

Living Faith in a Culture of Fear: Love as the Key to a Culture of Connection

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“It’s during the winter, while we sit around the fire, drinking sweet wine and eating chick peas, that we ask the ancient questions. ‘Who are you?’ ‘Where are you going?’ ‘How old are you, my dear one?’ ‘How old were you when the fear came?’” The words are attributed to the Greek philosopher Xenophon; the questions are still ours. If they were ancient to Xenophon in the fourth century B.C.E., think how deeply embedded they are in the human condition. Questions of origin and destiny, identity and the unknown: these rivet our attention today.

What did Xenophon mean by “the fear”? Elsewhere in his *Anabasis*, Xenophon speaks of “*the* fear,” prefacing it always with a definite article.¹ In so doing, he turns away from derivative fears that demand an object, fears *of* something, whether snakes or spiders, tidal waves or tornados, war or plague, to a kind of primal and organizing emotion that embraces them

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all. From Socrates to Shakespeare to Ernest Becker to Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, thoughtful people identify that primal aversion as *the* fear of death. Yet the fear of death is given particular expression in the United States as the second millennium begins.

In the first part of this article, I will take Xenophon's insight and examine fear particularly as it plays out in religious and political landscapes of twenty-first century United States of America. Then I will explore love as a way of casting out fear and establishing a culture of connection. The responses will relate this article to formation and supervision in ministry.

FROM LOVE TO FEAR: A CULTURE OF FEAR

Journalist and contributing editor to *Harper's* Earl Shorris wonders how, in half a century, the United States has gone "from love of God and one's fellow man to fear of God and one's fellow man."² Initially researching a book on the Religious Right, he found himself studying the culture of fear that permeates the nation's mediating institutions, a culture characterized by a fearful relationship to God and a fearful relationship toward the other. His work points to religious and political dimensions of the fall-out from a culture of fear.

My life spans the half-century Shorris describes and my experience confirms his hunch. I remember growing up with a God of love, a divine and all-pervasive smiling yellow face of stickers and post-its. Now I'm not so sure. Wrath and judgment supplant that smile. I wonder if "the fear of the Lord [that] is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 1:7, NRSV) has given way to a fear of damnation from a vengeful God. Popular spiritualities and religious movements alike seem driven by a need for expiation. What changed?

"I AM BECOME DEATH, THE DESTROYER OF ALL WORLDS"

Two events in the twentieth century give the primal and organizing fear of death its particular religious expression. Hiroshima and the Holocaust raised the specter, not simply of personal death, but of collective death. Writing from the cold heart of the Cold War, poet Richard Wilbur struggles to think the unthinkable:

Spare us all word of the weapons, their force and range,
 The long numbers that rocket the mind;
 Our slow, unreckoning hearts will be left behind,
 Unable to fear what is too strange.

Nor shall you scare us with talk of the death of the race.
 How should we dream of this place without us?—
 The sun mere fire, the leaves untroubled about us,
 A stone look on the stone's face?

Speak of the world's own change. Though we cannot conceive
 Of an undreamt thing, we know to our cost
 How the dreamt cloud crumbles, the vines are blackened by frost,
 How the view alters...³

Wilbur wrote his poem in the early 1960s when I was in grade school. As vividly as I remember watching the 1961 flight of Alan Shepard in *Freedom 7*, the United State's inaugural venture into space, I remember compulsory nuclear attack drills that hunkered us down under our desks on a cold linoleum floor. These two mental snapshots are not unrelated. *Freedom 7* was a "flight" toward what President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) would later call "The High Frontier." It was simultaneously a "flight" from a planet contemplating the perils of nuclear war. Even as schoolchildren, we were being prepared for "the death of the race."⁴ Collective death signals the death of everything, even annihilation of the earth itself. Earl Shorris cogently argues the pervasiveness of this fear of collective death:

The fear of the death of everything creates a different logic, an encompassing urgency. What cannot be explained away as the error of conservationists (pollution, global warming), the miscalculation of astronomers (asteroids, comets), or the movies (extraterrestrials, mutant monsters) calls for putting politics in the hands of an omnipotent defender. It could be the prince of war or peace; nothing else matters as long as the defender is omnipotent and on our side.⁵

Shorris, however, only hints at how it fuels a fear of collective damnation, and he misses entirely why Americans might fear this. Although Shorris brilliantly elaborates the joint impact of Hiroshima and the Holocaust on the American psyche, he fails to examine how it burdened the national conscience.

THE QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

Buried somewhere in the conscience of this “one nation under God” is the question of responsibility. We dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, inaugurating the age that sent Shepard into space and schoolchildren scurrying for cover. We ushered in an age that our present president, George W. Bush, keeps mispronouncing as “nucular.” Whether callous or merely callow, the repeated mispronunciation of “nuclear” trivializes the significance of nuclear warfare and masks our signature responsibility in pioneering it. The moral burden was not lost on the one of its key scientists. J. Robert Oppenheimer remembers the explosion of the first atomic bomb near Almagordo, New Mexico, on July 16, 1945, only three weeks before the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki: “We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried. Most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*... ‘I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.’”⁶

In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 70,000 people were killed in the immediate aftermath of the bombings. Five years later, the number of deaths had escalated to 200,000. The bombings hastened the end of the war, but they also left a world shadowed by the possibility of a man-made and widespread collective death. To this point, this possibility had existed largely in terms of natural disaster: the waves of bubonic plague that depopulated Europe in the Middle Ages, the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the explosion of Krakatoa in the Sunda Strait in 1883. The powers that leveled two Japanese cities were not natural. Nor were they unnatural or supernatural, though Oppenheimer invoked scripture sacred to the Hindus. The architects of that death were a team of American scientists. As the contemporary comic-strip character Pogo put it: “We have met the enemy—and he is us.” How have we as a nation wrestled with our need for expiation?

The other defining horror was the Holocaust. National responsibility for this obscene exercise in collective death, which killed over five million Jews, rests at the feet of Hitler’s Nazi Germany. Many in this country knew of the death camps, but the United States entered the conflict only in December 1941, after the bombing of its Navy at Pearl Harbor and a full two years after France and Great Britain had declared war on Germany. The moral culpability of a passive bystander differs from being the active agent of genocide, as the United States had been in developing and dropping the

atom bomb on two Japanese cities.⁷ In the language of moral philosophy, an act of commission is not the moral equivalent of an act of omission. Still, acts of omission register on the scale of culpability, many included in a category Aristotle identifies as “moral incontinence” or *akrasia*, knowing “the right thing to do”—and not doing it, but instead doing nothing or doing the merely expedient thing.⁸

With Hiroshima and the Holocaust, Americans confront our responsibility for collective death, whether it is a direct responsibility or a passive complicity. Perhaps more than anything, the sense of collective damnation and the resulting need for some kind of expiation or atonement catalyzed the beginnings of the Religious Right. Evangelist Billy Graham drew both the fears of collective death and collective damnation into a single “crusade” for salvation. The logic was deceptively simple: “You’re born. You suffer. You die. Fortunately, there’s a loophole.”⁹ That loophole was belief in Jesus.

Graham’s use of the term “crusade” reveals a lot about the agenda of what would later become the Religious Right. It hearkened back to a centuries-long series of religious campaigns waged by Christians against both Jews and Muslims. In so doing, however, it unmasked two things about the new movement: its political tendencies and its need for an enemy. Is it not surprising that in an early, gut-level reaction to September 11, 2001, then President George W. Bush invoked the language of “holy war” and “crusade” to justify the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan?

The judged are always quick to judge others, as they search for someone worse than them. Sports offers better analysis than political philosophy: the best defense is a good offense. Beneath all this religious belligerence lies a kind of national uncertainty *vis á vis* the Creator. After Hiroshima and the Holocaust, can we still stand as Puritan leader John Winthrop’s vaunted “city on the hill?”¹⁰ Does God still love us as a nation? As long as the answer to these questions remains open, the religious landscape remains riddled with fear.

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF A CULTURE OF FEAR

“We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” As he stood in the Ellipse that wintry day in 1933, my father-in-law remembers that the only thing he was really afraid of was frostbite.¹¹ But Roosevelt was not talking about the

weather. He was on the front end of a presidency that encompassed the Great Depression and World War II, two looming events in the last century. How far has this country traveled from Roosevelt's insight? How did fear overwhelm the political landscape as well?

Fear has become the *lingua franca* of political discourse. No robust sense of hope challenges fear in this political season. Hope is prominent, but pallid. It features in many of the political slogans in the 2008 campaign—and one of the candidates boasts of being another “man from Hope” (Mike Huckabee from Hope, Arkansas). Barack Obama's slogans play on a popular ad for a less-than-popular dairy product: “Got hope?” Yet he shows how easy it is to use the rhetoric of hope to inspire fear. Journalist Sharon Begley picked up a telling statement from Obama's campaign in Iowa:

We have to break that fever of fear...Unfortunately what I've been seeing from the Republican debates is that they are going to perpetuate this fearmongering...Rudy gets up and says, 'They are trying to kill you'...It's absolutely true there are 30,000 to 40,000 jihadists who would be happy to strap on a bomb right now, walk in here and blow us all up. You can't negotiate with those folks. All we can do is capture them, kill them, imprison them. And that is one of my pre-eminent jobs as president of the United States. Keep nuclear weapons out of their hands.

Even a candidate promoting hope plays on fear to make a point. “Half a century of research has shown that fear is one of the most politically powerful emotions a candidate can tap,” observes Sharon Begley covering the 2008 presidential campaign.¹² The politics of fear even gives rise to a new academic discipline: political psychology, whose chief spokesman is Emory University academic Drew Westen. Drawing on half a century of research, he concludes that fear is one of the most powerful political motivators, along with hatred, hope, and anxiety.¹³ Not coincidentally, Westen examines studies emerged during the half century Earl Shorris referred to when he noted that “love of God and love of one's fellow man” had turned all to fear.

Pundits market fear; politicians manipulate it; and the electorate is left in a terminal state of anxiety, waiting for the next shoe to drop. On November 4, 2008, we won't vote our party or our values; we won't even vote our head or our heart. We'll vote our fears, and whoever manages it most cleverly will have won. The fall-out from this politics of fear is three-fold: manipulation, incantation, and enemies.

FEAR IS EASY TO MANIPULATE

Fear is governed more by image than argument. Lyndon B. Johnson capitalized on the horrifying mushroom cloud of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the 1964 presidential campaign against Barry Goldwater. His signature ad depicts a girl child in a field of tall grass picking petals off a daisy. Suddenly there is a big ominous boom, and she turns to see the sickening shape of a mushroom cloud materialize on the horizon. A voice-over intones: "These are the stakes...vote for President Johnson." The brief segment telegraphed to voters the fear that the more hawkish Goldwater would bring Hiroshima to our shores. The image stuck: people remembered the message every time they saw it. Commercials for California's 1994 Proposition 187, an anti-immigrant ballot initiative, featured a shot of the border with Mexicans streaming across to El Norte. The voice-over simply said: "They keep coming." When election day rolled around, fifty nine percent of the state's voters replayed the commercial in their heads rather than listening to the arguments. The proposition passed.

The pancaking World Trade Towers from 9/11 run over and over again as a trailer in some corner of our corporate memory. Constant repetition of those images from that day seared them upon the national consciousness. By the end of the day, I could no longer watch the footage. On one hand, repetition trivialized the tragedy, rendering us callous to the event and making familiar something that should stay segregated from ordinary reality. On the other, repetition re-terrorized us. Watching the towers over and over again seemed somehow obscene and irreverent: I had to turn the television off. Fear entralls us, and a government of the fearful, by the fearful, and for the fearful risks tyranny. The strategy plays to our darker natures. Is that a good thing?

INCANTATIONAL POLITICS

Slogans repeated over and over again gain the appearance of truth, even if they prove false. By the time the United States invaded Iraq, almost three-quarters of all Americans thought Saddam Hussein directly supported Osama bin Laden, simply because they'd heard it repeated so often. Repetition eclipsed fact: Hussein governed a secularist Muslim regime of the sort bin Laden despised. Now we watch the surreal juxtaposition of carnage in

the streets of Baghdad alongside clips of leaders who repeat the mantra: “Things are getting better; things are getting better; things are getting better.” No wonder so much of this country finds Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show” more credible than FOX News and MSNBC. Laughter is one way of cutting down political cant. But when people trust “fake news” more than network broadcasts, they become a cynical citizenry. Getting them to take politics seriously again will be a huge feat.¹⁴

THE FINAL FALLOUT OF THE POLITICS OF FEAR IS THE NEED FOR ENEMIES

People who have trouble leading from strength—or finding any strength to lead from—lead from fear instead. Fear demands an enemy—and if there is no enemy lurking, it creates one. Sometimes fear creates a whole “axis of evil.” But be forewarned: it’s very hard to negotiate with a country you’ve so labeled. And it’s even harder to keep up the good appearance that rendering such judgment demands.

With enemies comes paranoia. Because you never know exactly who the enemies are, they could be everywhere and they could be anyone. At their best, the classic “just-war” criteria were really “justifiable” war criteria.¹⁵ Morally, they raised the bar for a declaration of war. Morally, they stipulated the challenges that needed to be met before war could be declared (*jus ad bellum*) and in the waging of war itself (*jus in bello*): identifying an enemy, putting forth reasons for engaging in conflict, distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants, and, most important, curbing initial and unprovoked aggression. These criteria would have brought needed clarity to the amorphous “War on Terror.” At the very least, they would have forced us to think through what it meant to engage the sovereign nations of Iraq and Afghanistan in order to combat a trans-national enemy (al Qaeda). They would have compelled us to submit to public scrutiny the rationale for invading Iraq—and judged us when we prevaricated. The initial rationale, threats from weapons of mass destruction and contact between Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, quickly shifted to “liberating the people of Iraq” when it was shown to be false. Finally, “just-war” criteria would have forced us to be concrete and specific in the weighty business of war; it would have disallowed engaging a “War on Terror,” which can then be waged against whomever gets slapped with that label.

Would the moral burden to offer such clarification have prevented these conflicts? We can only hope.

An abstract war against unknown aggressors only raises people's anxieties. Indeed, the "War on Terror" contributes to a general state of national and personal paranoia in this country. It feeds a new diplomacy whose motto seems to be "America Against the World," a statecraft that has only shifted the image of "the ugly American" to the image of "the dangerous one." It also creates fear of other citizens: you never know who might be a terrorist. The situation is not far from one Hannah Arendt described in her work on the forms of political life: "the most outstanding characteristic of tyranny was that it rested on isolation—on the isolation of the tyrant from his subjects and the isolation of the subjects from each other through mutual fear and suspicion."¹⁶ Americans see this isolation in both foreign and domestic affairs. Our external diplomatic relations and our internal policies towards immigrants and national security both feed on fear—and breed it.

FROM FEAR TO LOVE: A CULTURE OF CONNECTION

Every theology speaks from a particular standpoint. Particularity makes theology concrete; it also limits it. Every theology has only a partial point-of-view, from which something, but perhaps not everything, can be seen.¹⁷ I want to say what can be said theologically about fear from a particular standpoint within the spectrum of Christian theologies. Of necessity, this point-of-view is limited, both by my location and by my relative unfamiliarity with traditions other than my own. Because I say nothing about Islam does not mean Islam has nothing to say about fear. It means simply that I can only tell you what I know. Still, that's something. As H. Richard Niebuhr acutely observed: "It is not evident that the man [sic] who is forced to confess that his view of things is conditioned by the standpoint he occupies must doubt the reality of what he sees."¹⁸ My standpoint in Christian theology challenges the culture of fear with a culture of connection. In this second part of the essay, I will try to outline what that culture of connection might contribute to both the religious and political climate in this country.

PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR

The great Greek philosopher Aristotle identified courage as the mean between fearfulness on one hand and recklessness on the other. His standpoint was the Greek *polis*. According to Aristotle's moral calculus, what cast out fear was courage.¹⁹ From the standpoint of Christian theology, however, the opposite of fear is love. 1 John 4:18 puts this boldly: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love." The perfect love that casts out fear comes with the eschaton, but how can we be a little less daunted in the interim? Let me speak from a point-of-view that values both the Reformation and the great tradition that preceded it. Several convictions anchor me in this sea of fear.

First, Christian citizens appreciate **the primacy and reality of divine love**. At their best, Christians find a middle ground between biblical literalism and biblical irrelevance. We take scripture seriously, not simply literally. We take it seriously because it "deals with Christ" (*was Christum treibet*). Christ is God become human, and in the face of Christ we see the face of God. That is not a face of judgment, but a face of love. It isn't the vapid, smiling yellow face of my childhood, but rather a face that finds love in the ashes of Hiroshima, in the death camps of Auschwitz, in the horror of crucifixion. It is a love that does not flinch in the face of personal or collective death; it is the love that conquers death. It is a love that casts out fear, as the author of John's epistle put it so well. This perfect love is the love that stands up to *the* fear Xenophon spoke of twenty-five centuries ago.

Of course, such love is impossible for mere humans. Perfect love is the privilege of God, but it's a privilege shared. Like all blessing love leaks, spilling out onto everything and everyone around it. The author of John's epistle continues: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Divine love sparks human love like a match to tinder-dry wood. We love imperfectly, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't love at all.

Second, Christian citizens have **an anthropology of realism**. We possess a healthy respect for the darker side of human nature, but are (hopefully!) wise enough not to let it ruin political judgment or paralyze moral will. As both "saved and sinning," we get to challenge the judgment of an opponent, so long as we remain suspicious of our own as well. Indeed, part of the Reformation's vaunted "freedom of a Christian" is the freedom to ask

questions, check facts, and challenge mere slogans. This realistic assessment of human nature should curb us from the kind of “spaghetti Western” judgments that permeate politics of late. If all the “saints” wore white hats and all the “sinners” wore black hats, things would be easier—and vaguely racist. An anthropology that finds “saint” and “sinner” in each person starts with the person making the judgments.

From this standpoint, talk of an “axis of evil” makes us restive, not that we don’t believe evil is alive and well in the world. We believe that we also stumble upon it in ourselves, precisely in that too-easy ability to identify our side with “good” and the other side with “evil.” If our own judgements are flawed, our actions are necessarily modest. We know that now “we see in a mirror, dimly,” (1 Corinthians 13:12), and that a course of action may be the best of a range of bad options. Much of political life happens in an arena that is morally gray, with consequences we cannot foresee and implications we cannot predict.

Hannah Arendt identified unpredictability and irreversibility as two consequences of human action. To take the hard edges off these consequences, she prescribes promise-making and forgiveness:

The possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility—of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have known what he was doing—is the faculty of forgiving. The remedy for unpredictability, for the chaotic uncertainty of the future, is contained in the faculty to make and keep promises.²⁰

Arendt crosses the disciplinary boundaries that separate political philosophy and theology by speaking of “redemption.” She knew creatures could not clean up the messes they would make—all by themselves. People needed to take responsibility for what they had done, without denying it and without being burdened forever by its moral freight. They needed to actively reach for new beginnings, a condition of hope she distinctively called “natality,” rather than passively contemplate the certainty of death, mortality. Arendt found these two practices, forgiveness and promise-making, central to political life.

Finally, against the background of the reality of divine love and the realistic assessment of human nature, **forgiveness, particularly in a culture of connection**, emerges as a key spiritual practice. Without forgiveness, as Arendt points out, we would never be released from the consequences of what we have done: “we would be confined to one single deed from which

we could never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever, not unlike the sorcerer's apprentice who lacked the magic formula to break the spell.²¹ Forgiveness is essential to life in community, whether the community is a nation or the more intimate bond of friends. In both arenas, forgiveness involves a three-fold process of repenting, remembering, and reconciling. Repentance turns away from vengeance, inviting all parties to acknowledge their own capacity for violence. Repentance refuses retaliation and embraces connection instead. Remembering overturns the popular counsel to "forgive and forget." Trying to forget injustice only fuels passive-aggression and denial. Memory riveted to the past refreshes an injury; memory open to the future incorporates the past into a new future. This way of remembering allows us quite literally to be "remembered" into political communities. Reconciliation refuses to see the world in terms of "us against them," creating enemies to buttress a shaky sense of identity. The world becomes a place of near and distant neighbors instead, neighbors with whom we have to share life on this fragile planet.²²

In the aftermath of apartheid, South Africa established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, so that victims and perpetrators could come together and be reconciled. Guatemala's thirty-six-year-long civil war, during which citizens were forcibly drafted to fight other citizens, needed similar truth telling. The Roman Catholic Church's Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory Project made a systemic effort to tell the stories from all sides of the conflict, so that the nation could be healed.²³ Why has this not happened in the United States, given its agency in Hiroshima and its complicity in the Holocaust? What would the experience of asking for forgiveness look like? And what stories would need to be told?

AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

Can love be a political virtue? Certainly Aristotle thought so. After thorough taxonomy of the virtues necessary for civic life and the vices that corrode, he comes to the signature quality of love. Friendship, he writes, "seems to hold states together and lawgivers apparently devote more attention to it than to justice...When people are friends, they have no need of justice, but when they are just, they need friendship in addition."²⁴ Aristotle was not naive about the impact of nepotism on political life. He dismissed this as a lesser order of friendship, based on mere utility or pleasure. The

kind of friendship so necessary to political life was based on virtue, a union between people of good will.

Christian citizens turn to the apostle Paul for insight into this signature virtue of love, and Paul does not disappoint. In a letter to the cosmopolitan Corinthians, he identifies three virtues for life in the interim: "And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13) The text is often read at weddings; it could easily be read at political causes. There is here nothing exclusionary; indeed, there is room here for the plurality of faiths present in twenty-first century America, along with the hope we share in a common future. Fear erodes relationships between the individual and God and between the individual and others. It may even alienate the individual from her own soul. What casts out fear, however, is not courage, but love.

I close with a brief interpretation of the apostle Paul's counsel to another community, this one at Galatia: "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22). Love re-establishes relationship and creates connection. Nine dispositions tether us to God, to the neighbor, and to the self, supporting a web of relationships. The first three—love, joy, and peace—link us to God. We can use them as a compass pointing us to the true north. Where these dispositions surface in our lives, God works. The reverse is true: where God works, these dispositions surface. The soundtrack for this first dimension of the Spirit's fruit is the chant "*ubi caritas*"—but add two more. "Where there is love and joy and peace, there is God." The next strands—patience, kindness, and generosity—ground our relationships to others. This second dimension of the Spirit's fruit translates love, joy, and peace into the language of human contact. As we interface with the people around us, we lean on the everyday love of kindness, a generosity fueled by the sense of joyous surplus, and the long-tempered character of peace-making patience. Finally, the Spirit shows us our best selves in the virtues of faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. Placing faithfulness here reminds us that infidelity also destroys the soul's integrity. We become that sorry soul Plato described in the *Gorgias*, forever "at variance with himself."²⁵ Meekness holds in check a power that could destroy others and shatter the self. Finally, self-control turns all of our relationships back to God, letting love pull us into a divine embrace. In these nine habits of the heart, the Spirit binds us to relationships with God, the neighbor, and the self.

These nine dispositions, infused by the Spirit's love, create a culture of connection.

Fear rips these relationships apart, isolating a citizen from God, from others, even from herself. When Roosevelt told Americans that "we have nothing to fear but fear itself," he wasn't thinking about the vices, but he was right to name the power of fear. Fear undoes the Spirit's careful work. Fear manifests in our relationship to God, when we doubt God's love for us. Here Psalm 139:1 offers a soundtrack: "O Lord, you have searched me and known me." A culture of fear reads this as the Divine Surveillance Psalm, with God the parole officer, we the hapless parolee—until one heard its steady beat of yearning. God longs for us the way a lover longs for the beloved. Ask a lover why she loves, and she'll give you chapter and verse: a cowlick, the way he lays a napkin on the table after dinner, the way she wrinkles her nose, and always the hands. There's nothing abstract about this list. Love lodges in the particulars. That's the way God loves us, and Psalm 139 bears witness.

Fear manifests in our relationships to our neighbors in the guise of envy and jealousy. More marriages run aground on envy than jealousy, observed John Bayley, spouse of novelist and occasional philosopher Iris Murdoch. Envy wants what someone else has, while jealousy longs to have exclusive claim on her affections. Both are fruitless distractions, born of the common fear of not being good enough, not being worthy enough, not being lovable. Bayley wanted to be a novelist, until he fell in love with his far more successful wife. Wisely he shifted his energies to Russian literature, and theirs was a great passion. Fear almost burned the house down.

Finally, fear carves a path of self-destruction. Fear of not being lovable grounds the seemingly contradictory vices of pride and self-negation. The Pharisee Within is also the Publican Within. Pride needs endless adulation to counter what arrogance most fears: "I'm really worthless." Those who struggle with self-esteem just get the point more quickly. Both are wrong. God's love banishes the Inner Pharisee and the Inner Publican alike. If there is a unity of the virtues, as theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas suggests, it is love.²⁶ There may be a unity to the vices as well, and fear is the worm in the garden, poisoning love's fruit. We see the effect in our present culture of fear. Let us lean on love to reconnect.

NOTES

1. Xenophon, *Anabasis*, trans. C.L. Brownson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).
2. Earl Shorris, *The Politics of Heaven: America in Fearful Times* (New York: Norton, 2007), 3.
3. Richard Wilbur, "Advice to a Prophet," in *The Poems of Richard Wilbur* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963), 6.
4. Hannah Arendt opens her magisterial book, *The Human Condition*, with a powerful illustration of the effect of space travel on the worldliness she sought to cultivate. Though she wrote before the voyage of Freedom 7, she acutely foresaw its impact. She is a philosopher for all times, but especially ours. Cf. *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958), "Prologue."
5. Shorris, *The Politics of Heaven*, 28.
6. Quoted in John Bartlett, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, ed. Justin Kaplan (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 714b. From Len Giovanitti and Fred Freed, *The Decision to Drop the Bomb* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1965).
7. Again in 1994, under President William J. Clinton, the United States stood along the sidelines in 1994 as the genocide in Rwanda claimed 937,000 victims.
8. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 7 (1144b14–1154b35) in *The Library of Liberal Arts*, trans. Martin Ostwald (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1962), 174–213. Shorris also picks up on moral incontinence or moral weakness in his book, *The Politics of Heaven*, 311ff. Indeed, he asserts: "Fear is the great passion of the incontinent" (319). Interestingly, he gives as an example the alliance Hillary Clinton struck with Rupert Murdoch, attributing it to an excess of the love of honor on her part and an excess of the love of gain on his. His closing comment: "They are both incontinent, if either is a good person" (321). ["Incontinence should not be confused with ignorance, and the kind of incontinence discussed here has only to do with good people, those who know what they ought to do... Ignorance is much less dangerous than incontinence, because one can be cured with knowledge, but the other, carried out in full knowledge of what ought to be done, is a surrender to passion and excess that infects a person's life and can be cured only with temperance, which is a rare attribute in the formerly incontinent" (321). This section finally shed light on my own dis-ease with someone I should mostly agree with—but finally do not admire.]
9. Shorris, *The Politics of Heaven*, 109. Shorris never mentions the possibility of "collective damnation," though everything in his argument suggests it. Perhaps this is because he never treats the possibility of national culpability, active responsibility, and passive complicity. These surely lodge deeply in the national psyche, shaping politics and religion more than we know.
10. John Winthrop (1588–1649), first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, used the illustration in a 1630 sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity."
11. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1933.
12. Sharon Begley, "The Roots of Fear," *Newsweek* (Dec. 24, 2007).

13. Drew Westen, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007). See also the book review by columnist David Brooks, "Stop Making Sense," *The New York Times: Book Review* (August 26, 2007) at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/26/books/review/Brooks-t.html?_r=1&scp=7&sq=Political+Brain&st=nyt&oref=slogin.
14. Barack Obama may be able to re-energize an understandably cynical younger generation. The Iowa Caucuses of 2008 showed a huge turnout on the part of twenty- and thirty-something voters, precisely the demographic to whom "fake news" appeal.
15. For an overview of this tradition that is both thoughtful and critical, see Gary M. Simpson, *War, Peace, and God: Rethinking the Just-War Tradition* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 2007).
16. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 202ff. Arendt goes on to argue that tyrannies stifle power, which is the capacity of a citizenry speaking and acting together. Because they depend on an isolated buttressed by mutual fear and suspicion, tyrannies can only operate using force and violence. Thus, she defines tyranny as "the always abortive attempt to substitute violence for power" (203).
17. Cf. Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," in Linda J. Nicolson ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 133–156. Bordo contrasts meta-narratives that promised a universal perspective, the "dream of everywhere," to more modest partial perspectives, "views from somewhere."
18. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. 1941), 13.
19. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.7 (1116a10) in *The Library of Liberal Arts*, trans. Martin Ostwald (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1962), 71.
20. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 237.
21. Ibid.
22. Cf. Martha Ellen Stortz, *A World According to God* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), especially the chapter on forgiveness, 93-111.
23. The Office of Human Rights, the Archdiocese of Guatemala, *Guatemala: Never Again! The Official Report of the Human Rights Office* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Press, 1999).
24. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.1 (1155a22-30), 215.
25. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 352a
26. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II.65.1; I-II.61.4 ad 1. Cf. Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).