Fascism from ever arising again in Italy. Naturally this meant that there were concessions La Pira had to accept to reach a text that was acceptable to all of the deputies on his commission and in the Constituent Assembly. Although *Democrazia Cristiana* was the party that held the highest number of seats in the Assembly, the system of proportional representation used at the 1946 election meant that none of the parties held a majority. Co-operation and compromise between the parties was, therefore, essential.

While the Constitution recognised the rights of the individual and of social groups, it did not affirm the origin and destination of humanity in God, which La Pira had wanted it to enshrine as the rationale for the rights and duties of citizens.⁴⁰ La Pira also proposed that the Constitution should begin by stating: 'In the name of God, the Italian people give themselves the present Constitution'.⁴¹ He argued such a declaration was vague enough for all to endorse it, but he wanted it to be accepted unanimously or not at all, since he wanted it to be a sign of a common faith in God transcending political divisions. However, the opposition from left-wing deputies meant that La Pira had to withdraw the proposal, saying at the end of his speech: 'Frankly, if all this should produce division in the Assembly, I for my part can only say this: that I have done what according to my conscience I had to do'.⁴² One of La Pira's colleagues at the Assembly recalled years later that 'La Pira's proposal was not followed, but it inspired emotion in many and respect in all for the idea itself and for his frank profession of faith. La Pira's actions were not limited by a concern for worldly esteem'.⁴³

In closing, I can only note that further study of La Pira is needed, especially of his tenure as the mayor of Florence during 1951-57 and 1961-65. Although La Pira was by no means a dull man,

³⁷ Ibid., Art. 118.

³⁸ La Pira, *Premesse*, 222.

³⁹ Possenti, *Profili*, 68.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁴¹ Alfano, *Giorgio La Pira*, 62.

⁴² Ibid., 70.

⁴³ Amintore Fanfani, *Giorgio La Pira: Un Profilo e 24 Lettere* (Milan: Rusconi, 1978), 17.

there is no denying that the achievements of Christian Democracy in post-war Europe were neither glamorous nor perfect. But we can continue to learn from them, and especially from La Pira's example, from his willingness to compromise with others, whilst also bearing witness to the Gospel's indispensable importance for political life. We need him and other case studies of Christian political virtue to help us discern how we too should contribute to the peace of the earthly city.

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From Colonialism to Communism

The Christian Church's Response to Hong Kong's 1997 Handover

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Abstract

This paper explores the case study of how Christianity has shaped the ethical outlooks of Hong Kong around the 1997 handover. It addresses the question of the role of theology and ethics in the public sphere, especially how Christianity informs political realities in Hong Kong. The Christian Church's varied response raises the question of how the Church in Hong Kong can improve its approach to socio-political issues and interactions with the post-colonial Hong Kong government. This paper argues for Hong Kong theologians to develop a theology that is most suitable for the Hong Kong context because its decolonisation process is unique compared to other former colonies. The effects of Hong Kong's colonisation and subsequent decolonisation on the Christian Church and society at large are discussed, followed by an analysis of the Church's attempts to react to the handover, pointing out several different approaches, such as migrating to the Western world, perceiving China as a mission field, and participating in social demonstrations. This paper acknowledges the heavy borrowing of foreign theology, and the pragmatism of the Hong Kong people, which leads to a lack of systematic teaching on how Christians should interact with socio-political issues. There is a need for the Church to take a more critical role in society, which requires collaboration with local theologians to shape a theological view that is suitable for Hong Kong Christians and society. Processing politics through the Christian ethical outlook allows for a dialogue with the government for the Christian Church to perform its prophetic role in society.



In 1997, Hong Kong's sovereignty was transferred from Britain to China. How did Hong Kong churches respond to this change? What is a thoughtful, Christian way to respond to this change of sovereignty? The Christian Church's response to the handover of Hong Kong around 1997 brings forth the question of how the Church in Hong Kong can improve its approach to socio-political issues and interactions with the post-colonial Hong Kong government. This paper discusses the church-state relationship in Hong Kong before and after the handover, and I will interpret the theological responses of the Church in two ways: those who argue against the Chinese government on socio-political issues and those who focus on personal piety and moral issues. Through this paper, I analyse and critique the Protestant response to work within the system and the approach of standing out of it as a prophet.

I argue for Hong Kong theologians to develop a theology that is most suitable for the Hong Kong context because its decolonisation process is unique compared to other former colonies. Unlike many other former colonies, Hong Kong has not made a transition from colonial to post-colonial, but rather, it continues to be under the rule of another, that is, China. The extensive borrowing of foreign theologians' ideologies and applying it to Hong Kong cannot function as a Hong Kong theology, even with thoughtful contextualisation.¹ Many regions in the world are without self-determining powers,² and with the possibility for them to transition to another phase, such as Hong Kong from Britain to China, the Hong Kong Christian Church's response could exist as a reference for other regions, making for an interesting academic comparison.

Christianity came into Hong Kong around the same time as the British colonisers and enjoyed the prestige of a close relationship with the British Hong Kong colonial government.³ Over the century, even while Christians only made up a small proportion of Hong Kong's community, because of its influence on a structural level, such as in education, medicine, and social welfare issues in Hong Kong,⁴ Christian rhetoric has been pervasive even in this non-confessionally Christian state.

The colonialism and decolonisation of Hong Kong are unique. The Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 ceded Hong Kong Island to Britain. In 1984, the Sino-British Joint Declaration stated that, in 1997, Hong Kong's sovereignty would be handed over to China.⁵ In general, Christian colonisers saw themselves as benefiting the colonised by bringing them Western civilisation and Christian faith;

¹ Stephen Carl Pavey, "Envisioning/Embodying Christianity in Hong Kong: Theologies of Power and Crisis," *EBSCO*, accessed October 22, 2016 (dissertation, University of Kentucky, 2005), 127-34.

² United Nations, "Non-Self-Governing Territories," *The United Nations and Decolonization - Committee of 24*, accessed March 23, 2021, <https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/nsqt>.

³ Kim-kwong Chan, "Multi-Faith Dynamics in Hong Kong: From Pluralism to Politicization," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19, no. 1 (2021): 27-41.

⁴ Norman Etherington, ed., *Missions and Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 261-84.

⁵ Henry Rowold, "The Reunification of Hong Kong with China: Why? What's at Stake? What about the Church?," *Concordia Journal* (1998): 53-62.

this racial and cultural arrogance produced the anticolonial reaction during the twentieth century.⁶ As Stephen Chu argues, 'Hong Kong is a good example to illustrate the limitations of postcolonial discourse in the context of Hong Kong.'⁷ Hong Kong does not fit classical patterns of colonialism because the colonial government involvement in Hong Kong has had minimal intervention since the 1970s, giving society a sense of openness and opportunity compared to the post-handover Hong Kong.⁸ The *laissez-faire* policy of the colonial government and social non-interventionism reduced the potential for conflict in a city with a population of ninety-five percent ethnic Chinese.⁹

Due to the colonial past, Hong Kong churches held prominent positions in society, enjoying a close relationship with the Hong Kong government because of the special status of the Anglican Church in British politics.¹⁰ Although the Christian community makes up less than ten percent of the population, their disproportionate influence in Hong Kong enabled Christians and Hong Kong churches to initiate social actions to influence government policies for the betterment of society.¹¹ For example, the Church was instrumental in supporting various social welfare structures, including schools and hospitals.¹² In providing social services, the Church had always strove to consider social justice in terms of facilitating dignified living and social welfare conditions for the local people. However, the Christian Church's unique status in colonial Hong Kong was challenged when the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty came about in 1997.

The transference of Hong Kong's sovereignty is unique: Hong Kong was not heading towards decolonisation, but re-colonisation, and Hong Kong's future was never in the hands of the locals, yet the changes created an identity crisis for them.¹³ The Sino-British Joint Declaration stated there would be one country, two systems. Hong Kong would retain much of its economic, political, and social structures, deferring to the Chinese government in Beijing only for matters of defence and national security.¹⁴ On the whole, the Hong Kong people exhibited a seemingly unexplainable

⁶ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Reformation to the Present Day*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2010), 6534-42, Kindle edition.

⁷ Stephen Yiu-wai Chu, "Brand Hong Kong: Asia's World City as Method?" *Visual Anthropology* 24 (2011): 46-58.

⁸ Rowold, "The Reunification of Hong Kong," 53-62.

⁹ John M. Carroll, "Colonialism and Collaboration: Chinese Subjects and the Making of British Hong Kong," *China Information* 12, no. 1/2 (1997): 12-33.

¹⁰ Shun-hing Chan, "Christian Social Discourse in Postcolonial Hong Kong," *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 4 (2007): 447-66.

¹¹ Lung-kwong Lo, "Hong Kong," in *Christianities in Asia*, ed. Peter Phan (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 183-8.

¹² Chiu-wan Lam, "A Concise History of Social Work in the UK," in *What Is the Value of Social Work? A Deep Reflection of Professionalism* (translation from Chinese), ed. Chiu-wan Lam and Chi-keung Chu (Hong Kong: Aradia Press, 2014), 184-205.

¹³ Chan, "Christian Social Discourse," 447-66.

¹⁴ Chung-wah Kwong, *The Public Role of Religion in Post-colonial Hong Kong: An Historical Overview of*

sense of apathy and an attitude of indifference towards the handover, yet the post-colonial experience of the Hong Kong people is marked by anxiety, ambivalence, and uncertainty.¹⁵ The identity of the Hong Kong people is highly hybridised: being culturally Chinese and yet pragmatically British. Thus, there is both a strong sense of identification with China and a fear of being nationally Chinese. Being the periphery in vast and powerful China, creates difficulty for the Hong Kong people in locating themselves and fostering their own cultural identity which, at best, is still in the making and will remain fluid. In this process, there are significant dilemmas: the inability to assimilate to the Chinese culture and, simultaneously, no option to cling to the legacy of its colonial past.¹⁶

As a result, the Church was hugely affected by the transfer of power. After the handover, the historically close ties between Hong Kong's Church and the government loosened because China, as a communist state, approaches religion cautiously.¹⁷ The Basic Law, drafted by representatives from China and Hong Kong jointly after the Sino-Britain Joint Declaration, states that 'the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall not restrict the freedom of religious belief, interfere in the internal affairs of religious organisations, or restrict religious activities which do not contravene the law of the Region.'¹⁸ The Church is wary of the wording of the law, as it is the National People's Congress of China who has the authority to determine what it means to 'contravene the law of the Region.' China tolerates churches in Hong Kong as secular charitable organisations since there is a legacy of colonial church involvement in running schools and other charitable organisations that provide social welfare. Many Hong Kong Christian leaders have wanted to redefine the church-state relationship since the handover, and questions arise as to whether the Church needs to be within the state and work with it, or whether the Church needs to stand apart from the state and be critical of it.¹⁹

Different responses arise in different denominations due to the different teachings of social involvement and their different concepts of identity. For example, Catholics and mainline churches have social directives for the entire denomination, even if the directives are not necessarily studied by the laity, changing the entire conversation within the Church and the approaches to social

Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism and Christianity (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2002), 135-40.

¹⁵ Pui-lan Kwok, "Response to Archie Lee's Paper on 'Biblical Interpretation in Postcolonial Hong Kong,'" *Biblical Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (1999): 182-6.; Archie C. C. Lee, "Returning to China: Biblical Interpretation in Postcolonial Hong Kong," *Biblical Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (1999): 156-73.

¹⁶ Wai-luen Kwok, *Self-Defense or Social Concern? The Social and Political Participation of Hong Kong Church* (Hong Kong, SAR: China Alliance Press, 2014), 98-106.

¹⁷ Nai-wang Kwok, *Hong Kong After 1997: The First 1000 Days* (Hong Kong, SAR: Hong Kong Christian Institute and Asian Human Rights Commission, 2000), 142-64.

¹⁸ Rowold, "The Reunification of Hong Kong," 53-62.

¹⁹ Kwok, *Hong Kong After 1997*, 142-64.

activism.²⁰ In general, Catholic and mainline Protestant churches wish to uphold the principle of one country, two systems and have repeatedly spoken out on the issue of political reform.²¹ Most Catholic laypeople expect the Church to take up a prophetic role and advocate for justice and morality in politics. This prophetic role is to speak God's truth into society, and because of this role, the Church must stand apart from the world to be able to speak into it from a unique, God-given light. The Catholic Church will have to find channels to establish warmer relations, to lessen suspicion of the Chinese government, before the Church can begin to effectively serve the Hong Kong community in its prophetic role in the post-colonial period.²²

In comparison, Protestant Evangelical churches, in general, emphasise working within the structure provided by the government. Their teachings are more inwardly focused on their personal experience and engaging society by taking up a few personal or moral issues and generally avoiding societal structural issues.²³ The laity rarely expects ethical and social guidance on public and contemporary issues from the church leadership of Evangelical churches and, at times, resent such teachings should they arise.²⁴ Unlike the Catholic Church, Evangelical churches attempt to foster a strong relationship with the government without carrying the baggage of China-Vatican relations, allowing them to continue their evangelical work not only in Hong Kong, but also in China.²⁵ In either case, many churches in Hong Kong have become an interest group due to their tremendous power and privileges, as opposed to many churches in other regions. This could be because some Hong Kong churches exist to fight for their own privileges and not the rights of the masses, which could be one of the reasons that has resulted in them losing their distinct identity and prophetic voice.²⁶

Decolonisation is a time where a nation struggles to find identity in new circumstances. With the sovereignty of China, any actions, or lack thereof, express a political stance of Hong Kong churches.²⁷ As there is no way for the Church to avoid politics, how can Hong Kong churches

²⁰ Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, “社會訓導文獻 [Social Directives Doctrine],” *Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong*, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://catholic.org.hk/%E7%A4%BE%E6%9C%83%E8%A8%93%E5%B0%8E%E6%96%87%E7%8D%BB-2/>.

²¹ Chan, “Christian Social Discourse,” 447-66.

²² Beatrice Leung, “Church-State Relations in the Decolonisation Period: Hong Kong and Macau,” *Religion, State & Society* 26, no. 1 (1998): 17-30.

²³ Chan, “Christian Social Discourse,” 447-66.

²⁴ Raymond Fung and Keith Tennis, “The Struggle to Speak: The Christian Church in a Time of Historic Change in Hong Kong,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 15 (1996): 120-34.

²⁵ Chan, “Christian Social Discourse,” 447-66.

²⁶ Kwok, *Hong Kong After 1997*, 142-64.

²⁷ Fung and Tennis, “The Struggle to Speak,” 120-34.

thoughtfully critique the socio-political situation while being in dialogue with authorities? Although most Hong Kong churches do not enjoy the privilege they had with the colonial government after the handover, this may be a blessing in disguise, as the generally conservative and inward-looking church must re-examine its own identity and reposition itself as Jesus would with the oppressed. The Church must try to reinterpret its faith in God, from which derives real-life implications.²⁸ I would argue that, following Jesus' example, Christians are to care for the poor. To adequately care for the poor, Christians need to consider social justice. Without doing so, Christians cannot fulfil an essential aspect of Jesus' teaching. This is a weak point of Hong Kong Christian churches because of the long history of pragmatism and capitalism in Hong Kong – a history that seems to promote superficiality and vanity. When faced with an undemocratic and, at times, authoritarian regime, Christian churches need to choose: do they play the role of 'prophet' in accordance with their religious principles or keep silent to preserve their organisational interests?²⁹ This is not to say the two are necessarily mutually exclusive since church and culture interact in complex ways. H. Richard Niebuhr, in his work *Christ and Culture*, suggests that there are five possible models of how Christians might engage in culture, that is: 1. Christ against culture; 2. Christ of culture; 3. Christ above culture; 4. Christ and culture in paradox and; 5. Christ the transformer of culture.³⁰ I would refrain from suggesting that either way is a correct way, but rather, that how Christ can be seen engaging with culture is necessarily complex. Moreover,

Not only does God in Christ take people as they are: He takes them in order to transform them into what He wants them to be. Along with the indigenising principle which makes his faith a place to feel at home, the Christian inherits the pilgrim principle, which whispers to him that he has no abiding city and warns him that to be faithful to Christ will put him out of step with his society; for that society never existed, in East or West, ancient time or modern, which could absorb the word of Christ painlessly into the system.³¹

As Andrew Walls suggests, standing outside a culture prophetically and standing inside it redemptively requires a complex and delicate balance for Christians and Christian communities. It is my suggestion that the Protestant Christian approach in Hong Kong is unbalanced in that it needs, at this time in history, to be standing more outside of the culture in order to address it prophetically.

Although Christian churches may be keeping silent because they want to preserve their organisational interests, they may also believe this is an effective way to spread the gospel indigenously in their culture, since co-operating with the government can lead to a trusting

²⁸ Kwok, *Hong Kong After 1997*, 142-64.

²⁹ Chan, "Christian Social Discourse," 447-66.

³⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1975).

³¹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: T & T Clark, 1996), 18-20.

relationship, which in turn creates more room for further evangelical and almsgiving work. This hope for expansion compels Hong Kong churches to cooperate with the government to gain access to China. Another reason could be due to the situation they faced with the impending handover determined in 1984, combined with witnessing the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989. Hong Kong churches had to adapt to their unsettling wariness and uncertainty of the upcoming political situation in Hong Kong. They did this by seeing China as a mission field. They attempted to spread the Gospel in China with the hope that the power of the Gospel would be able to work within the country and influence the Chinese government so that when the handover proceeded, Hong Kong would be reunifying with a somewhat Christianised country.³²

However, while this approach has its merits, it does not sufficiently address the current political context facing Christians in Hong Kong. After the handover, Hong Kong is still under the rule of a communist-socialist country, and thus, the highly pressurised way of ruling differs greatly from the British *laissez-faire* style. This causes Hong Kong people to be highly suspicious of the Chinese government-appointed Hong Kong government. The attempt to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law, which affects freedom of speech and freedom of association and assembly, led to several approaches from the Church in their relationship with the government.³³ Under these circumstances, working within the system can be less effective than standing outside of it, since by standing outside of the system Christians can take on the role of watchdogs and pressure groups rather than legislators and government officials. Catholics in Hong Kong have taken this more prophetic approach of 'passive compliance.' They tolerate individual Catholics participating in the regime in a personal capacity, yet the Catholic Church does not participate in the political regime but instead continues to object to the government and does not endorse the decisions of individual Catholics who wish to participate in the system. Most Protestants, on the other hand, would participate in the existing Chief Executive election system by representing the religious sector, however unrepresentative of the Hong Kong people for whom the system is set up.³⁴ Although there are ambiguous and overlapping approaches to socio-political issues, these are views held by individual Christian Church leaders and academic theologians rather than a denomination directive or instruction. Moreover, these views are rarely taught or directed towards the congregants, resulting in confusion about how to thoughtfully approach socio-political debates and arguments

³² Ka-lun Leung and Fuk-tsang Ying, *Weary Yet Passionate: Discussions of Hong Kong and Chinese Churches 1* (Hong Kong, SAR: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1997), 101-11.

³³ Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, "The Basic Law," *The Basic Law*, last modified July 17, 2020, accessed February 26, 2017. <http://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/basiclawtext/index.html>.

³⁴ Justin Kin-hung Tse, "Religious Politics in Pacific Space: Grounding Cantonese Protestant Theologies in Secular Civil Societies," *Circle UBC*, accessed March 2, 2017 (dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2013), 488-519.

on a personal and a church-wide level. In a sermon on 6th July 2014, Archbishop Emeritus Paul Kwong ‘poked fun at young protesters arrested after a Chater Road sit-in on 2 July 2014, who complained that they could not eat or use the toilet while in detention. He mocked them by asking why they did not “bring along their Filipino maids.”’³⁵ The church leaders tend to react to social issues without guiding their congregants in the thought process, and as a result, their actions reflect a scattered array of responses rather than a thoughtful, collective process of theological reflection, making it difficult for the congregants to learn how to think through socio-political issues systematically with a Christian lens.

The laypersons are informed only by snippets of personal stances projected by the church leaders in specific situations, and as such, it is difficult for them to formulate a holistic Christian view towards socio-political issues. The reason for the Church’s lack of direction for laypersons and lack of depth in reflections in theology and politics in Hong Kong—reflections that would lead to an indigenous Christianity suitable for post-colonial Hong Kong—is partly due to the emigration of many church leaders and Christian elites right after the announcement of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.³⁶ The mass emigration was triggered by the fear of the unknown: they did not know how China would exercise their sovereignty in Hong Kong, and thus many assumed the worst and fled from their homeland. In their absence, the new leaders who were forced to step up were relatively inexperienced. Due to this inexperience, plus the additional work due to the absence of experienced pastors, Church leaders—clergy and lay alike—had less time to reflect theologically or map out directions and priorities of action for the whole church.³⁷

I would argue that the Church must demonstrate its concerns for society in its prophetic role, yet currently, the Church takes a problem-oriented rather than a vision-oriented approach in expressing its concerns for socio-political issues. This approach is not helpful for the Church to grow in maturity in its faith. Given the unjust and demoralising forces in the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres, as well as the oppressive, enslaving, and damaging institutions, the Church, previously focused on preaching a Christian faith that is only personal and ahistoric, needs to spiritually maintain its discerning and analytical powers.³⁸ At this juncture, Hong Kong churches must be involved in the building up of civic society through demonstrating appropriate and specific

³⁵ Lap-yan Kung, ‘The Umbrella Movement and *Kairos*: The Church’s Theological Encounter with a Political Movement,’ in Tse, Justin K. H., and Jonathan Y. Tan, eds. *Theological Reflections on the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 107-130.

³⁶ Leung and Ying, *Weary Yet Passionate*.

³⁷ Kai-chi Leung, “香港第一課 [A First Lesson on Hong Kong],” in *Voices*, vol. 13 (Taipei, TW: Spring Hill Publishing, 2020), 82-96.

³⁸ Kwok, *Self-Defense or Social Concern?*, 1-5; 107-19.

attention to communal moral issues: freedom, democracy, the development of human rights, and the rule of law.³⁹

A wave of emigrants returned to Hong Kong once they saw the tentative stability that has occurred post-handover. However, because they have the security of citizenship abroad by having migrated to a Western country and can leave Hong Kong permanently whenever they choose, they may lack the same incentive to think deeply, theologically, and politically about Hong Kong and its churches compared to lifelong Hong Kong residents. For example, a Protestant church located close to the Central Government Offices has congregants who would fall under the category of middle-class repatriates holding nationalities of Western countries and would consider themselves removed from the current political situation; they see protests and demonstrations, such as the Occupy Central Movement⁴⁰ and the Umbrella Movement,⁴¹ as an inconvenience instead of a chance for them to engage thoughtfully and theologically on whether each social action is Christian or otherwise. Many Hong Kong churches pride themselves on being mainly made up of middle-class repatriates, and it is difficult for the Church to criticise the establishment when it has so much to gain from the government and its congregants having an escape route should religious freedom in Hong Kong be suppressed.⁴²

The concept of 'Christ as Lord' informs Christians in their daily lives to care for the poor, which informs social justice, which informs political stances, which informs the Church's position towards the government. Christians have responsibilities both as citizens of a nation and as members of a church. If the government forgets its responsibility to the people, Christians as citizens have a duty to call officials to account. The dual identities of Christians as members of a church and citizens of a nation do not contradict each other, but rather the former supports the latter.⁴³ Key figures to whom the government will listen and trust are critically needed. For these reasons, Hong Kong churches need to map out their agenda for social development.

State and church separation does not mean the Church cannot think politically and socially because, by virtue of being in a society, the Church participates in both. Dialogue with anyone, given all parties have the opportunity to define terms used to enable a levelled ground for communication, is never wrong, and every small change is a step forward. It is difficult, if not impossible, to expect a governmental structure to change completely overnight. This supports the

³⁹ Chan, "Christian Social Discourse," 447-66.

⁴⁰ Occupy Central with Love and Peace Movement, 'Manifesto,' http://oclp.hk/index.php?route=occupy/book_detail&book_id=11.

⁴¹ Bureau of East Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, *Evaluating the Impact of the 'Umbrella Movement'*, 3 December 2014.

⁴² Kwok, *Hong Kong After 1997*, 142-64.

⁴³ Chan, "Christian Social Discourse," 447-66.

argument that the Church needs to think thoroughly and deeply, acting within the constraints of the current structure, to affect its influence on society. More importantly, current events highlight the Church's responsibility to educate the congregants to think maturely about how their faith interacts with society.

More than a decade after the handover, during a time when Hong Kong society is perceived to be spiralling downwards, there have been continual reflections on the city's unique socio-political situation. As a result, many younger academic theologians who are trained both locally and internationally are rising to evoke discussions of public theology and political theology in Hong Kong.⁴⁴ They contest the role of the Christian Church in relation to secular public space—a tool of the state or a voice of the people—and they attempt to develop a theological method to use the language of the Church for secular public discourse, which was previously avoided for the sake of a superficial church and state separation.⁴⁵

Some may argue that there is no indigenous Hong Kong theology because people are simply citing Karl Barth or Dietrich Bonhoeffer. There are those who criticise Hong Kong theology for being colonised by foreign theology that is abstract, remote, and makes little sense to the everyday Hong Kong people, not specifically addressing the needs of Hong Kong and making it exclusively for theologians. Some may also argue that the foreign theological stance perceives itself as teaching a universal theological position, yet the position originates from the West, and hence it is able to deal with Western contexts more capably, and less so with Hong Kong's unique context.⁴⁶ However, Christian theology is always, in a sense, culturally foreign, as the church is both always incarnated in an indigenous culture, and also always a pilgrim of this world that calls for the world to repent.⁴⁷ After all, the Bible is a translation from Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts based on stories from the Hebraic culture. How is the culture from the Bible any closer to the Chinese culture with British colonial influence in Hong Kong than it is to, say, a church in Los Angeles? It is not surprising that Chinese Christianity borrows Western Christianity to express its culture. Why would Hong Kongers take away the ladder on which they stand? The point is not to create

⁴⁴ It is possible to challenge why Hong Kong academics who have studied elsewhere are suitable voices in producing indigenous theology. However, in Hong Kong's transient context, studying abroad is rather commonplace, especially for theologians. Moreover, even those who have completed their entire education in Hong Kong would have been taught by those who studied abroad. Additionally, university as a contemporary institution is an inherently product of Western Enlightenment, so the argument that those who have studied abroad automatically disqualifies from speaking into this context would not hold. Hong Kongers are usually proud of being from a place where 'East meets West,' so rather than attempting to take out the Western influence in Hong Kong, it is all the more important to consider how Hong Kongers have made the Western influences indigenous.

⁴⁵ Tse, "Religious Politics in Pacific Space," 488-519.

⁴⁶ Pavey, "Envisioning/Embodying Christianity in Hong Kong," 127-34.

⁴⁷ Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, 18-20.

ideological purity by separating what is Western from what is Chinese, but rather, to acknowledge that different theologies and their underlying epistemologies come from certain contexts, recognising each's structural location within the disciplinary history and academic institutions.⁴⁸ It will take time and generations of indigenous Hong Kong Christians before thoughtful indigenous theological reflections manifest and, at present, it is through reflexivity and transparency on the genealogies of theories and epistemologies that we can push forward.

The purpose of developing an indigenous theology is for Hong Kong to be able to reflect and convey its inherent theological views. Meanwhile, working within the system is necessary in engaging with the public sphere because the current narrative, such as use of rights language, is shaped by Western Enlightenment, yet Hong Kong has never gone through such a process, and as such these concepts cannot fully express what is happening in Hong Kong. Those who emphasize on the development of an indigenous theology might argue that working within the institutional framework of a country is more indigenising than standing outside of the culture as a prophet. Nonetheless, by standing outside these institutions, one is still indigenising Christianity through inculturation, prophesying to a culture to which one belongs. Developing theological views is not necessarily solely reactive to current affairs. Rather, it can also be based on the conviction that the Church's role is to teach their congregants how to think about socio-political issues through the Christian lens and to form rational arguments and rationally converse with those with different socio-political stances.⁴⁹ The Church is missing opportunities to lead society to think thoughtfully and to engage in conversation as a means of social justice. To develop a thoughtful and coherent indigenous theology, the Church is slowly moving towards working closely with local theologians to engage in thoughtful reflections, grounded in biblical hermeneutics and contextualised theology, from the ground level rather than superimposing Western theologians' work alone.

During the colonial period, the Hong Kong people faced many economic hardships and social tribulations and have collectively developed an 'under the Lion's Rock' mentality, where the people are hardworking and think of themselves as riding in the same boat and together can achieve the Hong Kong version of the American dream. After the handover, the 'Hong Kong dream' has collapsed due to actual and perceived political oppression and financial monopolisation.⁵⁰ How does the Church lead its congregants and exercise its influence in an increasingly distrusting society? First, Christian churches need to further collaborate with local theologians to shape a theological view that is suitable and helpful for Hong Kong society to process socio-political matters through

⁴⁸ Malory Nye, "Decolonizing the Study of Religion," *Open Library of Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2019).

⁴⁹ Tse, "Religious Politics in Pacific Space," 488-519.

⁵⁰ 'Spirit of Lion Rock,' *Radio Television Hong Kong*, 24 Oct. 2014, http://www.liberalstudies.hk/daily_concepts/?word=903. Accessed 9 March 2017.

the Christian lens, establishing a thought system that clarifies long-term issues.⁵¹ Second, Christian churches need to attempt to maintain a dialogue with the government for it to perform its prophetic role in society in a manner that will be heard by intended recipients, the Christian community. Hong Kong may have a minuscule church population, but its undeniable influence on its society may be a paradigmatic presence to the rest of the world at this particular juncture.

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⁵¹ Kwok, *Self-Defense or Social Concern?*, 107-19.

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Spiritual Competence and Western European Social Work

Offering Ritual Relief to Nigerian Survivors of Sex Trafficking through Psalm 82

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Abstract

Spiritual competence in western European social work has been singled out as both necessary and uniquely challenging due to the secular hegemony surrounding professional social services, even those provided by faith-based institutions. The abuse of African spirituality in the sex trafficking of Nigerian women into Europe poignantly exposes the adverse effect the spiritual competence gap can have on victim services and the criminal prosecution of traffickers. As a theologically based intervention, the following article argues that Psalm 82 can offer faith-based social workers a unique approach to address the needs of Nigerian survivors of sex trafficking. A narrative-based, ritual-judicial therapy is presented as an intervention for survivors of trafficking based on Psalm 82.

Despite secularization theories and their prognostications regarding the departure of religion from the western European public square, religious-based institutions have by no means disappeared. Among other areas, religion remains essential to western European public life through faith-based civic engagement in welfare service delivery.¹ As an important observation for public theology, researchers have identified a 'strategic silence' in how western European religious institutions retain a strong vocalization through civic action while letting go of other more contentious societal

¹ Justin Beaumont and Paul J. Cloke, *Faith-Based Organisations and Exclusion in European Cities* (Bristol: Policy, 2012).



discourses.² The voice of civic engagement is dependent on an altruistic pragmatism typical of civil society participation in Europe's welfare mixes.

There has been an increasing internationalization of those reliant upon social welfare within Europe over the past years. It has been widely noted that displaced persons entering Europe give greater significance to religion and spirituality than the majority population.³ This observation has led to social advocacy for the religious rights of minority communities and invited in-depth examination of competencies needed for a more inclusive social work praxis in welfare delivery. As a method for inclusion, David Hodge promotes 'spiritual competence' as a concept analogous to intercultural competence, which relies on a social worker's capacity to critically reflect on her own worldview and empathetically engage with another's.⁴ Furthermore, Hodge notably states that spiritual competence should include the 'ability to design and implement interventions that resonate with the client's spiritual worldview.'⁵ Despite a diverse social work landscape across western Europe, a secular rule is commonly observed in all professionally shaped social services and such a secular expectation poses unique challenges to Hodge's pragmatic, collaborative aim, exposing a spiritual competence gap. Cases of Nigerian sex trafficking into Europe highlight how this competence gap fails to meet the spiritual needs of survivors, and in turn, invite anti-trafficking organizations to consider a theologically shaped intervention.

Nigerian Sex Trafficking into Europe

Debt-bondage and sexual exploitation is the most common method used in the trafficking of Nigerian women into the European Union.⁶ In the vast number of reported cases, Nigerian women are promised post-migration employment in Europe and offered a financial sponsorship to travel within irregular migration channels. The treacherous road of irregular migration typically includes

² Paul Manuel and Miguel Glatzer, "'Use Words If Necessary': The Strategic Silence of Organized Religion in Contemporary Europe," in *Faith-Based Organizations and Social Welfare: Associational Life and Religion in Contemporary Western Europe*, ed. Paul C. Manuel and Miguel Glatzer, Palgrave studies in religion, politics, and policy (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

³ Beth R. Crisp, "Developing the Agenda for Religion and Spirituality in Social Work," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Spirituality and Social Work*, ed. Beth Crisp (London: Routledge, 2017), 371-372.

⁴ David R. Hodge, "Spiritual Competence: The Key to Effective Practice with People from Diverse Religious Backgrounds," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Spirituality and Social Work*, ed. Beth Crisp (London: Routledge, 2017), 283.

⁵ Hodge, "Spiritual competence," 283.

⁶ Stephanie Hepburn and Rita J. Simon, *Human Trafficking Around the World: Hidden in Plain Sight* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 177.

the risk of starvation and drowning, imprisonment and rape.⁷ Upon arrival, the start of repayment is expected with inflated debts reaching 40,000 Euros.⁸

A central element to the Nigerian system of debt-bondage trafficking is the utilization of the threat of spiritual violence in the form of a curse from an unseen power. This power often referred to as *juju*, is initiated by the victim's ritual oath upon entering the sponsoring relationship.⁹ The oath is performed in an atmosphere of dread before an African traditional deity, and a promise is made to repay the debt and keep silent regarding the sponsoring relationship.¹⁰ The fear-inducing ritual ensures compliance despite physical separation. The unseen and transnational nature of this system of exploitation has made criminal justice efforts especially difficult. Even if a woman escapes her situation of forced prostitution, she often remains psychologically bound by fear of her oath's repercussions, and she does not seek to prosecute her trafficker. Furthermore, government authorities and civic actors in western Europe often misunderstand the Nigerian culture's religious sensibilities and the significant role this plays in their trafficking experience. Regularly, the women's experientially based fears are disregarded by authorities as fantasies or, even worse, as lies to attain asylum status.¹¹

Nigerian based social scientific research has shed light on the framework and phenomenology of oath-taking rituals used in Nigerian sex trafficking.¹² Despite its abuse by traffickers, the practice of ritual oath-taking belongs to a positive conceptualization of justice in traditional Nigerian society, wherein the unseen world is explicitly invited to play a formative role. Researchers have referred to this as a 'traditional justice' system since it is built on a shared African traditional cosmology and worldview. The traditional system is also distinguished from a parallel operating 'official' system often viewed as corrupt and the byproduct of colonial rule.¹³

In nearly all traditional African cosmologies, the unseen world is related to a hierarchical structure where God is at the top and is responsible for forming and maintaining society's moral order. The

⁷ Duncan Breen, "'On this journey, no one cares if you live or die': Abuse, protection, and justice along routes between East and West Africa and Africa's Mediterranean coast" (UNHCR, 2020), 25, <https://www.unhcr.org/5f2129fb4>.

⁸ Hepburn and Simon, *Human trafficking around the world*, 177.

⁹ May Ikeora, *Bilateral Cooperation and Human Trafficking: Eradicating Modern Slavery Between the United Kingdom and Nigeria*, Global ethics series (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 117.

¹⁰ Precious Diagboya, "Oath Taking in Edo: Usages and misappropriations of the native justice system," IFRA-Nigeria Working Papers Series 55 (IFRA Nigeria, 2019), 15, <https://www.ifra-nigeria.org/publications/e-papers>.

¹¹ May Ikeora, "The Role of African Traditional Religion and 'Juju' in Human Trafficking: Implications for Anti-Trafficking," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 17, no. 1 (2016), 12-13.

¹² Itohan M. Idumwonyi and Solomon I. Ikhidero, "Resurgence of the Traditional Justice System in Postcolonial Benin (Nigeria) Society," *African Journal of Legal Studies* 6, no. 1 (2013), 123-136.

¹³ Idumwonyi and Ikhidero, "Resurgence of the Traditional Justice System in Postcolonial Benin (Nigeria) Society," 123.

formation of the moral order primarily occurs through the delegation of authority to subordinate divine powers (deified ancestors, divinities) and human agents (priests, elders, rulers).¹⁴ Thus, a Nigerian traditional justice system describes a ubiquitous reliance on the unseen world as co-enforcers of civil, criminal, and contractual justice within traditional Nigerian society.

Underlying divine involvement in the system named above is a fear of the deity's punitive-judicial power. Whereas any justice system regards the legitimate use of force and its punitive function as necessary, the Nigerian traditional justice system operates from a widespread conviction that deities have authority to fulfill this duty.¹⁵ Even though most of the Nigerian population self-identify as either Christian or Muslim, both religions afford degrees of engagement with a traditional worldview and its related justice system.¹⁶ The vast majority of Nigerian sex trafficking survivors in Europe come from the Christian region of Nigeria and have participated in a ritual oath before migrating.¹⁷ As these women seek emancipation from forced prostitution and their debt bondage, they face a deep dread of breaking their oath. For this reason, survivors seek out a ritually satisfying counteractive spiritual experience, and they are eager for Christian faith-based social workers to play a role in that process.¹⁸

A Therapeutic Application of Psalm 82

A reading of Psalm 82 based on the above-described context highlights unique similarities between particular ancient Near Eastern frameworks and practices and that of a Nigerian traditional justice system.

Psalm 82 reads as follows¹⁹:

¹ God stands in the divine assembly;

¹⁴ Esther Acolatse, *Powers, Principalities, and the Spirit: Biblical Realism in Africa and the West* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 37-42.

¹⁵ Cécile Plessard and Bénédicte Lavaud-Legendre, "Religious, Social and Criminal Groups in Trafficking of Nigerian Girls and Women: The Case of Shrines, "Ladies' clubs", and "Cultist Groups"" (Publication of the PACKING Project, ECPAT France, 2019), 22, <https://ecpat-france.fr/en/french-european-publications/>

¹⁶ Francis Anekwe Oborji, "In Dialogue with African Traditional Religion," *Mission Studies* 19, no. 1 (2002), 73.

¹⁷ Ikeora, "The Role of African Traditional Religion and 'Juju' in Human Trafficking," 11.

¹⁸ Jessica Blöcher et al., "Intersectional Approach to the Process of Integration in Europe for Nigerian Survivors of Human Trafficking: Strengthening Opportunities and Overcoming Hindrances" (Publication of the AMIF-funded INTAP project, 2020), 50, https://intap-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/ResearchReport_Nigerian_SoT.pdf; See also Cynthia Olufade, "Sustenance of Sex Trafficking in Edo State: The Combined Effect of Oath Taking, Transnational Silence and Migration Imaginaries on Trafficked Women in Edo State," IFRA-Nigeria Working Papers Series 55 (IFRA Nigeria, 2019), 15, <https://www.ifra-nigeria.org/publications/e-papers>.

¹⁹ Psalm 82.1-8 (The Lexham English Bible).

he administers judgment in the midst of the gods.

² “How long will you judge unjustly
and show favoritism to the wicked? *Selah*

³ Judge on behalf of the helpless and the orphan;
provide justice to the afflicted and the poor.

⁴ Rescue the helpless and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

⁵ They do not know or consider.
They go about in the darkness,
so that all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

⁶ I have said, “You are gods,
and sons of the Most High, all of you.

⁷ However, you will die like men,
and you will fall like one of the princes.”

⁸ Rise up, O God, judge the earth,
because you shall inherit all the nations.

Psalm 82 has been described as ‘poetry with narrative context’ and ‘prophetic’ due to its visionary nature and admonition to power.²⁰ It has inspired voluminous commentary, spanning from second Temple Rabbinic and Patristic writings to recent scholarly monographs.²¹ Evident in all the secondary literature is the interpretive challenge related to the literary-symbolic intersection of two unique domains; a social-judicial domain, found in verses 2-4, and a domain of divine authority, found in verses 1 and 6-7. Whereas the role of human actors is often assumed within the social-judicial domain and not divine actors, the opposite is true of the verses related to divine authority. Yet, the text merges them within a singular visionary scene. The interpenetration of the two domains has resisted an indisputability around whether the plural use of *elohim* in Psalm 82 has a human or divine referent.

²⁰ Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary 20 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 332.

²¹ Exemplified in: R. B. Salters, “Psalm 82,1 and the Septuagint,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 103, no. 2 (1991), 225-239; Lowell K. Handy, “Sounds, Words and Meanings in Psalm 82,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 15, no. 47 (1990), 51-66; Daniel McClellan, “The Gods-Complaint: Psalm 82 as a Psalm of Complaint,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137, no. 4 (2018), 833–851.

Despite the enduring interpretive challenges, ancient Near Eastern comparative studies have highlighted the psalm's mythopoeic form and its arguable reliance on a shared ancient cognitive and linguistic framework.²² Although ancient Near Eastern cosmologies can vary greatly and cannot be considered static by any means, some relevant similarities are recognizable, especially between specific Mesopotamian and Ugaritic texts and the type-scene found in Psalm 82.²³ Comparative studies literature has noted a common motif referred to as the Divine Council, where the governance of the cosmos is depicted in terms of a political system overseen by a presiding deity.²⁴ Especially noteworthy has been a growing scholarly voice pointing to the linguistic and conceptual relationship Psalm 82 has to Deuteronomy 32:8-9.²⁵ This passage points to the representation of Israel's God as the divine suzerain of the cosmos, overseeing vassal deities appointed as tutelary powers over Gentile nations.²⁶ Based on a shared linguistic framework and narrative logic, Psalm 82 operates as a prophetic corrective to a heretofore cosmic *status quo*. God, who assigned authority to these spiritual powers, now intervenes against them on behalf of oppressed peoples.

Furthermore, ancient anthropological studies offer data points relevant to our contextual reading of Psalm 82. While James Trotter has questioned how the *elohim* as divine beings could be considered involved in 'everyday human affairs,' Walter Moberly finds it likely that the psalmist operates from a 'phenomenological and pragmatic' experience of ancient society.²⁷ Adding to Moberly's assumption, ancient anthropological studies have presented evidence showing that specific deities were regarded as ritually accessible judicial powers.²⁸ A phenomenological reading

²² Patrick D. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament the Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 9, no. 2 (1987), 53-78.

²³ Min S. Kee, "The Heavenly Council and Its Type-Scene," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31, no. 3 (2007), 259-273; Matitahu Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly: An Interpretation of Psalm 82," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 40 (1969), 123-137.

²⁴ Job Jindo, "The Divine Courtroom Motif in the Hebrew Bible: A Holistic Approach," in *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Ari Mermelstein and Shalom Holtz (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 76-93; E. Theodore Mullen, *Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

²⁵ Based on 4QD and LXX manuscripts in comp. with *Jub.* 15:31-32, 1 *Enoch* 89:59; 90:22, 25 and Dan 10:20-21; 12:1.

²⁶ Michael Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158, no. 629 (2001), 52-74; S. B. Parker, "'Sons of (The) God(S),' in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst, 2nd extensively rev. ed. (Leiden, Boston: BRILL; Grand Rapids, 1999), 796-797.

²⁷ James Trotter, "Death of the אלהים in Psalm 82," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 2 (2012), 235-236; Walter Moberly, "Justice and the Recognition of the True God: A Reading of Psalm 82," *Revue Biblique* 127, no. 2 (2020), 236.

²⁸ Tsvi Abusch, "Divine Judges on Earth and in Heaven," in *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Ari Mermelstein and Shalom Holtz (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 6-24; Anne Marie Kitz, *Cursed Are You! The Phenomenology of Cursing in Cuneiform and Hebrew Texts* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2014).

of Psalm 82 thus gives room for a context where diverse societies expect supernatural involvement in the administration of justice.

This cursory look at Psalm 82 seeks to offer academic support to a contextualized reading of the psalm. Such a reading presents a vision of God as the highest royal judge over all cosmic powers, who stands ready to intervene for the oppressed. Read from within a socially constructed context where spiritual powers are invoked as incorruptible enforcers of justice, the visionary scene presents an indictment given by God, exposing the corruption of numinous judicial power due to its support of wicked and oppressive systems. God judges the corruption of these deities, and a final terminus is given to their authority in the form of a divine imprecation ('...you shall die...you shall fall'). Apart from other potential narrative-theological outcomes from this contextual reading, the judicial curse spoken within God's highest court acts as a neutralizing force, offering freedom to those being harassed.

Offering a Narrative Therapy Based on Psalm 82

Nigerian survivors often desire to receive spiritually-based intervention to find healing and, more acutely, to get relief from the curse of their unjustly enforced oath. The contextualized reading of Psalm 82 outlined above can be therapeutically offered to survivors by faith-based social workers in the form of narrative therapy.

In some versions of narrative therapy, the social worker is merely providing narrative-based tools to allow for the elements of story to guide the therapeutic process. Yet narrative therapy can also include the provision and even promotion of counter-narratives, a form of reconstruction. Wai-Luen Kwok points out that postmodern counter-narratives of freedom usually operate from a hyper-individualized view of self, an approach often foreign to those outside of the western cultural tradition.²⁹ As an alternative to a postmodern approach, he offers a theological use of narrative therapy where clients can experience interventions that strengthen both their relationality and freedom.³⁰ Along with this, research on the use of spirituality in trauma therapy recommends creating space for a 'spiritual expression of traumatic grief,' where story, dialogue and creative expression are given a place.³¹

²⁹ Wai-Luen Kwok, "Narrative Therapy, Theology, and Relational Openness: Reconstructing the Connection Between Postmodern Therapy and Traditional Theology," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 44, no. 3 (2016), 206-207.

³⁰ Kwok, "Narrative Therapy, Theology, and Relational Openness: Reconstructing the Connection between Postmodern Therapy and Traditional Theology," 208.

³¹ Jo-Ann Vis and Heather Marie Boynton, "Spirituality and Transcendent Meaning Making: Possibilities for Enhancing Posttraumatic Growth," *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 27, 1-2 (2008), 139.

Since Nigerian survivors have experienced a spiritually shaped form of trauma, the therapeutic intervention should address the acute fears related to the oath and help reconstruct a counter-narrative built on God's intervention, granting them new meaning to their experience and offering a dignified sense of belonging. Furthermore, a narrative therapy offered to Nigerian survivors recognizes African cultural access to the conception of relational authority, where the intervention of a higher power can strengthen one's sense of collective belonging and offers an empowering identity.³² Since the therapy operates entirely within a narrative realism shaped by a contextual reading of Psalm 82, it allows social workers to creatively build interventions accessible to an African-contextual biblical realism without falling prey to attempts at theological assimilation to the western tradition.

The therapy design offered to survivors occurs as a spiritual-therapeutic engagement with Psalm 82 and begins by introducing the survivor to the visionary scene. The divine council scene recognizes God as Most High and acknowledges his royal-judicial authority to intervene. Based on the judicial complaint genre evident in verses 2-4 in the narrative space ('how long'), the survivor shares her story before God's judicial power and expresses explicit grievances. The genre of complaint guides the survivor to give a solemn description of her abuse to God as one who is positioned to intervene. This action should be seen as an opportunity for a creative, spiritual expression of grief. The social worker affirms the complaint in an advocacy way before God, acknowledging the injustices done by human and divine actors. After repeating the formal complaint against those who acted corruptly, a solemn declaration of God's judicial curse (v.7) is spoken by the social worker against corrupt powers. The social worker then affirms the survivor's identity as a dignified member of God's household. The client is invited to vocalize their reception of God's intervention. Finally, based on verse 8, both the client and social worker express a confident hope in God's ultimate intervention when all corrupt powers will be deposed.

The above narrative-therapeutic intervention based on Psalm 82 can be offered to Nigerian survivors while they are receiving psychosocial support from faith-based organizations. Such a therapeutic intervention presents a possibility for spiritual competence in handling cases of Nigerian sex trafficking in Europe.

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Orienting Sphere Sovereignty

The Synthesis of Kuyperian and Augustinian Theories as a Solvent for Modern Social Tensions

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Abstract

Building on Kuyperian theology and Dooyeweerdian philosophy, this paper advances the practical, yet still underdeveloped theory of Sphere Sovereignty as a helpful framework for resolving the tension between modernistic and the postmodern conceptions of socio-political reality and theories of power. By arguing that each human institution is sovereign only within its sphere of competence, while God remains sovereign head over all, the Kuyperian view is uniquely qualified to overcome the latent reductionisms inherent in modern and postmodern theories of state absolutism or social chaos. It provides a normative, creational basis for the unique existence of every sphere, while the state is tasked with the use of force to protect the sanctity of the spheres from sin's degradations. Additionally, by combining this with an Augustinian approach to rightly ordered affections, I argue that each sphere, like each person, is properly or improperly oriented based on its supreme love. An institution's orientation necessarily acts to calibrate the desires of those who participate in its structures. Essentially, when each sphere is sovereign, the diversity of humanity is revealed; when each sphere is rightly oriented, the unity of humanity is revealed. Together, organic coherence and human variety are both ontologically maintained without reduction or loss.



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JOGTS 2.2 (2021), pp. 113-121

Introduction

From lockdowns to riots, the world is struggling to find a balanced view of law and its place in human society. Incited respectively by a global pandemic and the revelation of startling abuse within police forces—two situations which caught many by surprise—the prolonged and disordered response from both state and non-state actors has nonetheless begun to hint at an emerging deficiency in both the modernistic and the postmodern conceptions of socio-political reality and theories of power.

Interestingly, it is difficult to isolate the source of these tensions to one political platform or another. With only a few notable exceptions, the Republican and Democratic governors in the U.S. have displayed a largely indistinguishable willingness to implement strict and indefinite lockdown procedures. Similarly, the use of riots and violent intimidation as a means to advance political goals has emerged with vigour and energy on the fringes of both sides. Whatever the legitimate differences may be between the dominant wings of American politics, the procedures and reactions common to both in the face of mounting pressures demonstrate at least that neither side has succeeded in establishing for itself a complete political theory sufficient to escape the dueling gravities of state absolutism and social chaos. This further suggests that the opposing ‘sides’ may in fact be working from a single mind when it comes to the nature and use of political power and points ultimately to a similar conception of human nature. That both major parties are historically and philosophically rooted in modernity (with its feet in the Enlightenment, and its penchant for state power) and are both now wrestling within their own camps over the extent to which postmodernity (with its authentic-relativistic tastes and emphasis on popular power) may be embraced, perhaps reveals why they have developed along these parallel tracks. Yet if this is true, what does it say about the ultimate sufficiency of either to furnish a fully formed and practically sufficient structural-procedural theory of public life in the realities of a fallen world?

While the immediate causes of these situations may be novel, the questions that they raise and the tensions that they discover are not. Pressure does not produce, but reveals the weak points of any structure, both physical *and* intellectual. Given recent events, it is growing harder to evade the difficult conclusion that the modernistic world-system, as well as the postmodern expression of it, are ultimately insufficient to meet these pressures, and that the struggle between them has exacerbated a world in turmoil, madly fluctuating between the excessive use of law and the excessive use of lawlessness to achieve social and political ends.

Abraham Kuyper and the Problem of Reduction

Especially in light of the more progressive, even utopian expectations which have historically surrounded modern political appearances, from classical liberalism to post-industrial Marxism, it

becomes worth asking why every arrangement thus far seems largely unable to avoid running itself into the serious inner tensions of social disorder, state absolutism, or both. While there are many possible explanations to explore, the prolific contributions of two Christian theologians—Dr. Abraham Kuyper and Saint Augustine—provide a valuable insight.

This insight, however, requires a precise definition of terms. While ‘modernism’ as a social and historical phenomenon is an admittedly expansive movement, which has given rise to numerous intellectual paradigms and diverse political arrangements since its early days in the European Enlightenment, for Kuyper it is still possible to identify an underlying current which unites ‘modernity’ into a single, all-encompassing world system, even despite its many, often-competing, manifestations. For Kuyper, this commonality is the fact that modernism, across all of its diverse expressions, remains committed to an immanent cosmology; one which seeks the source and norms for human life within the natural order itself, emancipated from any reference to transcendent moral conditions supplied by divine ordinance. ‘Modernism,’ explains Kuyper in his famous 1898 Stone Lectures, ‘is bound to build a world of its own from the data of the natural man, and to construct man himself from the data of nature.’¹ This controlling characteristic—the collapse of society’s view of reality from the transcendent to the immanent—makes it possible to speak of modernity as a distinct and unified expression of the Western mind; a ‘world-and-life view’ all its own, which stands in evident contradistinction to the Christian view and the larger pre-modern world in general.

Now, according to Kuyper, the central deficiency which lay at the heart of this modernity and represented its fundamental point of disconnection from the Christian faith, was the fact that it was essentially and inescapably reductionist.² This, to Kuyper, was not a deviation or an excess of modernism, but was its natural and necessary character whenever its true principle was allowed to manifest itself. A reductionism, in this sense, entails a narrowed or collapsed view of reality and of human life in particular, and fails to recognise or allow for the fullness and complexity of its many expressions. Instead, it isolates one aspect of reality, one trait or relationship, and identifies it as the most basic unit of its life-system.³ For instance, reality might be reduced to either its material or its spiritual constituencies. Similarly, man himself might be reduced to his reason, his emotions, his sexuality, his race, or his economic activity. Society, likewise, might be reduced to the individual, the church, the state, the market, the academy, or the social spheres. As all the diverse aspects of reality are ultimately seen as reducible down to this one absolutised base-expression, whatever it may be, all others are effectively denied the independent existence of their own

¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1931), 11.

² Mark Rathbone, *Sphere Sovereignty and Irreducibility* (Bulletin for Christian Scholarship, 2015), 1-8.

³ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Paideia Press, 2012), 42.

meaning-structures in society, and are instead comprehended exclusively in relation to the new absolute, which to Kuyper, has become an idol taking the place of God.⁴

Yet, as Herman Dooyeweerd reminds us, while man may narrow his vision of the universe through different reductionisms, the universe itself is not thereby narrowed, but stubbornly maintains its complexity. ‘Created reality,’ writes Dooyeweerd, ‘displays a great variety of aspects or modes of being in the temporal order... Those who absolutise one aspect of created reality cannot comprehend this or any aspect on the basis of [its] own inner character. They have a false, an untrue view of reality.’⁵

Of course, because each aspect of existence represents a facet of truth, it is still possible for those who have embraced a reductionistic view to experience ‘moments’ of reality even within the confines of their absolutised category.⁶ This is a point on which Kuyper, armed with his doctrine of common grace, is particularly insistent.⁷ The Freudian, for instance, who seeks to understand all things on the basis of the sexual-psychical connection may, in the pursuit of his discipline, obtain genuine insights into human life and patterns of behavior. This is due to the fact that the object of his investigation represents a true and genuinely significant aspect of human experience which cannot be eliminated or reduced away. Nonetheless, this view may still run itself into frustration and exhaust its resources trying to comprehend those meaning-sides of reality which pass *outside* the experience of the sexual, such as the structures of logic, reason, religious reverence, economic activity, etc. The sexual-psychical impulse, then, is both real and necessary, yet insufficient on its own to account for the entire spectrum of meaning in the universe, much of which operates beyond the experience of sex. The same may be said for the chemical, the biological, the racial, the intellectual, the emotional, the historical, the economical, or the spiritual—they must be acknowledged, but they must not be absolutised, or the result is always reduction and loss.

St. Augustine and the Order of Affections

Kuyper opposed these reductionisms on the basis of his Christianity. Yet fascinatingly, the most methodologically sound critiques have actually tended to arise from within modernism’s own intellectual camp. Continuing with the example of Freud, some of the most devastating refutations of his theories came from his own protégé, Carl Jung, and from the sociologist, Karl Popper, whose methodological critique held that they may in fact be *correct*, but cannot be called *scientific*, because they are non-falsifiable.⁸ Similarly, Marx was criticised by the classical liberals, Darwin was

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, 41.

⁶ Ibid, 42.

⁷ Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁸ Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 201-223.

condemned by Nietzsche,⁹ and the Enlightenment rationalists currently stand under the harsh censure of the postmoderns, all for being—in one sense or another—too narrow. In almost every corner, as modernists have attacked other modernists with whom they disagree, a picture seems to emerge in the aggregate of their critiques that absolutistic theories of any stripe are ultimately lacking in comprehensive explanatory power.

The fact that the modern world is increasingly aware that its successive and often competing reductionisms are too narrow, and yet has still failed to produce any genuinely anti-reductionistic theories of its own suggests that its entire world-system may have failed to grasp a fundamental reality about human nature—one that finds powerful expression in the thought of Saint Augustine.

According to Augustine, the human condition is branded in all its features by a relentless, internal search for coherence.¹⁰ The heart, says Augustine, perceives its own multiformity, as well as that of creation outside itself, and yearns for some way to unite all the diverse meaning-sides of temporal reality into one higher unity; to resolve all the distinct threads of life into one unified and purposive statement of existence. This statement must pass through his reason, but ultimately is lodged in his affection—he seeks something that he may *love* with the completeness of his being, in and through every facet of life.¹¹ To Augustine, the human person remains functionally dis-integrated, dis-associated, and fragmented until he discovers some universal principle on the basis of which to comprehend the totality of life's expressions as one glorious whole. He is impelled by his nature as a rational and affective creature to bring continuity to his multiform environment. In his *Confessions*, the church father chronicles his own personal search for this integrative continuity, as he explores many of the ancient theories, and ultimately finds each one wanting.¹²

The difficulty is how to bring all aspects of life together under one canopy of coherence, yet without collapsing them together in such a way that they lose their distinct essence and avenues of meaning-disclosure; in other words, how to bring unity out of diversity, while still maintaining diversity within that unity. This is certainly a question which contains tremendous political as well as theological consequences. To Augustine and to Kuyper, it is impossible to locate this higher meaning-coherence in any aspect of creation. To resolve the diversity of the universe into only one of its components is not a broadening of it; not a 'life to the full', but a monotonising of it. It is to collapse and not to expand, to search beneath the level of complexity in the universe for comprehension of that universe, to subtract meaning rather than add: it is, in essence, to commit reductionism.

⁹ Charles Pence, "Nietzsche's Aesthetic Critique of Darwin," *Hist. Phil. Life Sci.* 33 (2011): 165-190.

¹⁰ Augustine, *Confessions* (Wawa, PA: Franklin Mint Corporation, 1976), 3.

¹¹ James Smith, *You Are What You Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), 3.

¹² Augustine, *Confessions*.

All hearts seek coherence, and coherence depends on reference, which cannot derive from within itself (in this case, the universe), but must locate and orient itself in relation to something beyond itself. Thus, to Augustine and Kuyper, the only way to resolve this cosmic iteration of the problem of the many and the one is to seek a coherence of the parts not in the parts themselves, but in Him Who created each part for its own purpose. God alone is greater than the combined meaning and power of all creation. As Creator who encompasses and exceeds His creation, He alone may provide a sufficient base on which to comprehend reality and build society in a way that is neither disintegrative nor reductionistic. 'Thou madest us for Thyself,' writes Augustine in perhaps his most famous verse, '*and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.*'¹³

Augustine realised that, due to man's restless quest for coherence, all theories which purport to explain reality must absolutise something, must stake their point of reference somewhere, and must ultimately love something supremely, or else fall into fragmentation.¹⁴ If this supreme love which brings continuity to all of life is not God—Who stands above creation and gives each part its place—it must then be something which stands immanently *within* creation, something less than the sum it claims to explain.¹⁵ As modernity has moved away from accepting God as the central premise of existence, it has constructed a world of warring reductionisms, each seeking coherence in a collapsed vision of reality unable to provide unity without a loss of distinctiveness, and thus, continually veering into state absolutism and social chaos.

Sphere Sovereignty and Irreducibility

Because Christianity refuses to seek this coherence in any aspect of creation, but instead takes its point of departure only in the supra-temporal reality of God Himself, it remains ideally situated to produce a theory of public life which is uniquely anti-reductionistic. Here, Kuyper's astute reflection that the ontological root of all temporal existence cannot be found in random chance, social custom, or myths of inevitable progress, but only in the creative ordinances of God places a new foundation beneath the whole edifice of human society.

When God creates, explains Dooyeweerd, He 'encloses' meaning into His creation.¹⁶ And while all creational meaning ultimately finds coherence in its reflection of God's character, that reflection is not monotonous, but richly variegated and diverse in expression. This creational meaning arises in forms as simple as numerical value and spatial presence, to the more sophisticated functions of biological life and sensory perception. In human beings, this meaning refracts further into the

¹³ Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.

¹⁴ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 7-10.

¹⁵ Herbert Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 1-11.

¹⁶ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 30.

categories of reason, emotion, sexuality, race, aesthetics, and religious reverence or faith. In a whole society of human beings, that meaning again breaks up into the additional categories of social interaction, symbolic signification, economics, law, and historical development.¹⁷

Divine meaning, therefore, enfolds every facet of temporal existence, and each different 'side' or 'aspect' of that meaning is given its own creational structures by which it may be discovered, experienced, and 'disclosed' by man. This process of 'disclosing' what God has 'enclosed' in creation thus represents the central human task, as interpreted by the dominion mandate of Genesis 1.¹⁸ Yet because the modes of meaning in the universe are numerous and diverse, mankind itself must become equally multifaceted to complete its task. In order to interface with every band in the spectrum of meaning—each of which must be understood on its own terms—humanity as a whole must also come to expression not in a single monotony, but in a multiplicity of structural arrangements. These arrangements make up the various spheres of relationships and institutions that comprise human life, such as the individual, the family, the church, the state, the academy, the market, and the arts. None of these spheres, Kuyper insists, is self-existing, nor the product of social custom. Instead, each one represents a genuine and normatively distinct creation of God, Who has uniquely ordained it to experience a particular facets of created meaning, and disclose it in certain ways.

For instance, the sexual meaning is experienced by the *individual* through its biological and emotional aspects; by the *family* through its spatial, kinematic, sensual, social, and historical aspects; by the *academy* through its intellectual aspect; and by the *church* through its symbolical and spiritual aspects as a depiction of its consummation with Christ. In this way, each meaning-side is reflected in every other, and comes to expression through the relational spheres of human life. Without any one of these institutions, mankind's interpretation and disclosure of sexuality would be incomplete and reductionistic. In this sense, Freud was correct in noting that sexuality finds expression in every facet of human life. Yet because he rejected a higher unity and resolution of all things in the Person and work of God, he was unable to recognise that this was not *only* true of the sexual meaning, but indeed of *every meaning* in the universe. Rather than absolutise any single one—as he, Marx, Darwin and others attempted—Christianity recognises the divine origin of each, the irreducibility of the parts, and the essential coordination of the whole which alone can reveal the fullness of the parts.

The product of this Christian ontological system is, as Kuyper astutely recognised, nothing less than the prize which modernism has been seeking all its life: *a theoretically justified irreducibility* operative across all human institutions and bands of meaning in reality. Practically, it functions to

¹⁷ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Essays on Legal, Social, and Political Philosophy* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 165.

¹⁸ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, 30.

necessitate the inextinguishable presence of each sphere in human society.¹⁹ Since each one represents a direct creation of God within the broader creation of man, humanity as a whole is not complete, and the meaning it experiences is narrowed and reduced, until every institution is able to root itself and develop freely within society, while fragmentation is avoided through a principal affective coherence in Christ. As such, Kuyper describes each as “sovereign” within its own sphere—God’s ordained instrument to disclose His divinely enclosed truth.²⁰

An Alternative to Reductionism

Returning now to a view of law, it may be noted how this approach resolves the tensions of social chaos and state absolutism by regarding the government as truly sovereign *in its sphere*. The state here performs vital protective and organisational functions within society, for which it is empowered by God Himself. As such, its presence is mandatory, and operates to restrain the worst lawlessness through prevention and retribution, while internal fragmentation also gives way to coherence in God. Correspondingly, absolutism of any stripe is resisted perforce. The state may not impose its powers within the inner life of each institution, as this would be a deep violation of, and apostasy from, its allegiance to God’s creation-order. Such state-interventionism threatens to disrupt the natural coordination of society’s spheres by posturing itself as the absolute base-expression into which all other structures and relationships must be absorbed. This possibility should be especially troubling to Christians now becoming increasingly aware of how sin can manifest itself not just within individuals, but in systemic structures as well.

Thus posited, a Christian public theology incorporating the insights of Abraham Kuyper and Saint Augustine presents a potentially compelling solvent for current social tensions inherent to modernism’s characteristic reductionisms.

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¹⁹ Ibid, 43.

²⁰ James Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper, A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 461-490.

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Resistant or Complicit?

Augustine and Rape Culture in the City of God

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Abstract

In his *magnum opus*, *The City of God*, Augustine addresses some of the women subjected to sexual violence during the sack of Rome. The quality of his response is contested; his detractors argue that his retort is callous and emblematic of rape culture which enables the problem of systemic sexual violence, particularly against women. His proponents, conversely, contend that he responds with care and concern for the victims of sexual violence, in a way which not only refutes the dominant shame culture of Roman society which would have wanted victims of sexual violence to die by suicide to signal their honour and purity, but argues such a notion of shame is incompatible with Christian teaching. This paper suggests that Augustine's response is not an either/or scenario. It contends that his response to victims of sexual violence has strengths and weaknesses, and that he is both resistant to and complicit in rape culture and the attendant issue of victim blaming. Where he is complicit, this is sometimes the result of carelessness and a lack of awareness on his part rather than deliberate insensitivity and cruelty. As society has become more cognisant of systemic sexual violence and its concomitant issues, including, but not limited to, rape culture and the attendant victim blaming, different spheres of society have begun the process of interrogating its own resistance to, and complicity with rape culture. Using the lessons learnt from Augustine, this paper offers some tentative suggestions for how Christian ethics might examine its own complicity – intended or not – in rape culture, and how it might respond appropriately.

As society grows in awareness of the ever-present realities of sexual violence, so discussions of the contexts which breed such violence, including rape culture and concomitant victim blaming



have likewise increased.¹ Rape culture is where ‘rape and other forms of sexual violence are common and widespread... condoned, normalised, and encouraged by prevailing norms and attitudes and misogynistic practices are validated and rationalised through various acts of sexism.’² Victim blaming is one such sexist act, where (usually) women are accused of: routinely lying about rape; inviting rape through their behaviour; or arguing for a distinction of ‘real rape’. It also extends to absolving perpetrators through various means and myths. In his *magnum opus*, *The City of God*, Augustine addresses victims of sexual violence from the sack of Rome. I will argue that at times he is resistant to rape culture, at others, he is complicit. I will advance that his response provides Christian ethics with constructive lessons for its treatment of victims of sexual violence today.

Resistant

The City of God ‘is the most self-conscious book that [Augustine] ever wrote,’³ and thus the weaving together of his vocations – believer, rhetorician, pastor, theologian, bishop – reflects the breadth of his discussion in this tome. Augustine’s response to rape victims begins in I.7. His primary aim is pastoral: ‘we are not here so much concerned to return an answer to outsiders as to bring comfort to our own people.’⁴ The term used is *consolatio*, which, as Melanie Webb notes, is a genre wherein Augustine acknowledges that ‘the addressee has suffered a grievous loss and... is debilitated in the effort to live stably and resiliently.’⁵ Consolation is typically addressed to bereaved mothers; in employing it for victims of sexual violence, Augustine recognises the egregiousness of sexual violence, communicating to victims that he is attentive to their suffering. That Augustine responds to rape victims is his first strength. His genre shift from apologetic to consolation is victim-centred. This approach is counter-cultural to contemporary standards, where responses to abuse scandals consistently ignore victims. However, in focusing on consecrated virgins only, Augustine erases other victims. Hence, our first constructive lesson: attend to the victims, *all* of them.

¹ Consider the work of Laura Bates’ ‘Everyday Sexism’ project, Karen Ingala Smith’s ‘Counting Dead Women’ femicide census, and the widespread #MeToo movement with its multipurpose character which sought ‘to expose the extent of sexual harassment, assault, and discrimination and, second, to rally solidarity and support for resisting these scourges. Its primary and distinctive tactic has been to trigger a deluge of revelations about sexual abuse, ranging from microaggressions to rape, so that victims and survivors could find strength in numbers and collectively challenge perpetrators and rape-supportive social mechanisms.’ Johanna Stiebert, *Rape Myths, the Bible, and #Metoo, Rape Culture, Religion and the Bible*, ed. Katie Edwards, Caroline Anne Blyth, and Johanna Stiebert (London: Routledge, 2020), 14.

² Gina Messina-Dysert, *Rape Culture and Spiritual Violence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 66.

³ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2000), 302.

⁴ Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), I.16. 26.

⁵ Melanie Webb, ‘“On Lucretia Who Slew Herself”: Rape and Consolation in Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*,” *Augustinian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2013), 55.

Augustine's response dismantles one of the most pervasive and destructive rape myths: that rape is proven through empirical evidence of physical violence. To secure rape convictions, historically rape victims must demonstrate that they fought back, typically through physical injuries and actions indicating they fought back. This not only perpetuates the myth of the rapist as a violent stranger, but also overlooks the different responses to attack, fight, flight, friend, freeze, or flop.⁶ Augustine challenges this cornerstone of rape culture in two ways: he offers a mature view of consent, and he is suspicious of the body's reliability as a narrator of trauma.

In I.16 Augustine says, 'the virtue by which life is lived rightly has its seat in the soul... the body is made holy by the exercise of a holy will... while this will remains unshaken and steadfast, nothing that another does with the body, or in the body, that the sufferer has no power to avert... is the fault of the sufferer.'⁷ Augustine adopts an attitudinal model of consent, as opposed to a performative model. Performative consent is most widespread today (think 'no means no,' 'enthusiastic yes').⁸ It might seem the obvious choice, but it often colludes with rape myths around stranger rape, victim responses, and impact on victims. It is also finite-focused, concerned with specific single acts, ignoring both the situational context and the wider cultural issues that impact perpetrators and victims. Performative models of consent are content with performance: if your will says no but your mouth says yes, performative consent takes your mouth over your mind. Augustine does not. Instead, the consent of the will is primary; 'no one no matter how high-minded and modest, has power to control what is done to flesh, but only what the mind will consent to or refuse.'⁹ Augustine's recognition that consent is attitudinal is commendable, likewise his consolation: 'when anything of this kind is done, the chastity to which the most resolute soul holds fast is not struck down.'¹⁰

Augustine's interior focus challenges another pernicious tenet of victim blaming (that the victim enjoyed it) and one of the most destructive elements of rape culture (that there are categories of rape). Augustine counters these in I.16: 'it may be, however, that shame bursts in nonetheless, for fear that someone will think that an act which, perhaps, could not have been undergone without some bodily pleasure occurred with the consent of the mind also.'¹¹ His use of the word pleasure is unfortunate, arousal being the better term. A consensual orgasm transforms bodily arousal into personal pleasure; an orgasm brought about through unwanted physical stimulation is simply a physiological response. Augustine counters the accusation that any sign of arousal is a sign of either

⁶ Natalie Collins, *Out of Control: Couples, Conflict and the Capacity for Change* (London: SPCK, 2019), 178.

⁷ Augustine, I.16. 26.

⁸ For an overview of the performative and attitudinal models of consent, see David Archard, *Sexual Consent* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), 1-6.

⁹ Ibid. I.18. 27.

¹⁰ Augustine, I.16. 26.

¹¹ Ibid. 26.

enjoyment or consent.¹² Our bodies can collude with our attackers, failing to invite the three words our soul wants to hear: I believe you. But Augustine's focus on the will *does* invite them.

Augustine's treatment of the legend of Lucretia is controversial. Jennifer Thompson argues his utilising the language and set-up of a trial 'leads him to depict raped women as guilty spaces to be explored and interrogated.'¹³ Rape victims often speak of the experience of re-victimisation when recounting their sexual assault. One survivor says of her trial, 'after a physical assault, I was assaulted with questions designed to attack me.'¹⁴ Augustine's use of a courtroom as a rhetorical tool can seem crass. Moreover, when he asks of Lucretia, 'if she was an adulteress, why is she praised? If she was pure, why was she slain?'¹⁵ he re-victimises her, inviting us to take on roles as judge and jury.

However, Augustine also puts society on trial for creating the conditions that led to her to die by suicide. He notes that Lucretia 'was made ashamed by the infamy of another, even though committed against her without consent'¹⁶ and that if she did not consent, 'then it was not justice by which, being innocent, she was punished.'¹⁷ Augustine's rhetorical finesse is uncomfortable, but the discomfort is perhaps the point; it subjects the accusers to the humiliation and victimisation women endure as they seek acknowledgment of their suffering and pursue justice. However, using this strategy in such close proximity to a direct address to victims is ill-judged. The discomfort we feel with his technique encourages us to challenge that discomfort, and thus, challenge rape culture. Augustine puts an honour-based society on trial, challenging 'popular but untested ideas about sexual purity and volitional death'¹⁸ that were percolating within Christian society. Augustine wants to 'refute those who, far removed from any understanding of holiness, reproach those Christian women who were outraged in captivity.'¹⁹ He does so through a more textured approach to shame than the society which injured Lucretia to death.

¹² Although, it is prudent to note that Augustine has a more complicated understanding of the will of body and mind both in *The City of God* and elsewhere in his writings. As Peter Brown notes, sexual arousal and shame are postlapsarian consequences in Augustine's account, (see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 416), and labelling the shame felt in the aftermath of sexual assault as sin is harmful and untrue; shame in this situation is the consequence of being sinned against.

¹³ Jennifer Thompson, "'Accept This Twofold Consolation, You Faint-Hearted Creatures': St Augustine and Contemporary Definitions of Rape," *Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education* 4, no. 3 (2004), 9.

¹⁴ Chanel Miller, *Know My Name* (Great Britain: Viking, 2019), 342.

¹⁵ Augustine, I.19. 29.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Dennis Trout, "Re-Textualising Lucretia: Cultural Subversion in the *City of God*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 1 (1994), 55.

¹⁹ Augustine, I.19. 29.

Augustine subverts the Roman shame Lucretia felt at both intimate and societal level. Shame is something she is subjected to, and shame is active. '[S]he was made ashamed'²⁰ both by her attacker and by the society which predicated familial honour upon female chastity. For the Christian women Augustine is concerned with, shame is not something to be feared as a societal or divine tool of condemnation; 'by the testimony of their own conscience, they have the glory of chastity. Moreover, they have it in the sight of God, and they require nothing more.'²¹ Tianyue Wu expounds, 'shame discloses that the sufferer never degraded herself.'²² In other words, shame functions as epistemological proof of non-consent where the body fails to provide corporeal proof. Augustine thereby endows shame with an empowering quality, where a shame narrative can 'take on a special significance in which the telling and empathic hearing of shame stories is crucial to their healing, and where those narratives have a bearing on oppressive social systems.'²³ Augustine, albeit indelicately, foregrounds shame in a way that addresses the immediate situation and the wider rape culture that both facilitated sexual violence and encouraged revictimization. In cross-examining entrenched values of shame and exposing their facileness, he creates space for the empathic hearing of shame stories which can enable the hearing and healing of victims. It is a vision of shame in response to being sinned against and the compassionate and justice-focused response that triggers. Augustine's response to rape victims therefore reveals a more active countering of victim blaming and harmful myths and demonstrates a tentative movement towards tackling the wider rape culture in which those events took place. Furthermore, situated against the backdrop of *The City of God* in which Augustine sets out a vision for a transformed society, for rape victims, Augustine 'explicated a vision of an alternative society within which continued life is not only imaginable but also desirable for women who have been violated.'²⁴ The zenith of Augustine's resistance to victim blaming is found in his exhortation to victims of sexual violence to life – textured, realistic life – where being sinned against is not the conclusion to one's story.

Complicit

Augustine's response to rape victims is nevertheless problematic. Whilst he attends to wider societal issues like shame and honour, he neglects the wider implications of rape as a weapon of warfare. In I.7 he states, 'whatever devastation, slaughter, looting, burning and affliction was committed during that most recent calamity at Rome, all this was at any rate done according to the customs of war.'²⁵ Rape is a well-known weapon in war, acutely egregious to women, and

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Tianyue Wu, "Shame in the Context of Sin: Augustine on the Feeling of Shame in *De Civitate Dei*," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 74, no. 1 (2007), 12.

²³ Miryam Clough, *Shame, the Church and the Regulation of Female Sexuality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 6.

²⁴ Webb, "On Lucretia," 57.

²⁵ Augustine. I.7. 11.

devastating to both individuals and societies. However, Augustine fails to address or condemn it. He thereby denies rape victims a crucial acknowledgement of their suffering and misses an opportunity to espouse the values of Christian society which, unlike its attackers who sought chaos and destruction, is on both a temporal and eschatological pilgrimage from chaos to order. Margaret Miles notes that Augustine accuses 'the Roman people of the pervasive sin of *libido dominandi*, lust for mastery,'²⁶ which to contemporary ears includes sexual violence, but Augustine is not explicit.

In I. 28, Augustine suggests that consecrated virgins taking pride in their celibacy 'is why they suffered the violation of their flesh by the enemy.'²⁷ This is victim blaming. Augustine's asking whether they were 'too puffed up by the good of maidenhood or chastity,'²⁸ is a fifth century version of 'what were you wearing?' and 'how much had you had to drink?' Perhaps Augustine's quest for virtue superseded his pastoral sensibilities here. Regardless, victim blaming should not be tolerated. First, it re-victimises those who have suffered sexual violence; second, it compounds misogynistic views of female behaviour; third, it conflates issues in a way that undermines the seriousness of sexual violence; fourth, it obfuscates the pursuit of justice for victims; and fifth, as Katie Cross notes, 'the blame targeted at these women might be described as a kind of theodicy,'²⁹ with Augustine's victim blaming implicating God in the suffering of those made in his image. Some scholars suggest that Jesus was a victim of sexual violence, the references to his nakedness at his crucifixion suggesting crucifixion was a form of sexual abuse as well as an execution method. Others argue that he represents victims of sexual violence through solidarity as the suffering servant.³⁰ In both ways Jesus can be understood as identifying with victims of sexual violence on

²⁶ Margaret R. Miles, "From Rape to Resurrection: Sin, Sexual Difference, and Politics," in *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide*, ed. James Wetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 78.

²⁷ Augustine, I.28.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Katie Cross, "'I Have the Power in My Body to Make People Sin': The Trauma of Purity Culture and the Concept of 'Body Theodicy'," in *Feminist Trauma Theologies*, ed. Katie Cross and Karen O'Donnell (London: SCM Press, 2020), 26.

³⁰ Proponents of Jesus as a victim of sexual abuse include David Tombs, Jayme Reaves, and Rocío Figueroa, see Jayme R. Reaves, and David Tombs, "#Metoo Jesus: Naming Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Abuse," *Review and Expositor* 117, no. 2 (2020) Jayme R. Reaves, and David Tombs, "Introduction: Acknowledging Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Abuse," in *When Did We See You Naked? Jesus as a Victim of Sexual Abuse*, ed. Jayme R. Reaves, David Tombs, and Rocío Figueroa, ed. Jayme R. Reaves, David Tombs, and Rocío Figueroa (London: SCM Press, 2021); Michael Trainor, see Michael Trainor, *The Body of Jesus and Sexual Abuse* (Northcote, Vic.: Morning Star Publishing, 2014); Katie Edwards, see Katie Edwards, "#HimToo - Why Jesus Should Be Recognised as a Victim of Sexual Violence," *The Conversation*, 23/03, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/himtoo-why-jesus-should-be-recognised-as-a-victim-of-sexual-violence-93677>. Gender justice specialist, Natalie Collins, vehemently disagrees with the assessment of Jesus as a victim of sexual abuse, arguing that there it is unreasonable to understand crucifixion as specifically sexual abuse and undermines the potency of Jesus' solidarity with victims of sexual abuse if it is suggested that he only has sympathy for them because he has had the same experiences of them. See Natalie Collins, "Was Jesus Sexual Abused," *God Loves Women*, 07/06, 2021, accessed 14/07/2021,

the cross. If you would not ask the crucified God what he had been wearing or whether he was drunk, then do not ask it of the victims he represents.

Rome's attackers afforded clemency to church buildings but not the women they violated. Women were reduced to collateral. Those whom Augustine calls 'the savage barbarians' in one breath, he praises in the next for sparing churches 'under an aspect so gentle... [W]hoever sees it but does not praise it is ungrateful.'³¹ Interpreted charitably, Augustine is encouraging gratitude amongst Christians in Rome. However, he later compounds his lack of condemnation of war rape asking, 'what did the Christians suffer in that time of devastation that would not serve rather to raise them up than harm them?'³² Such a statement is pastorally insensitive in the face of any suffering, but for rape victims treads perilously close to spiritual abuse. Such words have for some been the coercion, manipulation, and 'control through the use of sacred texts or teaching.'³³ Augustine's words in I. 28, 'if you should ask why they were permitted to do so: deep indeed is the providence of the Creator and Ruler of the world,'³⁴ are eerily reminiscent of words spoken to victims of sexual violence by their church leaders and indeed, by Christian leaders who are themselves perpetrators of abuse. Such theologised statements, intentional or not, co-operate with a rape culture that disincentivises victims from coming forward, their abuse explained away, their God used as justification for their suffering.

'Let not such women, even if the lust of the barbarians was forced upon some of them, bewail the fact that this was permitted. Let them not believe that God is neglectful of them because, in their case, He has permitted a sin which no one normally commits with impunity.'³⁵ The power of Jesus' cry for the forgiveness of his torturers is the freedom in which it was declared and the knowledge that God sides with the oppressed. God's goodness lies in the repudiation of injustice and inflicted suffering, but Augustine's words undermine this. The man who longs for people to know and love their Lord, through carelessness, risks alienating God's children from their Father when at their most vulnerable. There is no set pattern for how we deal with trauma, so any

<https://mrsglw.wordpress.com/2021/06/07/was-jesus-sexually-abused/>. New Testament scholar, Erin Heim, offers a more nuanced stance between the two arguments, affirming Jesus as a victim of sexual *humiliation* and therefore someone who can say #MeToo, and delineating the implications of this for our understanding of sexual abuse and resurrection bodies. She nevertheless exercises caution, stating, 'the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion... leave open the *possibility* that Jesus experienced sexual assault.' See Erin M. Heim, "Resurrection and the #Metoo Movement: A Constructive Reading of the Crucified Resurrected Body in 1 Corinthians 15:35-49" (paper presented at the Biblical Studies Seminar, University of Edinburgh, 27/09, 2019). Emphasis my own.

³¹ Augustine, I.7. 11.

³² Augustine, I.9. 13.

³³ Lisa Oakley, Kathryn Kinmond, and Justin Humphreys, "Spiritual Abuse in Christian Faith Settings: Definition, Policy and Practice Guidance," *The Journal of Adult Protection* 20, no. 3-4 (2018), 148.

³⁴ Augustine I.28. 42.

³⁵ Ibid.

demands concerning how victims should act is intolerable, particularly when such pressures assume a spiritual dimension. Unlike his detractors, I do not think Augustine intends to be insensitive and abusive here. Rather, he demonstrates an unawareness of the sensitivity and complexity of the situation that victims face, and a naivety in how his theologising may be received. Combined with his views on sexuality which are at times clouded by his own struggles and sense of sexual sin and an ignorance of the female body, he reveals himself as unequipped to respond sufficiently to rape culture.³⁶ But Christian ethics must equip itself. 'To be adequate, Christian sexual ethics must deal not only with the realities of rape and fear in women's lives, but also with socialisation patterns,'³⁷ the patterns which create and sustain rape culture. Since Augustine cannot say it for himself, it is incumbent on scholars to apologise on his behalf to victims re-traumatised and injured by his words: he got it wrong here, I am sorry.

Conclusion

Augustine's response to the women raped during the attack on Rome is not perfect. His task in *The City of God* is too meandering, his theologising of sexual proclivities too erratic to offer sufficient comfort to victims. But this does not invalidate everything he says or mean that there are no constructive lessons to learn from him from this part of his work. First, Augustine's approach is victim-centred; we need to be attuned to the cry of injustice and prioritise attending to those who have called it out. Second, we need to be cognisant of the ways in which issues extend beyond the initial reaction or injury and what is seemingly obvious. What victims of sexual violence have experienced must be repudiated, but we must not fail to address the structural issues and inclinations which enable sexual violence to be endemic. When Augustine misses the mark in his response to rape victims, he undermines his empowering, counter-cultural, *Christian* response.³⁸ The challenge is to hold in tension our response to those crying injustice whilst leaving space to learn more about the attendant issues to that injustice. Third, we need to think about who might be listening and reading. As ethicists and academics, we want our work to have an audience. A #MeToo lens reminds us that victims and survivors may be part of that audience. This is not to

³⁶ Julie B. Miller offers an analysis of Augustine's understanding of prelapsarian sexual intercourse and the negative impact this has on his construction of Eve and therefore of women. See Julie B. Miller, "To Remember Self, to Remember God: Augustine on Sexuality, Relationality, and the Trinity," in *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine*, ed. Judith Chelius Stark (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007).

³⁷ Karen Lebacqz, "Love Your Enemy: Sex, Power, and Christian Ethics," in *Feminist Theological Ethics*, ed. Lois K. Daly (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 249.

³⁸ How distinctively *Christian* Christian ethics needs to be is one of the perennial debates in the field. The terrain is ably mapped by Nigel Biggar, see Nigel Biggar, *Behaving in Public: How to Do Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 1. Biggar attributes his own vocation to Christian ethics to reading *The City of God* and how it enabled him to reconcile his theological integrity with the ethical challenges of speaking into the non-Christian world.

cancel us, or to shy away from sharing ideas that are not fully formed. Rather, it invites us to ask the question, 'what if a survivor of abuse reads this?' Fourth, in his problematic response, Augustine detaches himself from his central theological task: grace. How much richer would his response have been had he remembered the call of grace on the lives of victims of sexual violence? Finally, to quote Mary Pellauer, 'we need to grieve for the mistakes Augustine and the church made about rape.'³⁹ Theology is a unique discipline; we are tied to our work in ways that others are not. Some of our academic forebears wrote theology which they did not live; our reading lists may perpetuate a legacy of harm.⁴⁰ Augustine's response offers ethicists a challenge to operate under the shadow of the cross, yet in the light of the resurrection. We will not always get it right. When we get it wrong, let us normalise the following statements even on behalf of our forebears: I believe you. I got it wrong. I am sorry.

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³⁹ Mary Pellauer, "Augustine on Rape: One Chapter in the Theological Tradition," in *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1998), 231.

⁴⁰ Consider John Howard Yoder, Jean Vanier, Jan Joosten, to name just three theologians accused of or prosecuted for sexual abuse, plus myriad church leaders and teachers. In the aftermath of the latter's conviction of possessing child abuse images, some scholars shared on social media replacements sources for Joosten's work on university reading lists and committed to not using his work in any future publications.

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Not Peace but a Sword

The Prophetic Visions of a Russian Exile (D. Merezhkovsky's Criticism of Modernity)

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Abstract

Considered by Thomas Mann the greatest literary critic and universal psychologist since Nietzsche and nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature more than once, Dmitry Merezhkovsky (1865-1941) is now an almost forgotten figure. The aim of this article is to bring attention to the political and religious ideas of this twentieth-century Russian émigré and to show their lasting relevance. Merezhkovsky was a critic of positivism and atheism, of the Russian Caesaro-Papist autocracy and the Bolshevik regime. Along with his wife Zinaida Gippius, he was among the initiators of the Russian symbolist movement and a key figure of the *fin-de-siècle* Russian Religious Renaissance. In this short article, I summarize some of Merezhkovsky's political and religious views and explain his Solovyevian apocalyptic visions. More concretely, I present his critique of the four 'modern escapes' ('exits') from Christian faith and truth: the 'art as religion', the 'science as religion', the 'generation as religion', and 'society as religion.'

'Not peace but a sword' (Matt. 10:34) means Apocalypse, a Revelation. This is how Dmitry Merezhkovsky interpreted Jesus' words. This is also how he entitled one of his books, published



after the 1905 revolution in Russia.¹ The revolution was the first serious blow against the age-old Tsarist regime. This was the first time in Russian history that the Tsar, forced by the people's uprising, tried to create a constitutional order and democratize the Empire from above. This attempt at democratization failed, and it also failed completely with the second Russian 'revolution'—the Bolshevik coup of 1917. Russian revolutions, like Russian autocracy, were disappointments, but disappointments of a realized prophesy: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God' (Rom. 13:1). Neither the Tsar nor the revolutionaries understood that they were subject to an ultimate Authority, that they were an 'historical phenomena,' and not an 'end of history.'

Merezhkovsky (1865-1941) was one of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinkers who sensed that the world was facing a cataclysm. While in the early 1900s his contemporaries discussed progress, he spoke about Rupture. And the Rupture truly happened in a string of upheavals—two World Wars, a Holocaust, a Great Depression, and a Cold War. In the twentieth century, more than one hundred million people died in wars and misery. This was the unexpected cost of the much-anticipated 'progress.'

Merezhkovsky, who was among the first to bring Nietzsche to the attention of the Russian reader,² was not a Nietzschean critic of modernity in the proper sense of the word. If Nietzsche expected the coming of the *Übermensch*, Merezhkovsky was already seeing him behind the 'mask' of the Russian emperor, the Roman Pontiff, the populist leader, and—finally—behind the faceless growl of the human 'mob.'³ His "anti-Christ," like his Christ, was always present but not fully revealed. In his apocalypticism, Merezhkovsky considered himself a prophet of the 'Third Testament,' of the revelation of the Holy Spirit that was going to expose and destroy the rule of the 'prince of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Like Joachim of Fiore, the twelfth-century mystic, Merezhkovsky believed in the coming Kingdom of God as a 'Kingdom of Spirit.' Critical of anarchist teachings, he was nevertheless a religious anarchist and political maximalist, and for that

¹ Д. С. Мережковский, *Не мир, но меч. К будущей критике христианства* [Not Peace but a Sword. Toward a Future Critique of Christianity] (Москва: Товарищества И. Д. Сытина, 1914); See also Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905* (California: Stanford University Press, 1988).

² Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "Nietzsche in Russia: The Case of Merezhkovsky," *Slavic Review* 33, no. 3 (1974): 429–452.

³ After the October Revolution, Merezhkovsky wrote: "Peer into the October mob: there are no faces in it. Yes, not the ugliness, but the lack of faces—this is what was most terrible in it." Д. С. Мережковский, "Записная Книжка-1919-1920" [Notebook-1919-1920], in *Свобода*, no. 10, 13 (28 и 31 июля, 1920). See also Dmitry Sergeyevich Merezhkovsky, *The Menace of the Mob*, trans. Bernard Guilbert Guerney (New York: N.L. Brown, 1921). He believed that the battle between Christ and anti-Christ was from the beginning of the world. Even before the Crucifixion of Christ, the "nameless" Christianity was fighting against the forces of, what Merezhkovsky called, "death."

reason he was soon estranged from the majority of the Russian intelligentsia, whom he had hoped in the early 1900s to unite and organize into a 'society of new religious consciousness'.

Like many Russian thinkers of the period, Merezhkovsky's life ended in exile. He fought against the Tsarist absolutism and the Church's complicity, but he was forced to flee abroad not by the Tsar or the clergy, but by their enemies, the revolutionaries, the same people whom he had hoped to convert into Christianity. The Bolshevik coup revealed Merezhkovsky's youthful naiveté concerning the nature of revolutionary force. In 1919, the same year that Merezhkovsky left Russia, the Tsar was executed, the Church was attacked by militant atheism, and Russia's governance was in the bloody hands of radical intelligentsia. Before the revolution, Merezhkovsky had blamed the 'simple' priests for their 'obscurantism' and 'ignorance' and pleaded for an 'intellectual' Church that would ally with the 'revolutionary vanguard' against the Tsarist regime for the creation of the 'Kingdom of Spirit in *flesh*.' Now, as his biographer Zobnin notes, he had learned one of the most important lessons of his life: that not the 'wise' intellectuals and social reformers, but the 'simple' priests, were the true martyrs (and saviors) of Christian faith.⁴ 'Is there salvation outside the Church?' Merezhkovsky will ask in 1930. 'No,' he will answer, 'the world is perishing because it abandoned or fell away from the Church.'⁵

If we were to try to describe Merezhkovsky with one word only, the most appropriate would be as an 'exile.' Exile, Merezhkovsky wrote in 1920, is a 'cross,' the same 'cross' as life in one's native country—in exile, one just moves the cross from one shoulder to the other.⁶ In other words, 'exile' was the earthly *Via Dolorosa* of the Christian disciple.⁷ Vasily Rozanov, the Russian translator of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, a man who himself became a victim of Bolshevism and who died in misery in a small town north of Moscow, called Merezhkovsky an 'empty' person, a 'shadow.'⁸ But

⁴ Юрий Зобнин, *Дмитрий Мережковский: Жизнь и деяния* [Dmitry Merezhkovsky: Life and Works] (Москва: Молодая гвардия, 2008), accessed July 7, 2021, <https://predanie.ru/book/203427-dmitriy-merezhkovskiy-zhizn-i-deyaniya/>.

⁵ Д. С. Мережковский, *Тайна Запада: Атлантида – Европа* [The Secret of the West: Atlantis-Europe], (Белград: Русской Библиотеки, 1930). See also Dmitry Sergeyevich Merezhkovsky, Z. N Gippius, and Dmitry Philosophoff, *Le Tsar Et La Révolution* [The Tsar and the Revolution] (Paris: Société dv Mercvre de France, 1907).

⁶ Мережковский, "Записная Книжка-1919-1920".

⁷ Kåre Johan Mjør. *Reformulating Russia: The Cultural and Intellectual Historiography of Russian First-Wave Émigré Writers. Russian History and Culture*, V. 7. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 42.

⁸ "It often seems to me that there is no Merezhkovsky... That he is some kind of a shadow... There is 'Julian,' 'Leonardo,' 'Peter' (all characters of Merezhkovsky's books; *author's note*), 'Christianity,' 'Renaissance' and so on... There is 'emptiness,' where Merezhkovsky should be found. It is very scary to love nothing, to hate nothing, to know everything, to read a lot, to read constantly, and at the end, as final misfortune—to eternally write, i.e., to eternally write your emptiness." (Quoted by A. Nikoliukin in Д. С.

as Bernice Rosenthal observed, Merezhkovsky wouldn't accept 'self-effacement,'⁹ the precise meaning of Rozanov's judgment. He was not a 'shadow'; he was rather an 'exile,' a stranger in the world as any true follower of Christ is. The 'shadowiness' of his physical presence, and of his books, reflected a kind of mystical 'other-worldliness.' The poet Alexander Blok rightly noted: 'God, God, God, Christ, Christ, Christ,' there is no page in Merezhkovsky's books that does not contain these 'Names,' written in 'enormously' big capital letters.¹⁰

In contrast to Berdyaev, Bulgakov, and Frank,¹¹ who were Christian realists, Merezhkovsky was and remained till the end of his life a political maximalist. His criticism—not just critique—of temporal power had anarchic dimensions. Like Bakunin, he saw in the State and in what he called the "historical Church" a source of darkness. Unlike Bakunin, he found in the resurrection of religious consciousness an exit from this darkness. Like Nietzsche, he explained the problem of power and modernity with the 'death' of God. He saw God dead, for humanity, from the very moment of Christ's crucifixion. Man killed his Creator delegating His power to the hands of earthly vicars—the Caesar and the High Priest.

Merezhkovsky saw in the Byzantine 'Caesaro-Papism,' whose successor was Russia, and in the Roman 'Папо-Caesarism,' whose successor was Europe, the two forms of secular theocracy that fought against the revelation of the Kingdom of the 'coming age.' Following Dostoyevsky's Fr. Zossima, Merezhkovsky believed that there could be no theocratic compromise between Church and State. The Church could not, and must not, reunite with the State.¹² These were two opposite Kingdoms. The last historical battle, he believed, will be between the State and the Church. This will be a 'mortal battle,' because the Church was an absolute negation of the State. The Church, Merezhkovsky expected, will annihilate the State through the appearance of a new religious consciousness that will make no difference between flesh and spirit. In his vision, the Kingdom of God will be a Kingdom of Spirit in flesh, an actual transfiguration of the profane, a process of *theosis* and Godmanhood.

Мережковский: pro et contra [D.S. Merezhkovsky: Pro et Contra] А. Николюкин ed. (ПХГА, 2001), С.8, accessed July 7, 2021, <http://russianway.rhga.ru/section/katalog/merezhkovskiy-d-s.html/>.

⁹ Rosenthal, "Nietzsche in Russia, The Case of Merezhkovsky." *Slavic Review* 33, no. 3 (1974): 429–452.

¹⁰ Александр Блок, Д. С. Мережковский in Д. С. Мережковский: *pro et contra* [D.S. Merezhkovsky: Pro et Contra], ed. А. Николюкин (St. Petersburg: ПХГА, 2001), accessed July 7, 2021, http://russianway.rhga.ru/upload/main/16_blok.pdf/.

¹¹ See for example, С.А. Франк, "О так называемом 'новом религиозном сознании'" [On the so-called "new religious consciousness"], *Русское мировоззрение*, СПб., Наука (1996): 542–547.

¹² Merezhkovsky, Gippius, Philosophoff, *Le Tsar Et La Révolution*, 179-180.

In his political criticism, Merezhkovsky was closer to Tolstoy, the anarchist, than to Dostoyevsky and Solovyov.¹³ He believed that earthly autocracy—the ‘sovereign’ Ceasar *and* Priest—reflected the natural desire of humanity for unity and wholeness. Theocracy, he argued, was the historical expression of the human thirst for ‘monotheism.’ But theocracy *itself* was unnatural; it relied on coercion, and so it did not withstand the revolt of the human spirit. Monarchy and the ‘historical Church’ collapsed under the violent pressure of revolutions and resurrections. Their demise left a void—not freedom, but an abyss of murky dreams, illusory hopes and ugly schemes. Merezhkovsky believed that humanity of the modern age was facing two ‘exits’: nihilism (annihilation) or consciousness (salvation). He stayed hopeful. He wrote, ‘God died in humanity but not in man; in society but not in the person; in all but not in everyone.’¹⁴ The death of God and the end of theocracy left a void, but the human person cannot survive without religion. ‘Man is a religious animal,’ he argued, humanity is ‘born for eternity.’ Without eternity life is meaningless. Religion, he concluded, was the only ‘exit’ from the abyss of Fall and Death; all other exits of modernity were pseudo-religions, nihilistic dreams.

What were these false exits of modernity? The first one was ‘art as religion,’ the second was ‘science as religion,’ the third was ‘offspring as religion,’ and the fourth was ‘society as religion.’¹⁵ All four were expressions of the culture of death. The religion of art had for its limit the ‘tragic contemplation of the world.’ Its highest point was the tragedy without catharsis. In it, the tragic hero, having reached the summit of his will, dies under the blow of the ‘impersonal power of fate or passion.’ Merezhkovsky argued that there was hopelessness in the aesthetic contemplation of modern art; it reflected not the light of Christ and the hope of faith, but the ‘non-entity’ of the world’s foundation. There was no beauty in modern art, because beauty was tainted by the ugliness of death in it. Art was alive, he concluded, as far as its ‘symbols’ delivered a genuine religious meaning.

The limit of science as religion was no less different than the limit of modern art. Science permitted only one hypothesis: material evolution. Matter is eternal, evolution—temporal. In the evolutionary process, the human person is a transient phenomenon. Like the hero in art, in science the human person is ultimately a slave of impersonal forces. The paradox of material eternity is that everything, in its lowest form, is eternal, while everything in its unique and highest form is temporal. Loss of uniqueness is a loss of value; loss of value is a loss of dignity. There was no place for

¹³ He tried to create a synthesis between Tolstoy’s anarchism and Dostoyevsky’s conservatism, but nevertheless, politically he was closer to Tolstoy than to Dostoyevsky (See Merezhkovsky, Gippius, Philosophoff, *Le Tsar Et La Révolution*: 182-187).

¹⁴ Д. С. Мережковский, *Не мир, но меч. К будущей критике христианства* [Not Peace but a Sword. Toward a Future Critique of Christianity] (Москва: Товарищества И. Д. Сытина, 1914; Москва: Акт, 2000), 18-33.

¹⁵ Ibid.

personality in the world of science. Merezhkovsky's conclusion was that science, like art, did not resolve but rather deepened the problem of death. If all die in the mouth of the eternal material 'Kronos,' then all, in their personal existence, must end in despair.

There are people who say: I am not eternal but my family is, I will die but my offspring will live and I will live in it. The idea of the human generation is a powerful stimulus for life and action. Nation and nationalism are one of its greatest expressions. But it is a false exit from the abyss of death. In the religion of offspring, Merezhkovsky says, the problem of death is not resolved but just moved from the present to the future, from this generation to the other. The eternity of offspring is not essentially different from the eternity of matter. The only and most important feature of life—personhood in flesh and spirit, is dissolved, even in the memory of offspring. Memory alone, or legacy, cannot replace the loss of life.

The final exit from the abyss of death is society as religion. It is related to the offspring as religion. It is, in fact, the farthest limit of the idea of eternal generation, and, according to Merezhkovsky, the most tempting and powerful of all false religions. This is the religion of human collectivity, of the totalitarian state. It rests on the following syllogism: if every personal life is destroyed by death, then communal life has a greater value than the individual one. This was the argument of the High Priest who said: 'It is in your interest that one man dies for the people than the whole nation perishes' (John 11:50). This was the argument for the death sentence of Christ. The whole dominates the part. With the death of Christ, however, all hope was lost for the nation, and all hope preserved for the disciple. The disciple, in every human generation, knows that Christ saved not the *nation* but the *human person*. He learned once and for all that humanity was not a means to an end; that the human was not made for a world or society, for science or art, but that the world, society, science and art were made for the human.

Merezhkovsky's faith in Christ and the primacy of the human person explains his extreme political views, his anarchic leanings and apocalyptic visions. He lived as an exile and died as an exile in Paris in 1941. But the hope never left him. His last written words, found on a piece of paper on a table, were: '...Me, I'm a worm, not man, slandered by humans, despised by peoples (Ps. 21: 7). But wrap itself into a chrysalis a hapless worm does only to break out as a shiny white, sunlight-like, resurrected butterfly.'¹⁶

¹⁶ Мережковский in Зобнин, Дмитрий Мережковский: Жизнь и деяния [Dmitry Merezhkovsky: Life and Works] (Москва: Молодая гвардия, 2008), accessed July 7, 2021, <https://predanie.ru/book/203427-dmitriy-merezhkovskiy-zhizn-i-deyaniya/>.

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Penance as a Virtue

A Thomistic Framework for Responses to Injustice

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Abstract

For Thomas Aquinas, penance is both a sacrament and a virtue. This article argues that Aquinas' account of the virtue, in the *Summa Theologiae*, provides insights for conversations about addressing injustice in contemporary societies. While, for Aquinas, penance is paradigmatically expressed in its sacramental context, the account of the virtue has broader ethical and political potential. To explore this potential, the article proceeds in three parts. The first part discusses Aquinas' account in the *Summa*. Aquinas sees the virtue of penance as motivating a transformation of character, which leads an offender to attempt to remove the effects of their own past sin. Penance belongs ultimately to the broader virtue of justice – it is the just response to sin on the sinner's part. While Aquinas discusses infused penance, we may also think of an acquired counterpart to this virtue. The second part discusses the value of this understanding of penance for contemporary theology. The identification of penance as a virtue – therefore a feature of character, rather than merely an act or practice – offers distinctive ways to conceptualize the responsibilities, motivations, and approach of the repentant person. The third part illustrates this by describing an exemplar of penance. Throughout, penance is understood as a virtue of individuals but with profound political implications.



Introduction

This article argues that the account of the virtue of penance offered by Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* provides a helpful framework for understanding of the nature and role of repentance in contemporary social contexts.

Aquinas considers penance as both a sacrament and a virtue.¹ While his account of penance continues to be studied in some areas, his account of penance as a virtue, perhaps because it is treated with the other sacraments in the *Summa*, has been relatively neglected by scholars working in fields such as Christian theological ethics and political theology. Maria C. Morrow has drawn attention to the important connections between the virtue and its sacramental context.² In an insightful and constructive treatment, Michael Griffin appropriates Aquinas' overall understanding of penance – as part of the wider Christian tradition – for contemporary politics.³ Yet the potential of the understanding of penance as a virtue to illuminate the dynamics of repentance in contemporary social life, has not been closely considered.

As an initial exploration of this potential, this article proceeds in three parts. Firstly, it discusses Aquinas' account of penance in general. Secondly, it outlines the value of this understanding of penance, as a personal virtue with political implications, for contemporary theology. Thirdly, it illustrates this value with reference to an exemplar of penance.

Penance in the *Summa Theologiae*

Aquinas' treatment of penance in the *Summa* occurs at the end of the incomplete *Tertia Pars*. Aquinas stopped writing in the middle of this work on penance, in 1273, leaving the account itself unfinished. Yet in the questions on penance that he completed, Aquinas provides an account that is systematic and insightful, if relatively brief.

One important aspect of the historical context of this account is the standardization of the sacramental practice of penance brought about by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, following debates in the preceding centuries. As Griffin discusses, the Council stressed the role of the *priest-confessor*, and set the requirement of regular (yearly) practice in order to receive the Eucharist at Easter.⁴ As Morrow notes, this also gave rise to a wave of medieval penitentials to help confessors

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2nd, rev. ed., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920; New Advent, 2017), <https://www.newadvent.org/summa>, III.84-90.

² Maria C. Morrow, "Reconnecting Sacrament and Virtue: Penance in Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*," *New Blackfriars* 91, no. 1033 (2010), 304-320.

³ Michael Griffin, *The Politics of Penance: Proposing an Ethic for Social Repair* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016).

⁴ Griffin, *Politics*, 44-45.

‘carefully consider and evaluate sins.’⁵ Following the Council, penance came to be seen as one of seven sacraments,⁶ and, among other previously controversial points, the idea that penance as a sacrament is repeatable was settled by Aquinas’ time.⁷

Griffin is right to say that Aquinas presumes the ‘Lateran synthesis’ but ‘places penance in a wider scope,’ with broader social and political potential.⁸ I suggest that we can see this more clearly by attending closely to Aquinas’ designation of penance specifically as a virtue, rather than only as an act or practice.⁹

Aquinas notes that for the sacrament of penance, ‘human acts take the place of matter,’ instead of physical materials (like, for instance, the use of water in baptism).¹⁰ For Aquinas, moral acts ideally proceed from virtues, understood as ‘good operative habits.’¹¹ These habits shape certain capacities of the person, such as the will. Aquinas therefore thinks that it makes sense to consider a virtue that underlies acts of repentance (whether these are performed within or outside of the sacrament).

In the first article in which he discusses this virtue, that of penance, Aquinas argues that ‘it belongs to right reason that one should grieve for a proper object of grief as one ought to grieve, and for an end for which one ought to grieve. And this is observed in the penance of which we are speaking now; since the penitent assumes a moderated grief for his past sins, with the intention of removing them.’¹²

He goes on to explicitly defend the idea that penance is a specific virtue. He considers the objections that the acts of the penitent might simply stem from the virtue of charity, or from any of the virtues (since virtue opposes vice). Both of these would mean that there is no need to conceptualize penance as a particular virtue with its own distinctive role. Aquinas responds that although straightforward displeasure at sin may come from charity ‘immediately,’ the ‘intention to aim at the destruction of past sin requires a special virtue subordinate to charity.’ And although every virtue by definition negates related vices, thus removing them ‘formally,’ penance removes sin ‘effectively,’ governing those actions which specifically target past sin and its effects.¹³ Penance

⁵ Morrow, “Reconnecting,” 305.

⁶ Griffin, *Politics*, 45.

⁷ Morrow, “Reconnecting,” 309.

⁸ Griffin, *Politics*, 45.

⁹ Such a designation is not unique to Aquinas (see Morrow, “Reconnecting,” 309); yet the comprehensive nature of his wider understanding of virtue, and the virtues, makes his vision of penance as a virtue particularly powerful.

¹⁰ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.1 *ad* 1.

¹¹ Aquinas, *Summa*, I-II.55.

¹² Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.1.

¹³ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.2.

is therefore the virtue that concerns the moral agent's will towards their own past sin, and aims to remove the effects of this sin.

The virtuous penitent feels proportionate regret or shame for what they have done. This helps to motivate them to act – but in what ways? Aquinas does not explicitly allocate specific categories of acts to the virtue, though it is consistent with his thought to consider the acts of 'contrition,' 'confession,' and 'satisfaction,' which he discusses as 'parts' of the sacrament, as the sorts of acts to which the virtue leads (again, in the context of the sacrament or more broadly).¹⁴ With Griffin, we may think of satisfaction as reparation that incorporates necessary material measures (restitution), but aims at the fuller '*moral and spiritual* reform of relationships.'¹⁵

Importantly, Aquinas locates the virtue of penance as a species of the broader virtue of justice.¹⁶ Justice is located in the will, and disposes its possessor to give to each their due, in various ways.¹⁷ Penance, therefore, is a virtue of the will. As such, it involves not only affective responses such as regret or remorse, but the decision to attempt to repair past sin. Penance is also a way of making things right between persons, a kind of exchange, so it is an example of 'commutative justice.' It represents the just response to sin on the sinner's part.

Aquinas emphasizes the vital importance of the virtue of penance for the moral life, insofar as we are all sinners. In one sense, which must be qualified by the key role of the theological virtues, penance can be said to 'open the door' to the full range of other virtues. Namely, 'it so opens the door to them that they enter at the same time as it: because, in the justification of the ungodly, at the same time as the free-will is moved towards God and against sin, the sin is pardoned and grace infused, and with grace all the virtues.'¹⁸

Aquinas thus treats penance as an infused moral virtue. As such it is given by grace and directs the person towards their ultimate supernatural end of union with God.¹⁹ This is set within the theological context of the understanding of sin as an offense against God, and repentance as a turning back to God.²⁰ Aquinas' paradigmatic penitent, then, is the Christian who comes to love the good and hate sin (both from the virtue of charity), then to intend the removal of sin and its effects (acting from the virtue of penance).²¹ This may happen not only to new converts but when the soul turns back to God after sin, as in the sacrament.

¹⁴ Morrow, "Reconnecting," 311; Aquinas, *Summa*, III.90.

¹⁵ Griffin, *Politics*, 62.

¹⁶ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.3.

¹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa*, II-II.58.1.

¹⁸ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.6 *ad* 3.

¹⁹ Aquinas, *Summa*, I-II.63.3.

²⁰ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.3.

²¹ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.6.

This theological context, however, does not mean that penance is exclusively to do with a private relationship to God, or bypasses relationships with others. The penitent may seek to heal the relationship with God, but doing so typically implies also repair of interpersonal relationships – to remove the effects of sin on others. The commutative justice of penance includes the need to address (one’s own) injustice against others.

Furthermore, we might also consider an acquired counterpart to infused penance (although Aquinas does not do so explicitly). This would be acquired through practice, and aligned with the end of natural happiness. The virtue would retain the structure of penance in addressing and seeking to remove the effects of past wrongdoing, as a specific expression of acquired justice, in the context of human communities as such. This is in the way that infused moral virtues and their acquired counterparts differ in cause and final end but share the same material object, that is, their immediate sphere of concern.²²

Either as infused or acquired, however, penance undoubtedly has implications for the repair of interpersonal relationships in human communities. While acknowledging penance’s ultimately theological context, it is these implications on which I focus below.

The Value of Penance as a Virtue

I suggest that there are three basic ways in which the understanding of penance as a virtue helpfully informs an ethical framework for understanding repentance in contemporary social contexts.

Firstly, the identification of penance as not merely an act but a virtue invites Christians and others to go beyond superficial measures to the deeper transformation required to adequately reckon with one’s own injustice. Aquinas emphasizes that taking responsibility for one’s own wrongdoing involves a fundamental movement of the *person*, which goes beyond reparative *acts*. Penance, as a virtue of individuals, is also useful in articulating the personal transformation that must accompany structural reform for social transformation or reconciliation to be effective and stable.

Secondly, Aquinas’ integration of backward- and forward-looking objectives rightfully encourages approaches to justice that are pragmatic and future-oriented, while informed by an adequate understanding of the past. At one point in his account Aquinas explicitly considers an objection, versions of which are familiar to us today from popular discourse about justice. Essentially, this

²² Aquinas, *Summa*, I-II.63.4. See William C. Mattison III, “Can Christians Possess the Acquired Cardinal Virtues?”, *Theological Studies* 72, no. 3 (2011): 561-563. Additional evidence that infused penance could share such a material object (human acts of sin and repentance) with an acquired counterpart is that Aquinas confirms that penance, as an infused *moral* but not a *theological* virtue, is referred to God but that “God is not its matter or object.” Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.3 *ad* 1.

objection is that the penitent is stuck in the past. Is the penitent not being unreasonable in focusing on what has been done, since one cannot change what has already happened? His own response remains useful: it is not possible to change what was done, but it is usually possible to go some way to removing the lasting effects of what was done.²³ One must, at least, make the best possible attempt to establish just relationships.²⁴

Thirdly, Aquinas' integration of passions with action in penance persuasively measures the value of personal shame with reference to its potential to stimulate active, effective, justice in the agent. Although it is essentially in the will, penance is also passionate. It arises with an accompanying affective movement, the shame for past sin. The penitent may engage intensively in the kind of 'bitter lamentation' of Jeremiah 6:26. Aquinas tells us that in certain cases such expressions respect the mean of penance – that is, they would be entirely appropriate, rather than unnecessarily dramatic. How do we measure this appropriateness? By whether it leads to actions from the agent that help to actually restore equity between persons.²⁵

Penance here is meant as a virtue of individuals; I leave for future inquiry the question of whether the language of this virtue can be applied to the level of various kinds of collectives – for instance, to the idea of a nation repenting as such. Even as a virtue of individuals, however, penance is a virtue with profound social and political implications.

This is essentially because the ways that we moral agents act unjustly – and therefore the ways in which we make amends – are inextricably bound up with the norms, narratives and structures of the social contexts in which we find ourselves. Aquinas' identification of penance as a species of justice, a virtue which presumes the situatedness of persons within communities, already gestures towards this social dimension. Beyond Aquinas, we can take advantage of the greater resources that contemporary theology and the social sciences have for understanding these modes of formation. For instance, from the Catholic tradition, the notion of structures of sin, and, more recently, structures of virtue and vice, helps to do this.²⁶ With this contemporary consciousness, we may think of the virtue of penance as guiding responses to the recognition of wrongs against others that represent our own culpable contribution, as individuals, to broader dynamics of, for example, racial, economic, or environmental injustice; these responses may include the attempt to change unjust structures themselves.

²³ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.1 *ad* 3.

²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.3 *ad* 2.

²⁵ Aquinas, *Summa*, III.85.3 *ad* 2.

²⁶ See Daniel J. Daly, *The Structures of Virtue and Vice* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2021). Daly's understanding also makes possible a way of speaking about structural penance, namely with regard to the influence of a structure on the formation of penance in individuals.

An Exemplar of Penance

The life of Nagase Takashi (1918-2011) exemplified penance, a virtue which is deeply personal, and intimately interpersonal, but with clear political resonances. Nagase's story became known in the West particularly through his involvement with Eric Lomax (1919-2012); Lomax tells the story in his memoir, *The Railway Man*.²⁷

Nagase was a member of the Japanese army and military secret police in World War II. In Thailand, he participated in the torture of prisoners of war, including the especially harsh interrogation of Lomax, a British officer who was suspected of plotting against his captors. Both survived the war but with great trauma. Nagase came to feel great sorrow for what he had done to Lomax in particular, and in the war more generally, and to attempt to atone for this.²⁸

Extraordinarily, Nagase and Lomax were able to communicate, and eventually meet, much later in life. Though Lomax had harbored fantasies of revenge for many years, Nagase, 'through his complete humility, turned this around.'²⁹ After spending time with Nagase, and coming to understand the sincerity of his repentance – 'it was truly almost a way of life'³⁰ – Lomax felt able to forgive him face-to-face. Lomax described how they spent a 'a lot of time together, talking and laughing. It transpired that we had much in common.' They became good friends.³¹

In the intervening years, Nagase had been active in offering information to former enemies, including helping to locate graves shortly after the war, doing charitable works, and in campaigning against militarism (a primary focus of his later life).³² He had become a devout Buddhist, and even built a temple at the site of an infamous bridge where prisoners died doing manual labor in brutal conditions. Before coming into contact with Lomax again, he had a spiritual experience of peace, feeling a sense of completion with regard to his reparative efforts. But on hearing of Lomax – in a letter sent by Eric's wife, Patricia Lomax – he was taken aback. He responded that this initial communication had 'beaten me down wholly, reminding me of my dirty old days,' yet that, 'I think having received such a letter from you is my destiny.'³³ Nagase felt the need to, and did, make every effort to assist Lomax, according to Lomax's needs.

²⁷ Eric Lomax, *The Railway Man: A POW's Searing Account of War, Brutality, and Forgiveness* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012).

²⁸ I focus not on the evaluation of Nagase's actions in the war but the structure of his penance according to his own understanding of its necessity.

²⁹ "Eric Lomax," The Forgiveness Project, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.theforgivenessproject.com/stories/eric-lomax>.

³⁰ Lomax, *Railway Man*, 265.

³¹ "Lomax," The Forgiveness Project.

³² Lomax, *Railway Man*, 255-265; "Lomax," The Forgiveness Project.

³³ Lomax, *Railway Man*, 264. Lomax records the text of Nagase's written response.

In his treatment of forgiveness, the philosopher Charles Griswold refers to the story of Nagase and Lomax (for Griswold a paradigm case of both repentance and forgiveness).³⁴ For him, Nagase is an example of someone whose repentance meets certain criteria, such that it counts as sufficient.³⁵ We may look beyond the fulfillment of conditions, however, to the way that Nagase exemplifies the virtue of penance.

Nagase's case illustrates penance as a virtue in the following ways. Firstly, his transformation was at a fundamental level of character and, as such, penance worked to 'open the door' to other vital virtues, goods, and relationships. Secondly, he engaged closely with the truth of his own past actions, and history of the context in which he committed them, at the service of future-orientated repair. Thirdly, his deep shame for what he had done motivated just actions of practical and spiritual significance. In combining his own personal transformation, and the interpersonal exchange with Lomax, with his advocacy for communal conversion, he also demonstrates the political implications of the virtue of penance.

Conclusion

In sum, Aquinas' account of penance helps us move towards an adequate understanding of repentance in contemporary theology by understanding penance as a virtue, uniting backward- and forward-looking objectives, and integrating affections and action. As a virtue whereby individuals respond to their own injustice within a social context, it has transformative effects on both the penitent and those to whom they seek to make amends.

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³⁴ Charles L. Griswold, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 95-98. I leave aside in this discussion the relation of penance to forgiveness.

³⁵ On repentance see Griswold, *Forgiveness*, 47-53. Griswold also mentions the idea that such acts may be linked to a virtue, see 18, but does not develop this.

Griffin, Michael. *The Politics of Penance: Proposing an Ethic for Social Repair*. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016.

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