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THE CRESSET

A review of literature, the arts, and public affairs

Advent/Christmas 2008



Robert Benne, Jennifer Hora, and Chris Bonneau on the 2008 Elections

Linda Ferguson on John Adams's Doctor Atomic

J. D. Buhl on Free Jazz and the Freedom of the Christian

Gary Fincke on Jungle Music and Tom Willadsen on Country Music



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in luce tua

Our Hopes and Fears

CHANGE CARRIED THE DAY. WHEN AMERICANS went to the polls last month, the result was indisputable. Senator Obama's seven-point popular vote margin marks a decisive rejection of the status quo and of the Republican Party's leadership of the nation. After eight years of the George W. Bush administration, voters have given Obama and the Democratic Party control of the Presidency along with both houses of Congress.

In many ways, this is an exciting and hopeful time in our public life. The next four years will bring many changes. There is no doubt that Barack Obama and his administration will present a striking contrast from the present administration in everything from ideology and public policy down to matters of simple tone and style. And the election of the United States' first black president suggests that an even more important change is happening. If a black man can be elected president, then surely this country someday can overcome its problems with race.

But this is also a worrisome time. We are now facing one of the greatest economic crises in recent history. The stock market keeps falling; banks are closing; workers are losing their jobs. And the economy is only the most recent of our worries. The memory of 9-11 and the fear of new terrorist attacks still linger in our minds. We wonder if our government—a government in which Americans' express historically low levels of confidence—is up to the many challenges looming on the horizon: the economy, international terrorism, climate change, Social Security reform, health care costs.

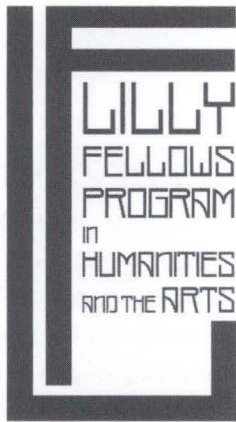
In this time of both hope and fear, *The Cresset* has asked three scholars of American politics and public life to offer their interpretations of the

recent elections. What did these elections mean and where are we going from here. These scholars gave us, of course, three different answers. Chris W. Bonneau sees the election of Barack Obama as presenting an opportunity for a genuine transformation of American public life, while regular *Cresset* contributor Robert Benne is more skeptical of the changes that Obama and a newly emboldened Democratic majority might make. Finally, Jennifer Hora considers factors that will make it difficult for Obama to deliver on any of his promised changes.

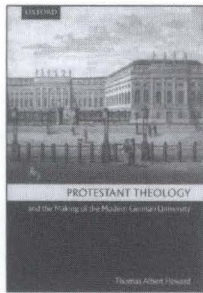
For those who have had enough of politics for a while, this issue also offers four essays on another, more harmonious, aspect of American public life—our music. These essays look at four different kinds of music and the role that each can play in our culture and our lives. Linda Ferguson reviews *Dr. Atomic*, an opera by American composer John Adams that tells the story of the test of the first atomic bomb at Los Alamos National Laboratory in 1945. J. D. Buhl considers the musical form of free jazz as a model of the freedom of the Gospel. Gary Fincke writes about the influence of African American rock and roll in a white, working class town where racial resentments bubbled just beneath the surface, and finally Tom Willadsen recounts how he learned to love (and hate) country music, an art form that expresses the humor and modesty in the hearts of the American people.

Also in this issue, we revive a column that has not appeared in *The Cresset* for several years. The Pop Culture column returns with a new installment from Luther Seminary professor Christian Scharen, who reflects on finding Jesus in the most unexpected places. †

—JPO



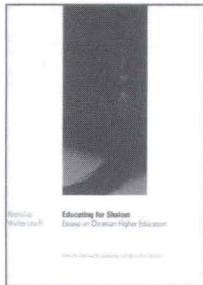
2007 WINNER



Protestant Theology and the Making of the Modern German University

By Thomas Albert Howard, Associate Professor of History, Gordon College Director, Jerusalem & Athens Forum Oxford University Press, 2006

2006 WINNER



Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education

By Nicholas Wolterstorff, Noah Porter Professor Emeritus of Philosophical Theology and Fellow of Berkeley College at Yale University
Edited by Clarence W. Joldersma and Gloria Goris Stronks, Calvin College
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004

Announcing the Third Biennial Lilly Fellows Program Book Award

The Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts invites nominations for the Lilly Fellows Program Book Award.

The biennial Lilly Fellows Program Book Award honors an original and imaginative work from any academic discipline that best exemplifies the central ideas and principles animating the Lilly Fellows Program. These include faith and learning in the Christian intellectual tradition, the vocation of teaching and scholarship, and the history, theory or practice of the university as the site of religious inquiry and culture.

Works under consideration should address the historical or contemporary relation of Christian intellectual life and scholarship to the practice of teaching as a Christian vocation or to the past, present, and future of higher education.

Single authored books or edited collections in any discipline, published in 2006, 2007 or 2008, are eligible.

A Prize of \$3000 will be awarded at the Lilly Fellows Program National Conference at Calvin College, October 2-4, 2009.

The committee will receive nominations from academic faculty, clergy, and others.

Nomination deadline is March 1, 2009

For nomination procedures and further information, please visit:
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The Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts, established in 1991, seeks to strengthen the quality and shape the character of church-related institutions of higher learning for the twenty-first century.

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The Lilly Fellows Program in Humanities and the Arts is based in Christ College, the interdisciplinary honors college of Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana.
For more information, please consult the Lilly Fellows Program website at

www.lillyfellows.org

An Eve of Construction

John Adams's *Doctor Atomic*

Linda C. Ferguson

“That I may rise and stand,
o’erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow,
burn and make me new...”

John Donne (1572–1631)
Holy Sonnet No. 14

A SURPRISING AMOUNT OF MUSIC HAS BEEN written about the atomic bomb. *Not* surprisingly, much of it has come from popular culture, often well positioned to respond quickly to current events. On 6 August 2005—the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, an audio-video anthology was released (“detonated” according to promotional materials) entitled *Atomic Platters: Cold War Music from the Golden Age of Homeland Security*. This set, published by Bear Family Records, contained Public Service announcements (some recorded by popular entertainers of the 1950s) and more than one hundred songs, including Slim Gaillard’s “Atomic Cocktail” (1945), Doris Day’s “Tic Tic Tic” (1949), The Commodores’ “Uranium” (1955), and Tom Lehrer’s “We’ll All Go Together When We Go” (1959). The DVD contained short subject anti-Communist and civil defense films, including the classic “Duck and Cover,” which extended bomb paranoia to a whole generation of school children in the mid-1950s.

“If the button is pushed,
there’s no runnin’ away
There’ll be no one to save,
with the world in a grave
...We’re on the eve of destruction.”

P. F. Sloan
sung by Barry McGuire (1965)

In October of that same anniversary year, 2005, American composer John Adams unleashed his *Doctor Atomic* at the San Francisco Opera. It was premiered in Europe by De Nederlandse Opera of Amsterdam in June 2007 and was staged at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in the 2007–2008 season. Both Amsterdam and Chicago offered the original Peter Sellers production. A new production was mounted by the New York Metropolitan Opera in the current (2008–2009) season and included in the Saturday broadcast series including HD delivery to participating movie theaters across the country. (The impressions described in this essay are based on the Chicago Lyric production, the Metropolitan Opera broadcast, and some assorted clips available on YouTube from the Netherlands Opera.) In this work, historical narrative is similar to but more compelling than science fiction. And science becomes the matter of art.

Adams was not the first classical composer to take on the bomb. At the Brussels Exposition in 1958, Edgard Varèse displayed his *Poème électronique*, an electronic tape composition of 480 seconds which exploded the notion that performers were necessary. Varèse was not the first to compose music onto magnetic tape, a means by which composers could speak directly to listeners by manipulating sounds embedded in physical matter instead of writing printed directions for performers to realize. But the *Poème*, played through 350 speakers mounted in the Philips Pavilion designed by Le Corbusier to house the composition, was the first deliberate mass delivery of electronic music to a large general audience. The structure, a tent-like creation with multiple white peaks, focused more on process and audience experience than on exterior effect. As audience members progressed through the multi-media structure, the sounds and projected

visual images expressed new realities about life in the mid-twentieth century. The visual images juxtaposed the ancient with the modern, natural elements with works of human conception, the abstract and the particular, the trivial and the elevated, youth and the aged. Prominent among the images were mushroom clouds. And Varèse's closing audible gesture is easy enough to associate with the same... followed by an immense silence.

In the early 1980s, minimalist composer Steve Reich, inspired by the poetry of William Carlos Williams and by the New Mexican desert home of the Manhattan Project, created *The Desert Music*, a large cantata in five parts for chorus and orchestra. It treats the issues of nuclear warfare and of individual attentiveness, response, and responsibility. Lines selected from Williams's "The Orchestra" (1954) ask "Well, shall we think

or listen? Is there a sound addressed not wholly to the ear?" Reich's orchestration is huge, rich in winds and percussion. Inspired by a siren in real life, a call to action more urgent to current day ears than the traditional bugle call, Reich replicated one in the viola parts. Both Varèse's *Poème*, and Adams's *Doctor Atomic* employed actual sirens.

Adams's opera in two acts is set in New Mexico in the summer of 1945. Act One depicts many aspects of technical and mental preparation, including consideration of science's relationship to politics, ethics, and social justice; Act Two focuses on the countdown. Act One, Scene One

opens in the Manhattan Project laboratory in Los Alamos on a June day. Scene Two moves to the Oppenheimer's home that night, or some night in that same month. Scene Three shifts to the test site ("Trinity") at Alamogordo on 15 July 1945, the night before the scheduled test of the atomic

bomb, and closes with Oppenheimer confronting his own condition and the implications of loss of soul in his aria "Batter my heart, three-person'd God" on the text of the sonnet by John Donne.

Act Two opens back in the Oppenheimer home, in the early hours of 16 July, where Kitty, in an alcoholic haze, reflects ("Now I say that the peace the spirit needs is peace, not lack of war...") and watches with the Tewa Indian women, her household help, for signs of the blast. A stunning orchestral interlude ("Rain over the Sangre de Cristos") suggests comfort

and removal from the intensity of the situation, as does the Tewa lullaby sung by the housekeeper Pasqualita. A menacing element in the New York staging suggests the transformation of rain over the New Mexican mountains into the Black Rain soon to fall on Japan. In Act Two, the separate spheres of science and domestic life, scientific activity and Indian tradition, poetry and prose are fused and layered, with multiple locations and perspectives playing out in the same space. Scene Two, synchronous with Scene One, is about the tense wait and final preparations at the test site. Scenes Three and Four occupy the

"I am among those who think that science has great beauty... A scientist in his laboratory is not only a technician: he is also a child placed before natural phenomena, which impress him like a fairytale. We should not allow it to be believed that all scientific progresses can be reduced to mechanisms, machines, gearings, even though such machinery also has its own beauty. Neither do I believe that the spirit of adventure runs any risk of disappearing in our world. If I see anything vital around me, it is precisely that spirit of adventure, which seems indestructible."

Marie Curie (1933)

countdown, the minutes between 5:10 and 5:28 AM, with the action ending at Zero minus two minutes, and Oppenheimer's closing line: "Lord, these affairs are hard on the heart."

The characters, though based on historical figures, have a certain operatic familiarity. The cast is male-heavy, not surprising given the narrative. Title character Oppenheimer and his somewhat sinister foil, physicist Edward Teller, are both baritones, as are General Groves, the military commander of the project, and Jack Hubbard, the chief meteorologist. The more youthful and earnest roles of physicist Robert Wilson and the Army Corps physician Captain Nolan are sung by tenors. General Leslie Groves stands as the traditional powerful tyrant but with limits to his power: he can control neither the weather nor his weight. He berates his "wise men" when the long-suffering oracle Hubbard warns of volatile weather on the scheduled test morning ("I demand a signed weather forecast... if you are wrong, I will hang you") and camp physician Nolan warns of potential radioactive fallout ("What *are* you, a Hearst propagandist?").

Kitty Oppenheimer, originally conceived for a mezzo-soprano, was alternately crafted by Adams as a soprano role. (The Chicago performances employed a soprano; the New York performances, a mezzo.) The only other female role is the contralto Pasqualita, following the operatic convention of servants occupying the lowest vocal ranges. Following another convention is Pasqualita's deep voiced "earth mother" presence, representing those things that Native People know, distinct from those things that scientists know. Numerous unnamed figures appear on stage, forming the chorus of scientists, technicians, wives, military personnel, and sup-

port staff. Other historical figures factor into the narrative without appearing—including Fermi, Bethe, and President Truman.

Doctor Atomic is built on a text-dense libretto by Adams's collaborator Peter Sellars who constructed it entirely from pre-existing sources. Like Alice Goodman's libretto for Adams's earlier *Nixon in China*, this text stands well on its own; it's very good reading, as opera libretti go. Unlike

the *Nixon* text, which is framed entirely in rhyming couplets, the *Doctor Atomic* book mixes, intertwines, and alternates poetry and prose of the most prosaic sort: excerpts from scientific and government documents and transcripts of actual conversations. The challenge to the composer becomes greater with a rich libretto, since the more meaningful and interesting the words, the less room the composer may find in which to be musically expressive. Traditionally, opera singing emphasizes the feelings that the words suggest more than careful articulation of those words.

*"...in the New Testament,
Jesus goes to the desert
to confront his visions, to
overcome his temptations,
to struggle with the devil, to
fight madness...The desert is
associated with hallucinations
and insanity. It threatens
one's normal thinking."*

*Composer Steve Reich
about his Desert Music*

The weight of the *Doctor Atomic* text was not lost on the principal singers (mostly the same in the Chicago and New York productions), and their enunciation was exemplary and fully charged with meaningful intent. Nevertheless, given the vagaries of sung language, even when delivered to native speakers, surtitles are typically provided in Adams's operas to clarify the text and permit it to be processed quickly.

The *Doctor Atomic* texts which are prose-derived tend to a one-note-per-one-syllable of text style, rendering them more natural in delivery and more intelligible to the audience. The more florid (melismatic) style of traditional opera arias is employed primarily in the arias of the leading lady, Kitty Oppenheimer, whose two big arias (one each in Scene 2 of Act I and Act II)

are settings of poems by Muriel Rukeyser (1913–1980). Robert Oppenheimer's Baudelaire music ("The soul is a thing so impalpable, so often useless..." sung to Teller in the first scene and "Long let me inhale, deeply, the odor of your hair" sung to Kitty in the second scene) are melodic but do not move into typical operatic prolongation of words as melody unfolds. Even in the opera's most memorable and most intense aria, Oppenheimer's song on the John Donne sonnet "Batter my heart" which closes Act I, the text setting is musically straight-forward. The first quatrain is repeated, as are some selected words and lines thereafter, but the musical treatment does not run ahead of (or behind) the poetic text.

Solo vocal lines consistently end with two-note slurs, often descending, on the last syllable of each phrase or sentence. This gesture, which musicians call "weak cadences" (and formerly called "feminine cadences") places the end of the phrase on the beat after the downbeat instead of on the downbeat itself. The cumulative effect heightens the sense of mental uncertainty and worry which permeate the work, even as the hyper-rhythms of the fast mechanistic passages generate a more physical sense of tension.

As typical in Adams, the musical styles employed are diverse. In addition to the electronic and noise elements, there are post-Wagnerian expressionist passages, delicate Debussy-like orchestral colors, hard-driving, dissonant, jittery episodes heavy on the brass and percussion. And in the private scene in Act I between Robert and Kitty, there was just a hint of Broadway, or perhaps a 1940s movie soundtrack. The choral interlude in Act II midway through the countdown ("At the sight of this, your Shape stupendous") based on a text from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, suggests comparison to the most terrifying sections of the Verdi *Requiem*.

The original Peter Sellers production (as mounted in Chicago) better evokes the American Southwest than does the filmmaker Penny Woolcock's production at the Metropolitan, particularly in the spare stage sets of the domestic scenes. And in Chicago, "the Gadget" dominated the stage more than in the new production and seemed more ominous. The New York design

emphasizes a grid as the main visual anchor, variously serving as a gigantic table of elements, as cubicles for the workers, as a portrait gallery of the key historical figures in the Manhattan Project, and as screens for projections of maps, video images, and representations of the scientists' computations. A secondary image in the New York staging is a series of white tents that suggest the Sangre de Christos ("Blood of Christ") mountains. Their resemblance to photos of the 1958 Philips Pavillion (and thus, Varèse's *Poème électronique*) again suggests Adams's connections with other "bomb" music.

In the opening moments, particles become choreography, and scientific statements become liturgy. In Chicago, the women's chorus describing the thirty-two points spaced equally around the plutonium core, was visually realized by dancers, interweaving "the centers of the twenty triangular faces of an icosahedron" with the "twelve pentagonal faces of a dodecahedron." The opening choral lines become an anti-credo:

We believed that "Matter can be
neither created nor destroyed but only
altered in form."

We believed that "Energy can be
neither created nor destroyed but only
altered in form."

But now we know that energy may
become matter,

And now we know that matter may
become energy

And thus be altered in form.

We once believed, but now we know: from credo to documented fact. Neither comfort nor security are conjured by this liturgy... rather doubt and anxiety are the over-riding passions, beginning with the opening disembodied sounds (which seem in homage to Varèse's *Poème*) through the countdown at the end of Act II, and the postlude, with the electronic score and the voice-over from a Hiroshima survivor. Ambivalence and ambiguity are the prevailing modes. The first exchange between the jaded Teller ("I have no hope of clearing my conscience") and the Faustian Oppenheimer

(“The soul is a thing... so often useless.”) raises the essential questions of relationships between responsibility and knowledge. Most dialogues in Act I emphasize doubt and second guessing: “We do not know when the first explosion will occur nor how effective it will be.” The paradoxes and inversions suggested in the Act I discussions (e.g. this weapon “potentially destructive beyond the wildest nightmares of the imagination” was “created not by the devilish inspiration of some warped genius but by the arduous labor of thousands of normal men and women working for the safety of their country”) leads logically to the inversions in Oppenheimer’s utterance of the sonnet:

Divorce me, untie, or break that knot
again,
Take me to you, imprison me,
for I, except you enthrall me, never shall
be free...

All music in some regard is about time. The interplay of regular clock time with personal experienced time gives us infinite variety in musical expressions of its passage. Operas typically operate on a grand out-of-real-time basis, with extended musical numbers suspending clock time so that personal inner-conditions can be explored. In *Doctor Atomic*, the countdown to the detonation establishes the basic terms. The frantic pace is protested by the young physicist Robert Wilson in the first scene: “Everybody is rushing around.... Nobody has a spare moment, and we work like dogs. It’s hard to stop and think as one ought to.” In the second scene, the more conventional private scene in the Oppenheimers’ Los Alamos house, Kitty’s opening aria ends “go spin the immortal coin through time/watch the thing flip through

space/tick tick, tick tick.” In the lab, in the home, in the desert, Adams’s score is time-conscious throughout, even in the reflective moments.

Likewise, we are conscious throughout of the inexorable advance to the conclusion of the work. And we know from the outset that the conclusion is as inevitable as in familiar operas: *La Boheme*’s Mimi will expire as Rudolfo cries out her name

at the final curtain; Tosca will leap to her death from the parapet of the Castel San Angelo; forces of divine retribution will drag Don Giovanni to hell. The conclusion of *Doctor Atomic* can only be compared to the close of Wagner’s *Götterdämmerung*, when, after the final words have been sung, an immense

and disembodied music prevails long enough for us to understand the cosmic shift that has occurred. But instead of ending with the detonation (and certainly not with the return of the plutonium to its source as Wagner’s gold was returned to the Rhine), the opera ends just before the test at 5:30 AM on 16 July 1945. The historical outcome we know. Following word of the successful test, President Truman, meeting in Potsdam with the allied leaders, gave orders on 25 July to employ the bomb against Japan. On 6 August, the uranium bomb “Little Boy” destroyed Hiroshima, and on 9 August, the plutonium bomb called “Fat Man” was dropped on Nagasaki. Japanese surrender followed quickly. These historical facts we know. The larger questions remain unanswered.

In the early twentieth century, after Wagner’s *Ring* had operatically destroyed the Valhalla and its god-occupants, restored the powerful gold to its source below the river, and wiped the slate clean for a new creation, opera composers including Schoenberg, Berg, and Bartok turned to exploring the dark inner-recesses of human experience rather than the epic expanses of

*“Wary of time O it seizes the soul tonight
I wait for the great morning of the west
Confessing with every breath mortality.”*

Muriel Rukeyser

(1913–1980)

“Easter Eve 1945”

the cosmos. In the late twentieth century, John Adams, who turned to history rather than to intensely personal experience, has frequently been credited with “re-inventing” opera, beginning with *Nixon in China* which premiered in 1987. In an essay in these pages (Easter 2007), I suggested that despite *Nixon*’s many unconventional features, it clearly exhibits the essential features of nineteenth-century grand opera. That suggestion was intended not to diminish its innovation but rather to point out that opera has been re-invigorated rather than re-invented. Some great composers have found it necessary to destroy in order to find a blank palette on which to create. Schoenberg and his systematic destruction of tonality comes to mind, and John Cage with his ultimate challenge to the definition and even the existence of a separate category of sounds to be called “music.” Others, among them Bartok, Stravinsky and, I believe, John Adams, create seemingly radical new works but with deep connections to the past.

Natural causes, as we know, are at work which tend to modify, if they do not at length destroy, all the arrangements and dimensions of the earth and the whole solar system. But though in the course of ages catastrophes have occurred and may yet occur in the heavens, though ancient systems may be dissolved and new systems evolved out of their ruins, the molecules out of which these systems are built—the foundation stones of the material universe—remain unbroken and unworn.

James Clerk Maxwell (1873)

One of my favorite sentences written by Donald J. Grout in the 1960s (in an early edition of the venerable *History of Western Music*, known to music history undergraduates everywhere) comes to mind: “Classical forms remained, like the features of a landscape after a geological upheaval—recognizable under new contours, lying at strange angles beneath the new surface...” Grout was speaking of Beethoven, a disruptive force in musical culture who in the first quarter of the nineteenth century retained his Enlightenment-based ideals even while dismantling formal notions of compositional standards and rejecting inherited constraints on what could be expressed symphonically. The remnants and artifacts of past times, “lying at strange angles beneath a new surface” are found as well in *Doctor Atomic* with its compiled text and its collage of musical styles. Lying at strange angles are poems, equations, reports, nature, history, big science, ancient culture, politics, modern marriage, and caloric intake charts. The musical and visual materials are similarly juxtaposed in new relationships. Neither a simple narrative nor a score that previous operas have taught us to follow, *Doctor Atomic* starts from many locations—far away from Ground Zero—and leaves us with both recognizable and newly unrecognizable pieces to start putting back together into a new constellation. ♣

Linda C. Ferguson is Professor of Music and Chair of the Department of Music at Valparaiso University.

Free Jazz and the Freedom of a Christian

J. D. Buhl

FREEDOM IS SOMETHING WITH WHICH A Christian should be very familiar. In Christ, we have been liberated from conformity to this world, the oppression of powers and principalities, and enslavement to guilt, self-absorption, and self-loathing. We have been freed from servitude so that we are free to serve others. Our model, the one to whom we look for an example of fully realized humanity, “was the freest person ever to walk this earth.”

In the final chapter of *Start Loving: The Miracle of Forgiving*, Colleen Townsend Evans wrote of the six ways in which Jesus was free. Jesus was free to be himself (“he insisted on fulfilling his real identity”), free to love others (“unencumbered with undue concern for the self”), free to express his emotions (“he could love and let people know it”), free to risk (“secure in the love of his Father”), free to serve (“free to be vulnerable”), and free to live fully—to love God and enjoy him forever (116–118).

Sin and guilt separate us from God, Evans wrote; Jesus brings us back. Once we accept being forgiven and Christ lives in us, this freedom is ours. So, I’ve always wondered why free jazz—that ongoing attempt at total self-expression that leaves chord sequences, time signatures, and accepted harmonic relations behind in search of individual freedom—is not hugely popular with Christians.

Much like the Jesus movement in the Jewish milieu of the Roman Empire, free jazz caused friction and fractured relationships. It was seen not as a natural progression but as a transgression against all progress. Its purveyors were heard as “wrong” in both conception and execution.

By the late 1950s, jazz considered itself synonymous with freedom. With its roots in personal and creative emancipation, jazz freed itself from the melodic, structural, rhythmic, and harmonic norms of music before and around it. Jazz

improvisation was the freest, most individualistic form of self-expression ever to delight the ears and move the body. When the great Duke Ellington was approached by combustible bassist Charles Mingus, his idea of a few old heads making a “Free” record to shame the upstarts met with a swift reply: “Let’s not take music back that far, Charles. Why not make a modern record?”

Free players such as Ornette Coleman thought they *were* modern, the most modern, really, with a drive to create beyond what they had been given. What *Down Beat*’s John Litweiler calls *freedom with a capital F* was a response to hearing tonal possibilities beyond the expected and therefore feeling called to embody music that was not being played. Ordinarily, soloists would create their statements within the chord changes of a particular tune, improvising from inside compositional perimeters. In a free jazz performance, writes Scott Yanow, “after playing a quick theme, the soloist does not have to follow any progression or structure and can go in any unpredictable direction” (xiii).

Unpredictability is something we tend *not* to invite into our lives; we associate it with randomness. Yanow continues, however, that “the success of a free jazz performance can be measured by the musicianship and imagination of the performers, how colorful the music is and whether it seems logical or merely random.”

Skill, imagination, color, logic; these are the things that make our Christian lives convincing to others. The world is attracted to the Christ *in* us, not the Christ we talk about. Living the gospel imaginatively, and not within the confines of culture, brings Christ to others in our actions. Making Christian living colorful and rich with possibility is what Acts and the epistles have already set in motion. The need here is not for winning arguments about the existence of God

but for a quality of life—what Paul referred to as “maturity in thinking.”

Pianist Thelonious Monk, a very strange cat himself, found free jazz offensive. It’s “bad,” he said. “Jazz must first tell a story that anyone can understand.” In *The Freedom Principle*, Litweiler presents alto saxophonist Coleman—free jazz’s most notorious exponent—as undermining our love of story. Christians are story people. Ours is a saving story, an interactive narrative, which explains and explodes existence. Our faith story comes in the form of writings. Although our faith is in a savior and not a book, still the book is indispensable to our faith. Our personal faith stories carry great meaning insofar as they mirror this form. In Coleman’s music of the late 1950s and early 1960s, “as the faint, lingering shadow of chorus structures disappears, classic narrative form (Lester Young’s ‘a solo should tell a story’) becomes irrelevant.” Litweiler believes Coleman implicitly tells the listener that “music with a beginning, middle, and end imposes the structure of fiction on the passage of life” (39).

For some, this imposition makes life possible. In *Blue Like Jazz*, Donald Miller writes that while taking a college course in literature, it struck him that the elements of story—setting, conflict, climax, and resolution—paralleled his understanding of Christian spirituality. He saw that they were not the result of theoretical work but of humans using “the tools of reality to create elements of story.” “The heart responds to conflict because there is some great conflict in the universe with which we are interacting.” Accordingly, if climax is the point where a decision determines the end of the story, Christianity must put such a decision before the human heart. Resolution—good or bad—would follow. “Our decisions,” he concludes, “[are] instrumental to the way our story [turns] out” (31–33).

In Coleman’s world, music is music and story is story, they need not be analogous. Vast change is the only constant. Coleman solos “make clear that uncertainty is the content of life, and even things that we take for certainties are ever altering shape and character.” Coleman by turns “fears or embraces this ambiguity; but he constantly faces it, and by his example, he condemns those who seek resolution or finality as timid” (Litweiler 39). Litweiler could have been describing Martin Luther.

Our attachment to story does not always serve us well. In a desire to read scripture as “the story of God,” we can reduce conflicts, downplay climaxes, ignore resolutions, and “play the changes”—solo from safely within the perimeters of accepted aesthetic standards. We desire greater compatibility than there is between an earlier, complete text (the Old Testament) and an ongoing new one (the New Testament). We want them to be *equal*. Beginning with Stephen, however, Jesus’ followers died because they were not equal. God had done something in Christ that made old old and new new.

Jesus shows up in the story of the Jewish people and declares everything you know is wrong. Ornette Coleman opens at the Five Spot in 1959 and tells jazz people everything you know is wrong. Free jazz is the sound of taking Jesus seriously. When he launches into one of his “I know you’ve heard... but I say” routines, we are to go with what he says, not what we have heard; they are not equal. Though David could praise the Lord for girding him to annihilate his enemies, Jesus eliminated the category of “Enemy.” As David went on to claim that the Lord “rewarded me according to *my* righteousness, according to the cleanness of *my* hands,” Jesus lets us know we have no righteousness of our own. Our hands are hopelessly dirty. No, they are not equal.

“The theme you play at the start of a number is the territory,” Coleman said, “and what comes after, which may have very little to do with it, is the adventure” (Ward 413). Jesus is the adventure—a very *passionate* adventure. Passion is not the same as romance. We are comfortable there, floating through its predictable highs and lows. Romance plays the theme, makes pretty the territory. Passion goes deeper. Even bebop, the daring reaction to swing that gave birth to free jazz, was ultimately a romantic movement. Litweiler writes of its “rich, abundant, neurotic emotionality” (89). Passion hones skill, imagination, color, and logic.

Still, Charlie Haden, bassist at the Five Spot, hears all great musicians as free musicians. “Even though they were improvising on a chord structure, they were playing so free and so deeply... I call it with your *life* involved” (Ward 417). How liberating to hear Haden sound like the Apostle Paul, when speaking of “risking your life... being able—

wanting—to give your life for what you’re doing.” The decision is between romance and passion. Can we play so freely and deeply as to give our lives?

GARY GIDDINS SAW ME COMING. HE WROTE in *Jazz: A History of America’s Music*, “the avant-garde has been treated as a metaphor rather than as music by proponents and enemies alike” (Ward 360). “The avant-garde” is Giddins’s preferred term for what I have called free jazz—and I do wish my reader to experience it as music. I believe the propulsive passion and world-denying power experienced at the vanguard provide a most appropriate soundtrack for faith.

Paul considered the Christian life a strenuous one; following Jesus was not for wimps or whiners. So it is not surprising that athletes were his favorite analogy. Had the phonograph been around, he could just as easily have used drummers.

“Elvin Jones was a mighty, mighty man,” I wrote in a poem for young people, “he could play those drums like nobody can.” His style was like,

A circle of sound
encompassing the kit...
It’s in your smile, it’s in your stance
it’s that dance you dance when you don’t
 know you’re dancin’
It shimmers like shale in the sun
splitting into thin layers
each of them our skin
so we simmer like cymbals whenever
 we’re close
it rattles and clatters and shivers your toes
light spreads out every time we meet
It’s like the song says:
“Alla God’s children got drums on their
 feet”

It sure felt that way. Jones’s work in John Coltrane’s “classic quartet” (1960–1965) seemed to do all it could with freedom, then enter “Free” for more possibilities, until a new rhythm of life was available. This was a heavy but joyous sound, using large cymbals and bass thumps, weighty accents, an asymmetric, polyrhythmic movement. His playing was not for keeping things on track, but a means of exploration: Jones did not delineate space but create it.

“Athletes exercise self-control in all things,” Paul reminds us. Likewise drummers, no matter how cacophonous it sounds. “May integrity and uprightness preserve me,” implores David in Psalm 25, “for I wait for you.” That is the feeling of a great Elvin Jones performance.

Jones often engaged in an intense, song-defining dialogue with Coltrane. Each recording feels as though these two have something to work out, and no end will come until they have exhausted all possibilities—for the moment. After a break, the matter is picked up again and examined from another perspective, found to possess meaning and application beyond what they previously imagined. Like Jesus’ Gospel discussions, this is a dialogue meant for full involvement. Theirs is not music for objective appreciation any more than Jesus’ announcement of the “good news” was a noteworthy event.

How exciting it would be for words like “dexterity” and “interplay” to describe our Christian witness. John Litweiler points out that, originally, Coltrane’s own emphasis on the downbeat freed Jones from establishing metric divisions. Eventually, he was able to solo in ways that left behind a song’s tempo and meter altogether, often running “three separate, simultaneous rhythms” to construct his own unique presence within a performance (95). By 1961, “with his great dexterity and instantaneous command of multirhythms, jazz percussion interplay reached its outer limits” (96). The only thing left to do after Jones, he writes, was for a drummer to abandon timekeeping altogether. This Sunny Murray would do.

In 1967 Amiri Baraka (back when he was Leroi Jones) wrote of the physicality of Sunny Murray’s drumming, his “body-ness.” What Jones called “the New Black Music” was about freedom, energy, and strength; real sweat, real funk, and the natural sounds of a body at work were not charming exoticisms or something to be imitated by technology. They were the essence of method and style. Jones saw that “what you say and how you say it are indissolubly connected.... How is What. Form is the structure of content. Right form is perfect expression of content” (124).

Is not the perfect expression of content what John had in mind when he urges the “little children” to love, “not in word or speech, but in truth

and action”? How *is* What. There is a “body-ness” to love, a physicality that does not shy away from sweat, funk, or real work. Some free jazz musicians thought traditional improvisers—no matter the beauty and ability in their creations—loved not in truth and action. They had begun to mistake complacency for freedom.

These young, often untrained players, surrounded by the sounds of revolution, wanted to see what jazz would sound like if you kicked its foundations down. Even the “cool” involvement which jazz offered was suspect. The commoditization of jazz that Dizzy Gillespie had met with a smile was no joke for the avant-garde.



Referring to Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl,” Eldridge Cleaver observed in 1968 that Ginsberg’s money-monster “Moloch” could have wished for nothing more “than to have its disaffected victims withdraw into safe, passive, apolitical little nonparticipatory islands.”

If all the unemployed had followed the lead of the beatniks, Moloch would gladly have legalized the use of euphoric drugs and marijuana, passed out free jazz albums and sleeping bags, to all those willing to sign affidavits promising to remain “beat.”
(72)

Graham Nash sang to rebellious white youth as they came into the 1970s, “Though we live in the air I’m not sure that we’re free.” He saw the high wire act he was a part of as a rejection even of balance, never mind gravity. Elsewhere in “Man in the Mirror” (original title, “Tightrope Song”) Nash reminds the rebels, “Two and two make four, they never make five.” This appeal to the laws of math-

ematics, a call for respect for *something*, mirrors the threat so many jazz critics felt in free jazz.

These are the elements of today’s confusion of two things, “living in the air” and freedom. The “freedom” offered us by modern technology, for instance—the freedom of the iPod, the freedom of the GPS—is all just living in the air (what our friend in Ecclesiastes would call “chasing after wind”). The “freedom” one finds in car commercials and men’s magazines is that of the Freedom Merchants. The same merchants who sell you the freedom of war sell you the freedom of escape from the heartbreaking tyranny of war. The same merchants who sell you the freedom of free-market retirement security

sell you the means of escaping the insecurity such “freedom” breeds.

Our Jesus of the ever-popular temple scene is not a man who would tell you freedom is for sale. He was overturning the tables of vendors and bankers and souvenir sellers who provided mediation for a price, inhibiting those in need of receiving God’s gift of existential freedom—no purchase necessary. This gesture, according to Robert Funk, may have “broken the back of patience for authorities concerned with the orderly conduct of business.” It was too much for them (as it is often too much for us) to accept Jesus’ view that “every person had immediate, unbrokered access to God’s presence, God’s love, God’s forgiveness” (203). God’s presence, love, and forgiveness equal freedom.

I have come to think of free jazz as America’s existentialism. Every person has immediate, unbrokered access to the music. The 1960s rebels addressed by Cleaver and Nash confused getting high with being high. This is something free jazz musicians never did but that we often do. Christianity could once have been America’s

existentialism, but the “body-ness” was removed, that sense of being the embodied individual loved by God. Freedom merchants have no place for God outside of His use as blesser and vindicator of America. It is of no importance that an individual iPod silhouette is loved by God. Those with unlimited minutes do not have unlimited freedom.

Paul encourages his protégé Timothy, “exercise yourself in godliness.” Again, the sweat, funk, and body-ness of the athlete make for the ideal metaphor. An Elvin Jones rhythm exploration, an above-time Sunny Murray solo, these things can also serve as physical expressions of the call to determination and *differentness*. What free jazz attempted to do was find a freedom beyond the freedom handed to it—not better, just further. The Christian call is to do the same: find, inhabit, and share with others a freedom beyond the one we have been sold—and are being sold—a freedom both further *and* better. †

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Suggested Free Jazz Recordings

Ornette Coleman, *Change of the Century* (Atlantic, 1960). His second album, with Charlie Haden, Don Cherry (pocket trumpet), and drummer Billy Higgins.

Ornette Coleman, *Free Jazz (A Collective Improvisation)* (Atlantic, 1960). The controversial “double quartet,” with Haden, Cherry, and Higgins joined by Freddie Hubbard (trumpet), Scott LaFaro (bass), and Ed Blackwell (drums). Altoist Coleman is offset by Eric Dolphy on bass clarinet.

Eric Dolphy & Booker Little, *Memorial Album (Original Jazz Classics, 1961)*. Ed Blackwell really rolls on this third volume of live recordings from the Five Spot by a short-lived quintet.

Cecil Taylor, *Nefertiti, the Beautiful One Has Come (Freedom, 1962)*. “The first truly ‘free’ drummer,” Sonny Murray, joins pianist Taylor and alto saxophonist Jimmy Lyons in Copenhagen.

John Coltrane, *Live at the Village Vanguard (Impulse, 1961)*. The “classic quartet” augmented by Eric Dolphy. In any of a number of configurations, some of the most searching and exciting jazz ever recorded.

Miles Davis, *Highlights from the Plugged Nickel (Columbia, 1995)*. A six-song introduction to some very free (and often very strange) live recordings made with Wayne Shorter (tenor), Herbie Hancock (piano), Ron Carter (bass), and Tony Williams (drums) in 1965.

Art Ensemble of Chicago, *Americans Swinging in Paris (EMI, 2002)*. A thrilling compilation of recordings from 1969 and 1970 that features all the wondrous early artistry and oddity of this long-running free jazz group. Fontella Bass’s vocal on “Thème De Yoyo” is not to be missed.

Jungle Music

Gary Fincke

WHEN I WAS A BOY, I COULD GET MY NEWEST favorite song on a forty-five to repeat endlessly if I raised the arm on my suitcase-sized record player and set it to the side.

That's exactly how I played songs when I first bought the records and carried them home in a bag shaped exactly to the size of forty-fives from National Record Mart or Sam Goody's. That bag announced its contents as unmistakably as the ones from the Pennsylvania State Liquor Store. Nothing else came in them.

When I arrived home, I inserted the plastic circle (doohickeys, my mother called them; she bought me a few dozen one day as her investment in my entertainment) into the hole in the middle so the record fit over the spindle that was made for albums and seventy-eights that only parents owned.

One boy on my street had a magical cylinder he attached over the spindle on his turntable. He could pile up six forty-fives on it, put the arm over, and watch them fall, one by one, into place, six songs in a row before the music stopped. It was wonderful, and for a while I begged my mother to buy one for me, but I began to notice that after three or four records had fallen, the music usually began to waver in a sort of musical Doppler Effect because one of the records was slightly warped and the pile exaggerated the distortion. If that boy had a favorite record that was even slightly warped, he needed to place it at the bottom of the pile.

Fortunately, I didn't need that magical cylinder to experience the joy of playing my new record a dozen times in a row, a half hour of hearing Elvis or Buddy Holly or Jerry Lee Lewis, who, according to my parents, was the worst of the white rock and rollers, someone who was surely headed to hell.

But no matter how awful Jerry Lee Lewis seemed singing "Great Balls of Fire," he was still light years less bad for my wellbeing than Little Richard, who my parents believed was possessed by the Devil himself. "Jungle music," they called Little Richard's songs—"Tutti Frutti," "Long Tall Sally," and their flip sides that I played to get my money's worth.

That was about as far as my parents let speak their prejudice, but my uncles on my father's side called it "Nigger music," and neither their wives nor anyone else in my family told them to keep their mouths shut.

I didn't pay much attention. I heard the same assessment in the same words in the homes of most of my friends. By the end of sixth grade, I knew there were original versions of more than Little Richard songs that were covered by white singers. My parents loved Pat Boone, even when he put out a ludicrous recording of "Tutti Frutti," but they had no idea the song they loved, "Dance with Me, Henry" by Georgia Gibbs, was a reworked cover of the wonderfully obscene "Work with Me, Annie" by Hank Ballard and the Midnighters. When it came time to get radio play, race mattered, even though there were exceptions like Chuck Berry who crossed over to the mostly white Top Forty.

By the time I was twelve, I was listening to the two black stations in Pittsburgh, and most of my white records began to sound tame. Only the Del Vikings, who were actually from Pittsburgh and the first integrated rock group, sounded exciting when they ran through "Come Go With Me" and "Whispering Bells," both of which paled beside the Isley Brothers "Shout," the song that drove my father to slam the door of my room as the singer moaned "a little bit louder now."

WILY was named for Wiley Avenue, which ran through the heart of one of Pittsburgh's black

neighborhoods, the Hill District. "Dialy Wily, Make You Smiley" was one of their jingles, and I did, turning the knob on the cheap red plastic radio my Aunt Margaret had given me for Christmas when I was in fifth grade because she knew exactly what I wanted.

The other was WAMO, that wonderful name for a radio station, which was high up on the dial where there was nothing else but static when the station signed off at sunset. In summer, it stayed on until 9:00, but in winter, WAMO, and WILY as well, signed off as early as 4:45, leaving me with only the predominantly white rock and roll of KQV.

Even worse, WILY changed its call letters soon after I started listening, becoming WEEP ("Weep for joy," its jingle said). One afternoon, with no warning, they announced the change by playing "Just Born (To be your Baby)" by Perry Como, who both my parents adored.

I owned one Perry Como record from my early days of buying records—"Catch a Falling Star"—and I'd played it five or six times in a row when I'd bought it, but by now I had that record and others like it hidden in my closet. The end of WILY was a sad day for "jungle music."

So I listened to WAMO, especially Porky Chedwick, the only white disc jockey who worked there. He played black music and white music that sounded black—doo-wop, rhythm and blues—songs I never heard anywhere else by groups called The Channels, The Solitaires, and The Nutmegs.

About that time one of my uncles told me it was time to stop tying my tie in a "nigger knot." "I can't get your father to change his ways, but you can," he said, twisting my tie in the church men's room from behind while I looked at his hands around my throat in the mirror. "Get it?" he said. "That's called a Windsor knot. Now you look like you weren't born in a box."

For weeks, while I practiced on the other two ties I owned, I didn't untie that knot. And then I

left all three tied for another month until I had the confidence to start from scratch on Sunday morning as ninth grade began. My father never said a word about my knots, but for the first time I was ashamed of how he looked on Sunday morning.

That first month of school somebody on a bus full of students after an away football game dropped down his window and hollered, "Bo Diddley is a gunslinger" toward a crowd of black students from the other high school. Guys on our bus laughed, and when that boy leaned out to shout it again, he was hit in the forehead with a piece of concrete block.

I loved Bo Diddley, and that phrase was the name of one of his recent songs. The boy took a dozen stitches, and the following week in school friends of mine were still talking about it, always with laughter. I didn't ask any of them a question. It was like

not getting the punch line of a dirty joke. I wasn't going to be the boy who let everyone know he didn't get it.

I played basketball on the ninth-grade team, and for the first time walked onto the gym floor of a school where the other players were mostly black. Our cheerleaders did a routine to "Dance with Me, Henry" that had lines like "So if you want to get a letter/For your varsity sweater/Then stay in training... Ooh-oo-wee" just before the cheerleaders from the other school did provocative dance steps, their hips shaking and their short skirts flaring out to exposed red underwear. Those cheerleaders didn't sit down while we warmed up. They worked their bodies along the sideline to music that blared from two small speakers by the scorer's table. Every song was jungle music, and our all-white team grew silent as we did our layup drills.

"You scared, white bread?" the boy who guarded me kept saying as the game wore on. "You look scared."

*Before our first league game
on the road, the junior varsity
coach gathered us together
after the game. "It's a different
world here," he said, "and it
doesn't belong to any of you."*

I kept my lips sealed, trying not to give myself away, but I was convinced he was a better player just because he was black, even when we pulled ahead and won the game. It wasn't my fault we won. I scored four points, two of them on free throws, and spent half the game watching from the bench. There wasn't one black student in my entire school district, even though it was twice as large as the school we'd been playing.

On the bus after the game, though nobody said the word "nigger," I could hear boys talking about beating "those coons" and "those spearchuckers." The coach sat two seats in front of me and acted like he never heard.

The following year, before our first league game on the road, the junior varsity coach gathered us together after the game. "It's a different world here," he said, "and it doesn't belong to any of you. You need to know enough not to leave the gym during the varsity game."

Sure enough, two players did. They walked to a convenience store a block from the school to buy junk food. When they left the store, names had been flung their way, and they'd run back to the gym with their potato chips. Nobody told the coach, but it was the last time anyone wandered away from the gym while the varsity played their game. On the way home, four guys from the varsity put together a rendition of the doo-wop classic "Gloria," a song I'd heard covered by five different groups on the Porky Chedwick Show. One of them, the back-up point guard, managed to get close when he went up the scale to warble "It's not Ma-rie!" and, a few seconds later, "It's not Sha-ree!"

By the time I traveled with the varsity, there were rumors my high school would have to merge with three nearby smaller schools. The crowds grew larger at school board meetings. Parents said the quality of education would go down, but everybody knew they meant there would be black students in the schools, and, for sure, black families moving across the soon-to-be-blurred school district boundaries.

A few years earlier, there had been a song my parents loved called "Quiet Village," an instrumental meant to suggest the jungle, complete with bird calls that sounded like the ones

in Tarzan movies. Now when the Tokens, a white group, had a number one song with "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," my father even sang along, straining into falsetto to get as close to mimicry as he could.

But on the bus, each time we traveled, somebody with a transistor radio would switch from station to station until a song by black artists came on. They were the only songs that didn't get shouted down by half the team: "He's a Rebel" by The Crystals as the varsity season began, "Shake a Tail Feather" by the Contours as the season ended, and "Little Latin Lupe Lu" by the Righteous Brothers who, someone insisted, were actually white.

By then I listened exclusively to jungle music. There was even another station, WZUM, that played music like the kind Porky Chedwick played, and though that station signed off at dusk, another one, WMCK, featured a nighttime disc jockey who played mostly jungle music until midnight so I could listen all that summer from dinner time to when I fell asleep.

I was just out of high school before I saw a live rock show—The Ad-Libs, Little Anthony, Joe Tex, and a singer named Walter Jackson who came out on crutches, hobbling as if he'd suffered from polio as a child. A girl from a nearby Catholic high school was sitting beside me. She was in love with the British Invasion, which had just begun, and if she was unexpectedly sitting in an audience that was 90 percent black, I didn't care.

And when Walter Jackson leaned on those crutches and moaned, "Won't somebody give their love to Walter?" a hundred or more girls stood up and shouted "Me" and "I will," and I wanted to sound exactly like Walter Jackson when I reached for that girl an hour later. I wanted her to be in love with jungle music and the promises it made, not be the girl who allowed me to do everything but enter her because she was saving herself for a Catholic boy who would marry her and love her more for waiting.

A few months later my high school was integrated when the merger happened. That Catholic girl went off to a Catholic college in Michigan and wrote me two letters. I didn't answer the second one. The Twist, the one black dance my aunts

would do when a non-threatening black man (Chubby Checker) covered a threatening black man (Hank Ballard), had disappeared. I drank beer until I wasn't self-conscious about doing the Mashed Potato and the Watusi. I finished my own first year of college and took another girl to see James Brown in Youngstown, Ohio, where 98 percent of the audience was black, and it's still the best stage show I've ever seen. The few dozen whites there were up on their feet when James Brown did his famous cape show closer, falling to the ground, being wrapped in it by his entourage, and emerging to keep "Please, Please, Please" going and going, resurrected,

and then resurrected a second time. The band worked the rhythm of the song until all of us, a few months before the black neighborhoods in nearby Cleveland and other American cities were burned during that summer's race riots, were as sweaty and excited as he was, wishing that music would repeat itself until we all collapsed. ♣

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DO GOOD POEMS HAVE GREATER ETHICAL WEIGHT THAN BAD POEMS?

1.

This is a poem.

Flurries in late afternoon sun.

Wind-snapped skeletons

of weeds. Two-tone juncos

skitter-land on snow crust,

in and out of shadow.

They chase the tough seeds

into the hot engines of their bodies.

2.

There must be a way to the poem,

back from the shattering of human lives:

blood-soaked earth / shock

numb after-rings in

broken air [...] To hell with

decorum, say *Iraq*.

Say *whose God wants this?*

Say *noise-to-message ratio*

& there is a way.

You must find it.

James Owens

How I Came to Love (and Hate) Country Music

Tom Willadsen

ON A CLOUDY DAY EARLY IN 1981, MY relationship with country music changed forever. I was tooling around Peoria with my friend Brent in his 1968 Pontiac. The Pontiac had an unusual paint job and an ambiguous history. When I first saw the car, it was a sort of black or showed signs of having once been black. Brent's father purchased the car from Doyle. The story went that Doyle was a little confused by his pain medicine and decided the car needed a new paint job, so he got some interior flat latex paint and a roller and painted the car an off-white. In some environments the splotchy, textured result could have qualified as camouflage. Brent's dad bought the car and his first stop was the Earl Scheib joint on Main Street, where the car was rendered an attractive metallic blue, though the texture of Doyle's drug-addled effort was still apparent.

I know it was cloudy that day because I was manning the Pontiac's AM radio, and I could not tune in WLS, that 50,000 watt AM beacon of rock and roll that radiated across the Midwest from Chicago. For laughs I tuned in 1350 AM, WXCL, a country station. I thought that Brent would howl and immediately forbid country music, thus forcing me to a local popular station with a lower quotient of hard rock than WLS. He did not howl. One of the first songs we heard was Willie Nelson's "Blackjack County Chain." This tune was a mid-chart hit for Willie in the 1960s. It is a story song, and it ends with a repeated fade of "Blackjack County chain," sung by a crew of male background singers, barbershop style. The pomade in their hair is audible.

We screamed with laughter at the song's over-the-top bathos. In the weeks ahead we were unable to remember precisely how many pounds of Blackjack County chain locked the protagonist's leg to the chain gang, but it did not matter.

"So he locked my leg in eighty-four tons of Black Jack County chain," we would sing whenever the mood hit us. It became a ready non-sequitur, a favorite inside joke.

The country music stayed on that day.

I have never heard "Blackjack County Chain" on the radio since. I did purchase it a few years later on *The Magic of Willie Nelson* and taped it onto various compilations I made for friends and loved ones over the years.

That cloudy day, country music became an alternative for us as we whiled away our teen years in Brent's car on the west bluff of Peoria, Illinois. Brent grew to like country music; I grew to "like" it. We got familiar enough with country music that we became acquainted with the canon: George Jones, Ronnie Milsap, Hank Jr., Ricky Skaggs, Tammy Wynette, George Strait, Don Williams, and Reba McEntire. This was before Garth Brooks's mega-popularity. I came to love the music of Earl Thomas Conley. Sincerely love it.

Brent went off to the University of Illinois where country music was not seen as exceptional. I attended Northwestern, where it was seen as abhorrent.

We took a trip together in July of 1985, this time in the faux wood paneled station wagon that had replaced Brent's Pontiac. We had some car trouble; the beast would not start for two days, so instead of driving like a bat out of hell to Colorado, climbing Long's Peak, and driving like a bat out of hell back to Chicago, we circled Lake Erie. Again, all we had was AM radio, so our choices were talk, "The Music of Your Life," or country. We split the time between the latter two options. We heard David Allan Coe's classic, "You Never Even Call Me by My Name" and the Chordette's "Mr. Sandman" as we cracked wise to each other. Looking back, this trip was our last gasp of adolescence.

When I returned to Evanston for my senior year, I had been vaccinated by country music. I did not hate it; it was more than mere camp. It was familiar and felt like home. Though I still preferred Rush and Billy Squier, and, of course remembering my environment, the Talking Heads, Split Enz, and U2, I tuned into country music more frequently. This had the added bonus of driving my roommate out of his mind! If it did not irritate me and did irritate him, that was a win-win!

My embrace of country music really should not have come as a surprise. My mother is a huge Eddie Arnold fan. He is the number one artist in country music history, but he would have been a great singer in any genre. And the adult contemporary station I listened to in my cavity-prone years played the hits of Glen Campbell, Charlie Rich, and Kenny Rogers. Crystal Gayle's "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue" was a huge hit during seventh grade. I even skated a couples' only moonlight to it with Debbie MacGregor.

I graduated college and moved to Brooklyn, New York, where I shared a two-bedroom apartment with a man I had nothing in common with save the internship program that employed both of us for nine months. My first night in Brooklyn, I tuned in WHN, an AM station that carried the Mets and played country music at all other times. This combination was jarring to me. At my first Mets game, I saw a group of young Hassidic boys whooping it up to John Denver's "Thank God I'm a Country Boy!" Peanut butter and sand go better together.

I went to Brooklyn because I wanted to live deliberately. Wait, that wasn't me.

I went to Brooklyn seeking some breathing space between college and seminary, and nurturing a broken heart. I listened to country music, but more importantly, I told all my fellow interns that

I listened to country music. When Hank Jr.'s live album came out, I snapped it up, promptly hated it, and shipped it off to Brent. I wrote a lot of letters and kept an informal journal while I lived in Brooklyn. One entry reads "country music because I'm sad." Looking back on myself at twenty-three, I am pretty sure that at that point country music was iatrogenic to my sadness. My journal entry should have read, "I'm sad because of country music." Still, I am glad for my familiarity with this most American of art forms.

There is an honesty and self-deprecating humor in country music that I find appealing. In "Small Town Saturday Night," by Hal Ketchum, the futility of being young, bright, and energetic in a one-horse town is captured beautifully, without being resolved.

Bobby told Lucy, "The world ain't round... Drops off sharp at the edge of town Lucy, you know the world must be flat 'Cause when people leave town, they never come back."

I heard Joe Nichols interviewed on the radio a few summers ago. It went something like this,

"Joe, do you have anything new coming out?"

"Yeah, I got one called 'Tequila Makes Her Clothes Fall Off' comin' out next month... I think my mama's gonna be real proud of me!"

I will take the winking self-effacement of "I Ain't as Good as I Once Was" by Toby Keith to the chest-thumping braggadocio of Nelly or R. Kelly any day.

As a father, I have found another use for country music. When my sons start to act up in the car I reach for *The Queens of Country Music*, a two CD set which Time-Life churned out a few years

My first night in Brooklyn, I tuned in WHN, an AM station that carried the Mets and played country music at all other times. This combination was jarring to me. At my first Mets game, I saw a group of young Hassidic boys whooping it up to John Denver's "Thank God I'm a Country Boy!"

ago. Donna Fargo, Jeannie C. Riley, and Barbara Mandrell, among other members of Nashville royalty, hold forth for a whole hour and a half. David and Peter hate it! "Don't make me play Daddy's twangy, hick music!" I threaten.

"We'll be good!" This technique has never failed to restore calm in the Toyota. Still, I wonder if country music will be there for them, when they need to sneer at, or soothe, the broken hearts that will one day surely find them.

There is some hope. One of my going to bed songs for David is "Sunny Side of the Street." The version I sing is based on Willie Nelson's from his miraculous *Stardust* album. I have owned this recording for more than twenty-five years. It is

the only album I have on vinyl, cassette, and CD. *Stardust* is warm and kind. It is more than aural comfort food. It is my connection to both the great American songbook and the days of my youth, when I sat in the front seat of Brent's car-of-the-week, turning the dial and fantasized about beating my manager at McDonald's to death with thirty-five pounds of Blackjack County chain, Blackjack County chain, Blackjack County chain... ♣

The Reverend Thomas C. Willadsen is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

ON THE LAST DAY OF THE YEAR

They disappear into banks of fog and melt like snow,
all our lost loves, our dark little griefs, this year's
dead. On the car radio, old Christmas carols thread through
rustling static; Caruso, Kirsten Flagstad pour out strains
of "Ave Maria," "Silent Night." No fledgling year will ever
charm us as the one we leave behind, warm with their breath,
shared like a common cup, resonant with lost voices.

Remember how we climbed toward the old mission church
on Rooster Mountain, a winter day in China, looking for
the graveyard with its round gate opening into a distant country.
Broken stained glass lined the rough stone walk. Charcoal fires
smoldered in the courtyards, weak sunlight, laundry flapping
in a tranquil wind. Down the mountainside, the acrid smell of smoke;
beneath our feet wet snow. Everything so quiet—that is how,
into the drafty heart of evening, tonight we let them go.

Diane Scholl

Election 2008 Roundtable

*Chris W. Bonneau
Robert Benne
Jennifer Hora*

On 4 November 2008, Barack Obama was elected the forty-fourth President of the United States. Senator Obama's convincing win marked both the end of the longest presidential election campaign in American history and, perhaps, the beginning of a new era in American politics. On election night, the scene was one of jubilation in Chicago's Grant Park where well over 100,000 Obama supporters celebrated his victory. Senator McCain's supporters were more subdued, but even the most steadfast conservatives could recognize the importance of the election of the first African American president. Inspired by this unlikely president and concerned about the considerable challenges he faces, Americans are looking to the future with both hope and concern. At this important moment in the nation's history, three scholars of American elections and public life offer their reflections on the meaning of this election and about what might happen next.

2008: A Transformative Election

Chris W. Bonneau

AS I THINK THOSE WHO HAVE FOLLOWED politics for a long time know, there was something *different* about this election. Sure, it was the first time in a long time that no Clinton or Bush was on the ballot. Yes, the president's approval ratings were hovering in the 25% range. But there was something else. Something that was not there in 2000 or 2004. A buzz. A sense of excitement. A sense of something historic.

I am writing this on the afternoon of Election Day as I watch thousands of people waiting hours to vote, and the thought that keeps going through my head over and over is that this is a transformative election. Certainly, at least, the voters are treating it as such. And the ability to tap into that transformative dimension is what separated the campaigns of John McCain and Barack Obama. One only has to look at the "ground game" of the candidates (documented excellently at www.fivethirtyeight.com). Obama's campaign had more volunteers than McCain, more field offices than McCain, more resources than McCain, more enthusiasm than McCain. In all aspects of

the grassroots, get-out-the-vote effort, Obama was able to mobilize more people than McCain. Commentators described the Obama organization as the best-run organization they ever had seen.

This was the fundamental difference in the two campaigns. While Obama talked about hope and change and provided a positive vision for the future, McCain gave us Joe the Plumber (who was not even a plumber), lectures about earmarks, and a vice-presidential nominee who a majority of Americans felt was not qualified for the job. It is not that McCain was a bad nominee: it is that he was the *wrong* nominee. Hillary Clinton fell victim to the same force in the primary: it was not that she was a bad candidate; it was that her message of experience and focus on specific policies was the *wrong* message for 2008.

So, what was this something "different"? If we believe the polls and the voters, it was a sense that we have lost our way as a country. A sense that something was fundamentally wrong with the way we have been conducting ourselves. This is much different than other recent elections. In 2000, people were largely satisfied with the direction of the country. Even though the incumbent party did not win the White House,

it was not a “change” election (in fact Al Gore even received more votes than George W. Bush). In 2004, again, there was some discontent, but Bush’s approval ratings were still pretty strong. Now certainly there have been other “transformative” elections. My point is not that 2008 was unique. Rather, my point is simply that it is unlike any election many (most?) of us ever have experienced. In no recent election have so many people questioned our government on so many levels—the economy, foreign policy, ethics, etc. The best parallel might be 1980—when an outsider with some experience who was charismatic and talked about hope won the White House.

Into this environment of uncertainty and unease with the status quo came

a candidate who is himself transformative, a candidate who does not look like the typical candidate, a candidate who has not spent his entire life in government, a candidate who inspires us simply by the fact that *he* is the one running for president. This year, this time, was crying out for a candidate like Barack Obama. A candidate who represented change: change from the economic policies that helped contribute to the current economic downturn/recession; change from the failed foreign policy that led us to invade and take over a country that posed no threat to us; change from the typical negative campaign and mudslinging that asks us to be motivated by fear, not hope. Change from the status quo, in all its forms. The transformative candidate transformed the electorate and transformed the way to campaign in this transformative election.



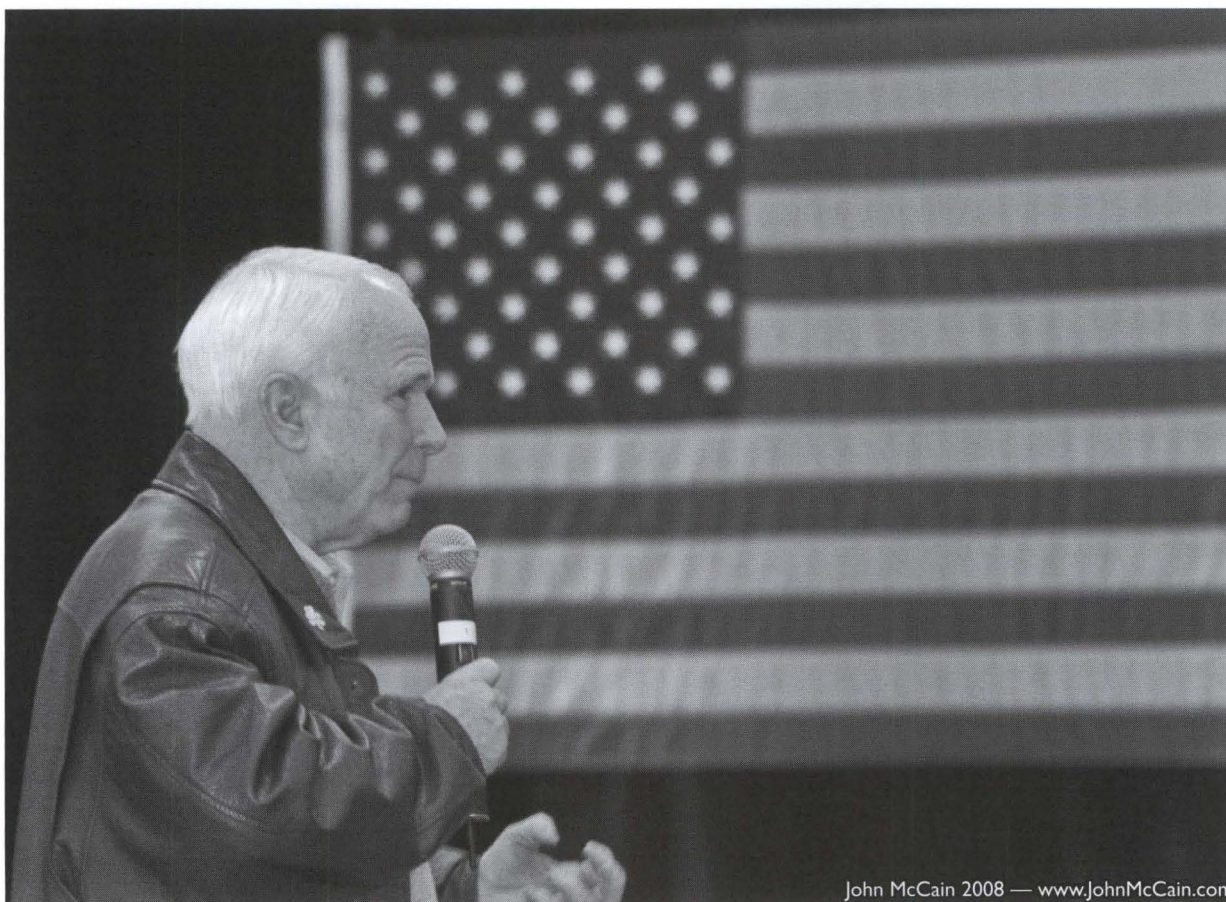
Photo by Marc Nozell. (Creative Commons, 2.0)

Now, none of this readily or easily translates into governing. Obama’s administration will have to make hard choices about how to prioritize his policy proposals. But if he governs in the same way he ran his campaign, he may usher in a new way of governing as well. Obviously, the challenges Obama will face are many. But it feels like, for the first time in a *long* time, they are not overwhelming, not insurmountable. It feels like the transformative candidate who ran on the slogan of “Yes we can!” will be able successfully to change that to “Yes we will.”

Finally, this reflection would be incomplete if I did not mention the fact that we have now elected our first African-American president. Fifty years after black

children and white children were allowed to attend school together, we have elected a black president. In an election in which a 109-year old woman whose father was born into slavery cast a ballot, we have elected a black president. At a time where the country seemed (hopelessly?) divided, we have elected a black president. A president who bridged the gap between red states and blue states. A president who inspired all people—young and old, black and white, men and women, rich and poor—to participate in the democratic process. A president who appealed to our best parts. A president who has helped give life to the promises of the Declaration of Independence and who has moved us along the path to achieving a “more perfect union.”

A transformative election, indeed. ♣



John McCain 2008 — www.JohnMcCain.com

Hopes and Fears for a New Presidency

Robert Benne

IT WAS CLEAR THAT FROM MID-SEPTEMBER ON, there was little or no chance for John McCain to win the Presidency. The economic meltdown determined that the party out of power would carry the day. Whether deserved or not, the party in power is held by American voters to be responsible for the economic conditions in which they find themselves. As I see it, a noble and deserving man—McCain—was caught in inexorable events over which he had little control. Without the meltdown, he would have won handily. The late addition of a populist dash of color and energy—Sarah Palin—had little effect. Though both were berated for the campaign that they ran, there was in truth little that they could do.

Given this outcome, what is there to hope for and fear? First, it is important to register satisfaction over the success of an African-American man who rose from modest origins to

the Presidency. He has embodied the American Dream once again. Moreover, he exhibited talent, grace, and genuine humanity in his campaign. So congratulations are in order.

There are signs of hope in Obama's successful run for the Presidency. He ran a centrist campaign that appealed to non-partisan sentiments. He tried to unite the nation around the theme of hopeful change. Now that he has won, I hope that his governance will be as centrist and reasonable as his campaign. He seems to be surrounding himself with centrist advisors, particularly on economic issues. He is certainly wise enough to want to continue to unite the country rather than bring sharp divisions. My hope is that his administration will be moderate, reasonable, and successful.

My fear is that the worrisome signals in his background may be a true reflection of who he really is and therefore suggest quite a different direction. His voting records in the Illinois and United States Senate were very liberal. His associations with Bill Ayers and ACORN are alarming, as was his long sojourn in a church that

seemed to thrive on racial resentment and alienation from the American mainstream.

Obama is beholden to some very powerful left-wing supporters who will expect him to move strongly to the left. Moreover, he will have a strong Democratic Congress that will be able to push through highly controversial and partisan, and, to my mind, dangerous legislation.

Let me list a few specific fears. My worst fear is that he will withdraw irresponsibly from Iraq and squander away the hard-won gains we have made in recent months. I believe that the emergence of a decent, roughly democratic, and friendly Iraq would constitute one of the most important foreign policy gains of the twenty-first century. Such an advance could change the face of the Middle East for the better. Success is quite possible but not assured. If Obama follows his own past rhetoric and the promptings of his left-wing supporters, he may lose Iraq and that would be devastating.

My second fear is that he will push through the Freedom of Choice Act, which will in one fell swoop eliminate all the carefully crafted limits on abortion that painstakingly have been achieved at the state and federal level. Such a legislative act will bring forth great social unrest, if not violence. That act will ensure the availability of abortion for whatever reason in whatever way, including even the gruesome “partial-birth” abortion. “Unrestrained killing” is not too strong a phrase to describe the effects of such legislation.

Third, he may well pay off his union supporters by enacting legislation that will disallow the requirement of a secret vote in unionization efforts. That will enable organized labor to intimidate and coerce workers into unions, which will then lead to many more strikes. Unions may once again have the power to disrupt economic life seriously.

Fourth, Obama will be able to build a heavily liberal judiciary, which has had the tendency to usurp the legislative will of the people. Combined with liberal executive and legislative arms of the government, a more liberal judiciary will give us more liberal hegemony over our common lives. Elite liberal legal requirements—

such as punishing the Boy Scouts for having their own standards for leaders—may well become the order of the day. The long arm of the law will reach into our private institutions even more than it already has.

Finally, Obama and the Democrats will be inclined to enlarge the size and scope of government, which will simply mean that more of the national income will be allocated by political choice rather than by the choice of private individuals and institutions. That will tend to diminish economic and social creativity and vitality, which have been the prized hallmark of American life.

I certainly hope that my worst fears will not come true. I will closely watch the leadership team and set of political priorities that Obama assembles, listen carefully to his inauguration address, and hope for the best. ♣

President Obama: Expectations and Constraints

Jennifer Hora

ELECTION DAY 2008 BROUGHT WITH IT AN historic win by the first African-American President along with expanded Democratic majorities in the United States House of Representatives and Senate. In fact, the promise or threat of large Democratic majorities (depending on which side you sat on) was a prominent component of several campaigns. As this analysis goes to print, several races are still undecided, facing recounts or runoffs. And in Georgia, the runoff election is focusing on the political big picture, with both candidates appealing to voters to think about the large scale consequences of their vote—control of the Senate and how Congress will work with the White House.

What dynamics led to these changes? How were the Democrats able to win sizeable majorities in both houses of Congress just a few short years after Karl Rove announced the beginning of a permanent Republican majority? How was a man named Barack Hussein Obama able to win states not won by Democrats for decades,

including Indiana, Virginia, and North Carolina, along with a clear majority of the popular vote not seen in twenty years?

One answer to these questions is a backlash against the current unpopular president. Cyclical change is another. In modern politics, no party maintains the White House for long periods of time. Obama supporters point to his messages of Hope and Change. Countless journalists have written about the excitement surrounding this election, energy that has been absent from other recent campaigns. Others attribute the Democratic wins to a weak economy, which traditionally helps Democrats. And minority turnout was certainly much higher than in a typical election year.

Whatever the cause of the considerable Democratic win, expectations are high. The media built up the idea that Democratic control of the Presidency, the Senate, and the House would bring radical change. Candidate Obama established himself as a candidate with a true rhetorical gift using a campaign message of broad and uplifting themes. These all-encompassing, inspiring messages have increased excitement and expectations for the incoming president. Yet, after an election, the new occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue always experiences considerable limits on his actions, and soon-to-be President Obama certainly will be no exception. People on both sides of the political aisle best consider the incredible constraints on the new President. Barack Obama may be taking over the most powerful elected position in the United States, but that does not mean his power is unchecked. The Democrats may have control of all three elected bodies, but that does not mean they get to ride roughshod over existing policy.

The first and strongest constraint to consider is the power of the status quo. In real estate, possession is nine-tenths of the law, and in politics existing policy has the force of possession on its side. Policy is severely limited by actions already set in motion by previous administrations. For example, there is no reneging on the \$700 billion bailout package passed this fall. A new president can close Guantanamo, but he cannot stop it from ever opening in the first place. The dam-

age to our national reputation already has been done, and the new president will have to deal with those consequences. A new administration can propose new mortgage regulations, but it cannot go back and put them in place to prevent the current foreclosures. Policy decisions are severely limited by the actions of previous administrations.

Another reason the status quo is such a powerful factor is that change is so difficult to achieve. Overwhelmingly, the public favors some type of health care reform, yet this was one of President Clinton's most glaring failures. Politicians, actuaries, and the general public concur that the Social Security system is broken. The predictions are grim. And yet no major change has been made to this policy which impacts all American throughout most of their lives. Change, while an appealing message, is strikingly difficult to implement.

Global and domestic conditions also place severe limits on a new president's power. President Obama will face very different domestic conditions from those Candidate Obama faced when he announced the start of his official campaign almost two years ago. Virtually all economic indicators, including unemployment, foreclosures, and economic output have taken significant turns for the worse since that time. On top of the domestic concerns, the global economy is experiencing a downturn as well, with Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Netherlands disclosing staggering economic indicators this fall as well. Chinese leaders have gone so far as to imply that the United States is responsible for the current poor international conditions and therefore responsible for taking dramatic actions to solve the current crisis. During the debates, neither Obama nor McCain was willing to suggest which of their proposed spending programs would need to be altered to compensate for current economic conditions. If these conditions continue to deteriorate, certainly President Obama will need to acknowledge and act on these changing domestic and international circumstances.

The final constraint on the newly elected House, Senate, and Presidential majorities is

public opinion. American politicians do an amazing job of being responsive to the electorate. Politicians listen to the public, if only because they want to get re-elected. When they fail at this, the other party gets a chance at the controls, as happened when the Republicans took over so forcefully in 1994, and now the Democrats in 2008. When he takes the reigns on 20 January, Barack Obama must recognize that, whatever expectations he created during the election campaign, his chances for re-election depend on how he responds to the desires of the American electorate over the next four years. †

Roundtable Participants

Chris W. Bonneau ('97) is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh. He is coauthor of *Strategic Behavior and Policy Choice on the US Supreme Court (2005)* and *In Defense of Judicial Elections (2009)*.

Robert Benne is Director of the Roanoke College Center for Religion and Society.

Jennifer Hora is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Valparaiso University.

USAGI

*The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold...*

Keats, *The Eve of St. Agnes*

Wise one, wary and still,
you allow us to approach you.
A street lamp dimly hallows
your cold intensity. You are poised
to flee yet you linger a moment longer—
small statue wanting to know us,
wanting to be known.

December advances into darkness
yet we expect greater brightness
warmth
and ease.

The fields spread out their invitation:
take hold of the staff we've been given,
walk arm in trusting arm toward a new year.

[*Usagi*, a Japanese inscription on the drawing of a rabbit
from an album acquired by the Bodleian Library, 1847]

Jan Bowman

Sarah Palin and the Future of Feminism

Peter Meilaender

I WRITE THIS ON 3 NOVEMBER, THE EVE OF A presidential election that, we are assured, is historic, following what one can only hope will prove to have been the longest campaign of our lifetimes. As I write, Obama looks poised to become our next president, though McCain has been making a late charge, and some of today's online chatter revolved around scenarios in which McCain wins the Electoral College while losing the popular vote. With any luck, however, the election will have been decided by the time you read this.

It has been a campaign full of interesting twists and turns. But who would have predicted a few months ago that by its end Barack Obama would be only its second-most interesting figure? A female vice-presidential candidate, but not Hillary Clinton; a little-known, first-term governor rocketing to political celebrity status; a self-described pit bull with lipstick. Sarah Palin is the most intriguing story of this campaign. Or, at least, she could be. If McCain goes down to a smashing defeat, he might well take Palin's political future along with him. That would be unfortunate, however, for Palin's example holds out the promise of a rapprochement between two political forces that are otherwise poles apart in the American culture wars: feminism and cultural conservatism.

At first glance, one might have expected Palin's nomination to have been greeted with some skepticism by rank-and-file Republicans. Not for the usual reason cited by her critics, inexperience, but for a different one altogether: motherhood. Conservative defenders of the family are not known for praising mothers of five who work full-time jobs outside the home. And Palin, of course, holds not just any job but one carrying tremendous responsibilities, long hours, and potentially limitless duties—precisely the

sort of job that a mother of young children should not hold (or so one might have expected cultural conservatives to argue). One can readily understand that a state governor might feel obligated to return quickly to work after a medical absence—perhaps even a mere three days after giving birth. But one might have been surprised to see conservatives embrace her—with wild enthusiasm, no less—as one of their own. Their embrace was made easier, of course, by the shameful barrage of highly personal vitriol heaped upon Palin by the mainstream media. Nevertheless, the ease with which family values advocates made their peace with this working mother should prompt more reflection than it has. For in a campaign that has teased us with various potential realignments—the South and Mountain West again in play for Democrats? cracks in the rightwing evangelical coalition? prosperous, upscale latte liberals shifting Democratic, while blue-collar, beer-drinking Reagan Democrats solidifying as Wal-Mart Republicans?—Palin could signify a shift of tremendous long-term significance: the transformation of feminism from a fixation of the radical left to a feature of traditionalist, family-oriented conservatism.

It is difficult to overstate the seeming implausibility of such a transformation, for there has been no more pointed opposition within American politics than that between feminism and cultural conservatism. We have as yet only a dim appreciation of the far-reaching changes, for good and ill, that feminism has wrought in American society. But it is intimately connected to practically every major front in the culture wars. Its signature cause has been the defense of abortion rights, which has colonized enormous political territory with the language of personal autonomy (a connection made most dramatically by the Court's infamous plu-

rality opinion in the *Casey* decision). The socially corrosive argument from autonomy—autonomy in the deep and literal sense of being a law to one's self—has seeped from the abortion debates into a vast range of other issues: divorce and family breakdown, drug use, same-sex marriage, pornography and rights of expression, euthanasia and end-of-life questions, and the complex web of biomedical issues from *in vitro* fertilization to genetic engineering to cloning.

And while the concept of personal autonomy has been the most important vehicle by which feminism has determined the battle lines of much political debate, it is by no means the only one. The simple notion of an equal right to work—far less explosive (and far more philosophically defensible) than accounts of autonomy—has posed equally dramatic challenges to a range of social institutions: the structure of the family, of child-rearing, of the workplace, of education. Feminism has thus been the linchpin around which a broad range of radical changes cohere. The feminist movement's success, I predict, ultimately will come to be seen as the most fundamental social and political transformation of postwar American politics, and we will be tracing its consequences for decades to come.

Because these changes are so very radical—think of the proposals in Plato's *Republic* for the organization of family and the education of the sexes suddenly crystallizing as an actual political agenda—conservatives have had great difficulty coming to grips with them or even knowing how to respond. The justice of the basic demand for female equality appears undeniable. But its social implementation has unleashed a kind of revolutionary juggernaut. This dilemma manifests itself

in the culture wars. One segment of the population heartily embraces feminism and all of the radical changes that have accompanied it. Another is prepared to dig in its heels and oppose the whole package. In the middle is a large, somewhat amorphous mass motivated less by any clear ideological or philosophical view than by a combination of conflicting instincts (supportive of “family values,” but also sympathetic to arguments for justice and equality) and economic interests (the need, or desire, for two incomes).



For conservatives (and for the Republican Party), this is ultimately a losing situation. In a political culture whose discourse is framed largely in terms of individual rights and equality, the defense of traditional arrangements always will lose out over the long run to claims of egalitarian justice, as progress appears to vanquish outdated and irrational prejudices. And so we give a bit here, a bit there, not entirely understanding why the slippage seems to be always and only in one direction. And traditional institutions are gradually eroded without anyone knowing how the slide might be stopped—or, perhaps better, without anyone feeling quite confident

about the justice of stopping it.

Enter Sarah Palin. The tremendous support she elicited from the electorate clearly rested in large part upon ordinary citizens' ability to identify with her, to see in her a reflection of their own circumstances and values. And this, I take it, included her success in the workplace. Whatever one might have expected, her combination of motherhood with a demanding career turned out not to threaten her acceptance among the conservative rank-and-file. This suggests that at the

level of practice, ordinary working families are already groping toward an accommodation of the demands of work and family. Critical to such an accommodation, however, is the severing of the link between a simple demand for equal opportunity and the much more far-reaching demand for full personal autonomy. Family structures can come to terms with the former; the latter explodes them. Palin's deep commitment to the pro-life cause, and in particular the powerful example of her decision to bear and raise a child with Down Syndrome, symbolized this rejection of personal autonomy as an ultimate value. Special-needs children cannot hope to enjoy full autonomy, and the decision to accept the challenges of caring for one represents a conscious abdication of the demand for autonomy—represents, indeed, an embrace of human interdependency. Palin's broadly conservative stance on the range of "values" issues further underscored the symbolism of her family situation.

Palin's example therefore provides an opportunity for conservatives. It raises the possibility of a de-radicalization and mainstreaming of feminism and thus potentially alters the balance of power in the culture wars. More strikingly than any other female American politician, Palin shows that it is possible both to defend opportunity for women and nevertheless to reject antinomian visions of personal liberation. Since working mothers and dual-income households are not going away, this combination is critical to conservatism's electoral prospects. It also paves the way for a brand of feminism, perhaps the only one, that could truly become mainstream, honoring rather than opposing the familial structures and values according to which most Americans still strive to lead their lives.

A "Palinian" feminism would, finally, hold out some hope for shifting the cultural balance of power. As I noted earlier, the long-term slide in the

cultural wars currently seems all in one direction. Halting, to say nothing of reversing, that slide will require adaptation on the part of conservatives. It will require carefully distinguishing between the aspects of our social arrangements that must be preserved and those that can prudently be modified, between core principles that must be defended and their social manifestations, which evolve over time. In particular, the stand against the cluster of autonomy issues—a stand that probably faces long odds regardless—must be free of doubts that it can satisfy demands for just and fair opportunity. But perhaps there is indeed a silent majority prepared to embrace equality of opportunity while rejecting the lures (and corruptions) of autonomy, if they have examples to emulate and leadership to show the way.

This is why Sarah Palin is such an intriguing figure. (And also, incidentally, why the hard left so greatly fears her.) The example she represents will not be an easy one to emulate, for the accommodation in question is genuinely difficult. Palin's own family has been a reminder that balancing work and family is not easy. And achieving that balance may still require significant changes in the structural landscape of work. But conceivably continued technological developments will make it possible for more and more work to be done from the home, in which case the trend of moving wage-earners outside the home, which began with industrialization, actually would prove to be the historical anomaly. We shall see. In the meantime, we can hope that John McCain's unexpected running mate will remain on the national scene as a reminder that feminism, rightly understood, need not be permanently in thrall to only one side in the culture wars. ♣

Peter Meilaender is Associate Professor of Political Science at Houghton College.

pop culture

Looking for the Baby Jesus under the Trash

An Advent Meditation on the Theological Importance of Pop Culture

Christian Scharen

U2's POPMART TOUR, IN SUPPORT OF ITS 1997 album *Pop*, was announced in a New York City Kmart on Ash Wednesday. The blue light was flashing overhead. When the juxtaposition of their announcement of the garish PopMart tour in Kmart on Ash Wednesday was pointed out to the band, their lead singer Bono replied, "Ash Wednesday and Kmart—that about wraps us up." The third song on the album, titled "Mofo," has a line that puts it similarly: "looking for the baby Jesus under the trash." Millions have lined up to see this band over their thirty-year ride on top of the pop charts. Nearly half their fans say they've had a spiritual experience or been drawn deeper into faith in God through their engagement with this pop band.

In order to make sense of this, apparently, we'd best not ask theologians. Writing in the most recent *Christian Century*, theologian Charles Mathewes laments that "by and large, the interests of academic theologians such as myself are determined by the fleeting fashions of our field more than by any vivid concern with the lived lives of churches, so we float ever further into abstractions and esoterica." I would think theologians would be in the lead here. What's going on? This seems similar to what happens when someone who loves organ and choral music at church looks down their nose at "entertainment" style worship led by guitar, bass, and drums. Assumptions rule and drive judgments and commitments.

For the sake of the life of spiritually engaged people today, many of whom are not active in a congregation of any faith tradition, theologians might want to reconsider following U2 in looking for "the baby Jesus under the trash." He was, after all, born amidst manure and straw. One

would imagine that today Christ might be found elsewhere than our nice, clean, and utterly upbeat churches. Our coiffed choirs and soaring organs seem altogether too established for this rebel Lord who kept breaking open the circle demarcating insiders and outsiders. In this brief reflection, I offer some orienting comments about culture and pop culture, as well as an apology for more focused theological attention to what people love, listen to, and are moved by for the sake of ministry in the world God loves, listens to, and is moved by.

Without getting too bogged down in comparing various academic definitions, let me suggest some common definitions of culture. When asked, people might say such things as "what we make, versus what is, naturally" or "the stuff of our lives, including language and making meaning of that stuff." That's a good start. To build on it, let me introduce a helpful perspective drawn from the sociologist Ann Swidler, who teaches at the University of California, Berkeley. Rather than speaking of culture as "out there," as a "thing," she tries to shift to thinking about the use of culture. She speaks of culture as a "tool kit" by which we do the things we do. We live through and by culture, so to speak. Here is her definition: "Culture is 'a 'tool-kit' of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems.'" Drawing from the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Swidler notes how often culture shapes us, how it forms the assumptions we make, the way we see the world, and therefore the actions we imagine are possible and reasonable. Try this exercise meant to elicit some of our cultural assumptions. Write down (or make



Mrs. Ostermeyer, Woodbury County, Iowa, 1936.
Photo by Russell Lee, Farm Security Administration.

a mental note of) your response to the picture on this page. Take a minute to really look at it and let your responses come to some clarity.

What came to mind as you looked at this picture? When Pierre Bourdieu did this experiment, he found that those from a higher socio-economic class (and who were likely also more urbanized) were interested in the photo as a beautiful if painful metaphor for age or life's difficulty. Those with closer proximity to the hard labor of the working class feel visceral horror at the deformity of these hands, and commented about the actual difficulty of a life of hard labor.

The point is that who we are, how we were raised, the sorts of families, schools, and so on that formed us shape our cultural sensibilities and frame how we live—the assumptions we make, the actions we see as possible and appropriate, and so on. Culture consists of more than objects out there; it consists of material life of which we are part and parcel. This is important later on, so we'll return to this point. Now, to distinguish what we mean by popular culture.

My focus is not simply culture as a whole (which I believe has pretty limited usefulness anyway, since what really exist are cultures, subcul-

tures, and so on, rather than the generic concept of culture). Rather, I'm interested in the category of popular culture, and so we need to specify what we mean with that distinction. Again, as with culture generally, there are many definitional debates here that I don't want to get bogged down in. For our purposes, I simply demarcate the lines between pop culture, high culture, and folk culture.

High culture is distinguished in part by its limited audience. However, its audience is limited on purpose by virtue of the fact that it is addressed to people with very particular training or knowledge (usually connected to socio-economic and educational level). For example, I recently chaperoned an elementary school trip (including my children) to the American Ballet Theatre production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. We all had been reading Shakespeare for children, getting the kids up to speed on this classic tale. We went on a Wednesday afternoon and sat in the highest section, called appropriately the "Family Circle." While I thought the kids behaved well, a crabby usher scolded us during intermission for clapping at the wrong times, saying that "we upset the dancers." Take home message: go

away until you can learn to behave properly.

A limited audience also distinguishes folk culture. However, this is not an intentional limit but more of a functional one. I think of the children's choir at a local church as an example. The point here is that their song is intended to praise God and uplift the congregation gathered for that specific service. Mark Chaves, a sociologist from the University of Arizona, has done the most extensive survey of congregations in American. He says they are the single largest producers and sponsors of the arts, but it is folk art, mostly, created by and for those gathered in a particular place. Bono, U2's lead singer, has said this is one of his favorite aspects of church and always has been. He calls congregational singing a "community art."

Popular culture, then, means that something has, whether by intention or by accident, gained a widespread audience. Take Jazzman Louis Armstrong as an example here. His signature song, "What a Wonderful World," was not a hit in the US and had an initial print run of 1,000. But it was a number one hit in Europe where Armstrong was a major star, and over time, largely because of its use on television and in movies, the song has become a classic on par with Frank Sinatra's version of "New York, New York." While I am not delving into the issue in any depth here, obviously media corporations have enormous power in shaping popular culture. Every summer, the Disney marketing juggernaut transforms thousands of fast food restaurants and cereal boxes into billboards for the kids' blockbuster of the season. An example from a recent season success is the film *Ratatouille* about a French rat who has extraordinary culinary gifts and wants to be a chef. In other words, many times popular artists are backed by powerful media companies and have access to major distribution networks that contribute to their popularity. Still, many artists have this backing and fail, while others without

it nonetheless make their way into the popular culture.

Given the media's influence in creating pop culture, why pay serious attention to popular culture? Why not dismiss it as so much fluff, entertainment created for the masses and not worthy of serious attention? Let me share a brief testimony on this point. I used to think "pop-schmop," why should I pay attention to what everybody's doing? I took it as a badge of honor that I didn't even have a television, let alone watch one. I smiled knowingly at the mention of the name Michel Foucault while enjoying being clueless about the zip code for Beverly Hills (that would be 90210, and it was a hit show on Fox). While on internship, parishioners would ask me if I'd seen some show or caught a news clip, and I'd say, "No, I don't have a TV." Kindly, they didn't imagine I was being condescending; they just assumed I was too poor to afford one. So as a going away present at the end of the year, they gave me a TV and VCR.

Their point was, you can't relate to your congregation very well if you don't know what they're watching. Fair enough. I now have a TV and DVD player, and credit that congregation—Bethlehem, Oakland, if you know it—for poking a hole in my self-righteousness and helping me see that if I wanted to do ministry, I'd need to pay closer attention to what people actually do day-to-day and not just read books on cultural critique. The incarnation—God enfleshed—raises the question of just where we think we'd find God working to reconcile the world to himself if not "under the trash" of our contemporary culture. Let's get digging. †

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film

Religulous: Is Religion Ridiculous?

Ross Moret

IF RELIGION WAS ONCE A CONVERSATION STOPPER in the United States, it is so no longer. One need look no further than presidential politics to see that religion is relevant once again in American public discourse. Who would have predicted ten years ago that the two parties' nominees for President would take part in a nationally televised forum focused solely on issues of faith? Nor is politics the only area where religion is a hot-button issue. Religious books such as Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* and films that engage faith such as *The Passion of the Christ* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy have been enormously successful. Perhaps not surprisingly, this phenomenon has not produced a universally positive reaction. Books such as Richard Dawkins's *The God Delusion* and Christopher Hitchens's *God Is Not Great* have capitalized on and added ammunition to the anti-religion backlash. Hollywood has even released a children's fantasy film, *The Golden Compass*, which in many ways counteracts the central messages of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Into this milieu of heightened public religious awareness, Bill Maher enters the fray with his sometimes hilarious, sometimes infuriating, but always interesting film *Religulous*. While the film is definitely smart, and often sophisticated, it cannot offer a serious critique of religion because it is shackled with too much bias, too much hypocrisy, too many preconceptions, and too many inaccuracies. Indeed, Maher seems willing to deconstruct everyone's dogmas but his own. Nevertheless, and despite its deficiencies, *Religulous* is as thought-provoking and entertaining a film as a person is likely to see—whatever their religious sentiments.

A play-on-words, "*Religulous*" is meant to combine the words "religion" and "ridiculous." If the title were not enough to give the film maker's

sentiments away, Maher declares in the opening scene that religion is "detrimental to the progress of humanity." In fact, the film begins and ends with a powerful criticism of religion delivered by Maher from Megiddo, the site where many Christians believe the Battle of Armageddon will occur at the end of days. The site is used by Maher to observe that while once only God possessed the power to destroy the earth, this danger can now be realized by the destructive powers of humanity—a possibility he believes is made more likely by religion. The rest of the film sees Maher traveling much of the globe to interview a wide assortment of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and members of other faiths.

As with any documentary of this kind, a great deal hinges on the performance of the interviewer. Here Maher, the witty and sarcastic host of HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*, is brilliant. He is in his element ridiculing the beliefs of those with whom he disagrees, and his mind moves with great agility, offering pithy one-liners and often thinking circles around his opponents. To be sure, Maher's performance is often as entertaining as the inept responses of those he interviews. His performance is a highlight of the film.

Religulous is also effective in revealing the hypocrisy of certain religious figures. This is particularly powerful, for example, in the interview with televangelist Jeremiah Cummings, who Maher takes to task for his significant amount of jewelry ("bling," as Maher called it) and custom-tailored suit. Cummings implausibly responds that he is following the example of Jesus, who wore fine linens and was given gold by the wise men! In a similar vein, Maher calls out the Roman Catholic Church for the material splendor of the Vatican. In another interview, he rightly points out the hypocrisy of the violent Muslim rapper

Propa-Gandhi, who constantly complains about the popular backlash against his record. Propa-Gandhi demands the right to free speech in one breath but in the next praises the death threats made against Salmon Rushdie, the controversial author of *The Satanic Verses*—a book critical of Islam.

Maheer is also adept at pointing out the inadequacies of many people's unexamined beliefs. Indeed, if Socrates was right that "the unexamined life is not worth living," then Maheer is offering a valuable service. Several times in the film, it is difficult not to shake one's head in amazement at the lack of self-awareness exhibited by those being interviewed. One such example occurs at the Dome on the Rock, where Maheer suggests that perhaps women do not enjoy equality with men in many majority-Muslim areas. The man who he is interviewing then shows Maheer a woman praying in a corner of the gigantic mosque and says, "See, women have their own special corner." When Maheer interviews Mark Pryor, the junior senator from Arkansas misuses and invents a number of words during the discussion, and the interview ends with Pryor declaring that "you don't need to take an IQ test to be in the US Senate."

Some parts of the film, however, are not as successful. A number of instances begin awkwardly and are only made worse by Maheer's crass comments. This is perhaps most evident when he interviews two gay Muslims in Amsterdam. He uses a number of vulgar terms in describing the male anatomy and homosexual acts that clearly make the men feel uncomfortable. The audience cannot help but sympathize.

The film also would have benefited from a stronger and more balanced pool of interviewees. Out of the many Christians he interviewed, only three, perhaps four, were truly knowledgeable about the faith. Moreover, the only truly world-class Christian mind of the group, Francis Collins, was interviewed about the historicity

of the canonical Gospels rather than on his specialty, the Christian outlook on science. If Maheer truly wanted to have an intelligent discussion on the viability of faith, he should have interviewed Collins regarding faith and science and asked N. T. Wright, Richard B. Hays, or some other Christian who is an expert on the New Testament about the historicity of the Gospels.

But the most glaring flaw of the film is not its uncomfortable moments or bias regarding interviewees, but its historical inaccuracies. In several instances Maheer chooses points of minutia and turns them into central points of attack. For example, it seems odd that Maheer is fixated on, the notion that Christians believe Jesus was born on 25 December. On one level, it is odd because it is simply not the case. In fact, having been a Christian all my life and having spent a great deal of

time in church and reading Christian literature, I never recall anyone claiming that Jesus was born on any specific day of the year whatsoever, least of all 25 December. Second, it is odd that, even were it true, Maheer would find it significant. What substantive difference could it possibly make to know, or not know, on which day of the calendar year Jesus was born?

Of much greater importance, though, is the film's claim that the written record of the life of Jesus Christ was contrived based on the legends of the gods Krishna, Mithra, and Horus, legends that predate the life of Christ by several centuries. The film only goes into detail on the claim concerning Horus, so that is the one that will be treated here. To put it concisely, the film's assertion is patently false. According to *Religulous*, Horus is portrayed as being born of a virgin, baptized in a river, crucified, and raised from the dead (among other things) in the thirteenth-century BC source *The Book of the Dead*. Having personally plumbed a translation of *The Book of the Dead* for every reference to Horus and having read a number of scholarly articles about the god,

Religulous is a smart and funny film that should spark the thoughtful viewer's intellect and almost certainly will spark most any viewer's interest.

I feel comfortable saying that none of this is true. In fact, it seems that the only available source for this material is a book of questionable merit entitled *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold*, by Acharya S (her real name is D. Murdock), a work that has received no scholarly attention save one negative review written by an atheist. These false claims, then, are without a doubt the film's greatest shortcoming. They are naïve and irresponsible, particularly for a film that attempts to uncover dogmatism and falsehood.

These criticisms notwithstanding, *Religulous* is a smart and funny film that should spark the thoughtful viewer's intellect and almost certainly

will spark most any viewer's interest. If there are unapologetic biases and even inaccuracies, they are, to some degree, to be expected from such a film. Bill Maher is, after all, a comedian. And he delivers where one would expect—by mixing scathing criticism with sarcasm and wit. The combination works, so long as the viewer eyes the film's truth claims with a discerning spirit and is willing to embrace its sense of humor. †

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LIGHTING THE CHRISTMAS TREE

The Big Bang also needed a spark,
a fuse to get the galaxies going.

Long after the fiery birth of our universe,
a raging star imploded one day,

spewing itself back into the cosmos

so that, as the story goes,
three wise men might find their way

through the desert, towards a new halo.
From light we began, and to light we will return.

We can't imagine a time before time began,
back when light was still only an idea, an unlit bulb.

And so, on this night beneath the stars,
we wait for the plug and socket,

for a spark to split the darkness wide open.

Patrick Hicks

Finding Religion at the Chicago History Museum

Gretchen Buggeln

A Review of *Catholic Chicago*, on view at the Chicago History Museum until 4 January 2008.

CATHOLIC CHICAGO, A TEMPORARY EXHIBITION at the Chicago History Museum, is bursting with life. Music, voices, color, and compelling images and objects draw the visitor into a robust depiction of the past and present of Chicago's largest religious group. The exhibition "explores Chicago from the perspective of the Catholic community, examines how being Catholic in Chicago has transformed over time, and how it has shaped the city's urban landscape" (Chicago History Museum press release, 21 January 2008). Although the exhibition space is small (about 3,000 square feet), its expansive contents offer a wide variety of perspectives on the experience of being Catholic in this place. Six themed galleries present a roughly chronological review of the history of the Chicago Archdiocese, from the first Jesuit mission church established in 1696 to the present day. The first gallery, *Laying Their Foundations*, tells the history of the early generations. Subsequent galleries interpret Catholic education (*School Days*), life passages and activism (*Committed to Community*), worship (*Worship in the City*), and, in the wake of Vatican II, *Changing the Church* and *Faith in the Future*.

What, one may wonder, is religion *doing* in this museum? What can an exhibition of this kind contribute to the public's understanding of religious art, material culture, belief, practice, and community? Ever increasing religious pluralism is a fact of life in America, particularly in diverse urban areas such as Chicago. Where shall we go to learn about each other? America's major history museums, to be sure, share a legacy of elite

ownership and exhibition content fraught with bias. Nonetheless, these institutions *suggest the possibility* of neutral space, where citizens might confront each other's beliefs and practices with respectful curiosity. The current generation of museum curators and educators strives to make this possibility a reality.

The Chicago History Museum is a case in point, the latest, freshest incarnation of the former Chicago Historical Society. With a newly conceived sense of mission and audience, CHM is reaching out to represent the wider community, including its many ethnic and religious groups, with new permanent installations that are visually exciting, interactive, and socially responsible. CHM has a notable web presence (*Catholic Chicago*, for instance, provides three multimedia essays and a downloadable audio tour online) and offers low-cost public programs such as neighborhood tours and pub crawls.

Catholic Chicago is the first of several anticipated exhibitions (pending funding) that will highlight the history and contemporary presence of a number of Chicago's religious communities. Next in line is *Jewish Chicago*, to be followed by *Muslim Chicago*. Museum President Gary Johnson says "*Catholic Chicago* is a good place for our series to begin, since the Catholic community has had an ongoing presence in Chicago since the seventeenth century" (CHM press release). The Archdiocese of Chicago currently serves two million Catholics, and the parish system long defined Chicago's neighborhoods.

The exhibition project provided CHM with an opportunity to build its relationship with the Catholic community and to celebrate, in a variety of public events, Catholic contributions to Chicago's past and present. Staff

interviewed clergy, religious, and laity, and attended mass and community festivals within the Archdiocese. An innovative addition to the research team was the “Teen Council,” a corps of nine high school interns (both Catholic and non-Catholic) who spent a summer gathering oral histories. Considerable financial support was given by Catholic institutions such as the Jesuit Community of Chicago and De Paul University, and in many ways the production of *Catholic Chicago* was a joint enterprise. The main event, however, is not a party or a program but a carefully constructed text: six galleries of objects and labels that add up to a summary of the Catholic experience in Chicago, a text that distills and emphasizes what the exhibition team wanted to say (or felt comfortable saying) about the life of this important group of Chicagoans.

Capturing the life of a religious community in its many dimensions (theological, ecclesiastical, social, political) is no mean feat for a museum. Throw in the inevitable politics—complex negotiations between museum staff, donors, artists, and community groups—and the task becomes even more daunting. How does a museum do justice to such a subject? I approached the exhibition looking for three things: artifacts, people, and belief. I was delighted to encounter a wide variety of the first; objects ranged from museum quality art and liturgical items, to clothing, to the ephemera of popular religious practice. People, also, are here in abundance. Individual Catholics populate the space; a long wall of photographs leads the visitor into the exhibition, and faces and voices appear at every turn. At the very end of the exhibition, the visitor confronts a wonderfully diverse crazy quilt of faces, each marked with the sign of the cross, photographed as they left St. Peter’s Church in the Loop after an Ash Wednesday service in 2005 (figure 1). But the third of my quarries, belief, proved more elusive.

Catholicism is an object-rich religion. Displayed throughout the exhibition are implements of public worship, as well as the stuff of private devotion that conveys the ubiquitous presence of faith in daily life. At the entrance to the exhibition, the visitor sees devotional cards,

a vial of Lourdes water, and “The Authentic St. Joseph Home Sale Practice,” a small kit complete with a devotional guide and a tiny statue of St. Joseph, who aids the believer wanting to sell a home. Elsewhere in the exhibition is a larger display case full of devotional items. As Anna Lee of St. Bernardine, Forest Park, explains in one exhibition label, “We have icons. We have rosaries. Catholics have a lot of little things to help us.” The label for a large collection of prayer cards states they are the “most popular and inexpensively distributed form of portable devotion, which dates back hundreds of years... such cards honor particular saints.”

Several of the exhibition’s key works of art emphasize the Catholic heritage of local artists. The largest painting in the exhibition hangs to the right of the entry, a *Virgin of Guadalupe* (pigment and gold leaf on Mexican *amate* paper) by the Mexican American artist Esperanza Gama. This attention-grabbing image, representing the Virgin’s appearance to the Mexican peasant Juan Diego in 1531, is a depiction of Mexico’s most popular saint and a symbol of the nation. Here she speaks to the strength of Chicago’s Mexican community, the fastest growing Catholic group in the city. The visitor is struck right off the bat by the ethnic richness and variety of Catholic Chicago, where mass is currently celebrated in forty languages.

Another work of art central to the exhibition’s themes is Krzysztof Wasko’s *Urbs in Horto* (“City in a Garden”) an oil on canvas painting in a steel frame (see front cover), installed in the final gallery, *Faith in the Future*. Wasko, a Polish American, created this image specifically for the city of Chicago. The exhibition label states that the image “derives from the traditional Polish devotion to *Czarna Madonna* or Black Madonna.” Wasko incorporated elements from the seal and motto of the city of Chicago, with details that “capture the city’s urban landscape and its history as a city of immigrants. Mary’s green skin tone reflects city parks, her heart pays tribute to victims of the Great Chicago Fire, and the frame [made by the artist’s sister, Marta Wasko] commemorates the steel industry, which employed many Catholics.”



Figure 1. Ash Wednesday at St. Peter's Church in the Loop, 2005.
Photos by Rich Cahan. Courtesy, Chicago History Museum.

With such rich artifacts, it is somewhat surprising that the labels reveal next to nothing about belief or even specific practice. The visitor doesn't learn how prayer cards are used, or why a Catholic would trouble to purchase a "St. Joseph Home Sale" kit. We don't hear of the eclectic spirituality that inspires Esperanza Gama, nor do we discover Krzysztof Wasko's Marian devotion, or what such devotion is about. These are great objects that call attention to the ethnic diversity of the community they represent, but the interpretation often misses an opportunity to explain what these things are for.

Belief is the most difficult thing to convey in an exhibition about religious objects and culture. Theological complexity is inherently hard to reduce to short phrases on an exhibition label. It is also, in my experience, deemed less interesting or important in museum display, and often the source of much disagreement among museum staff. This is not the case necessarily, especially when the religious objects on display belong to a foreign or exotic faith. Down the road at the Art Institute, for instance, you'll learn more about Hindu beliefs from displays of Hindu objects

than you will about Christianity from the labels next to medieval art. *Catholic Chicago's* curator, Jill Grannan, was concerned about interpreting belief in this exhibition, and in her words, the staff "had a lot of dialogue about this." But, in the context of a history museum, she explained during one of several frank and enlightening telephone conversations, one must "walk a fine line between what the history of the religion is and explaining religion," and the former is perceived as much safer territory.

This problem is particularly apparent in the *Worship in Chicago* gallery. The exhibition press release claims that this gallery "explores the artistic aspect of Catholicism," and indeed it does, in a beautiful, open, and churchlike space displaying many examples of liturgical art. "Inside the bricks and mortar of every church is a feast for the senses," the introductory label reads. "Mass is a sensory and spiritual experience, and different artistic traditions have given each church a powerful identity." As you walk into the gallery, past a model of the recently saved and restored French Gothic Holy Family Church (1860), a wall of arches to the left invites you into a quasi



Figure 2. *Worship in Chicago* gallery. Courtesy, Chicago History Museum.

worship-space, with two choir benches facing an altar on a raised dais in front of a facsimile of a stained glass window (figure 2). One terrifically engaging aspect of this gallery is auditory; music and liturgy representing different worship styles plays in the background, including Spanish and Tagalog masses recorded at the Transfiguration of our Lord church, English mass from the Faith Community of Saint Sabina, and the Catholic Singers at the Shrine of St. Francis Xavier Cabrini singing the Kyrie and Sanctus from a Schubert setting for the mass. Any visitor might be struck by the beauty of these objects and sounds, but only visitors with a window into the tradition would find the meaning in this art and music.

Grannan, not a Catholic herself, in fact “wanted to go much further” with the interpretation of belief, and asks “How can you talk about Catholic community without talking about what Catholics believe?” She was stymied by a majority of the team who insisted that “we aren’t backing religion; we aren’t proselytizing.” This skittishness affected the language of the exhibition as well. Terms such as “milestones of life” were preferred over “sacraments” and, according to Grannan, “ritual” was also not a good word.” On scattered liturgical objects throughout the exhibition, label copy does acknowledge doctrine or belief. For instance, the label for a gilded bronze monstrance, ca. 1925, states “A monstrance is an important vessel on display in a church because it holds a wafer of bread that, when consecrated by a priest, is believed to become the body of Jesus Christ.” In the worship gallery, a handsome illustrated Book of the Gospels based on Ethiopian woodblock printing has label copy that explains the text as the “good news of Jesus’ life as the Son of God.” But these explanations are few and far between.

Grannan is circumspect about these tensions, citing “a wide-ranging comfort level” among staff and the perpetual museum concern that visitors will interpret text in the exhibition as the authoritative position of the institution. (This concern pervades all the CHM exhibitions, and in fact most community history museums from small county historical societies to the



Figure 3. A classroom at St. Michael's School, South Shore, 1988. Courtesy, Chicago History Museum.

Smithsonian.) Unless a statement of belief can be attributed to an outside source, it isn't likely to appear—hence the critical importance of video in this exhibition.

Two videos stand out in particular. The first appears in the “School Days” gallery, where I sat in a small desk and listened to Chicagoans reminiscing about their days in Chicago's enormous parochial school system (figure 3). Some memories are about rules, or “this big, gruesome crucifix—what can I say, it scared me.” But the overall message of the video is conveyed in the joyful smiles on ordinary kids' faces as they bop down a runway, lights flashing and music blaring, modeling their school uniforms. Label copy in this gallery addresses the economic pressures facing the schools as they strive to maintain enrollment, improve aging buildings, and pay a lay faculty. This is balanced by a faith in their survival, conveyed most explicitly in a bulle-

tin board prepared weekly by the staff and students of one parish school to tell their own story. Pleasant associations are called up by school rings, yearbooks, and football helmets, and a significant amount of gallery space is devoted to the social action of the Catholic Youth Organization, Catholic orphanages, and charity schools.

A grimmer account of a Catholic childhood is delivered by the video playing in the *Changing the Church* gallery, in which Joseph Iacano tells of his abuse by a parish priest. This is the most sustained interview to appear anywhere in the exhibition, indicating a strong desire on the part of the museum to tell this story and get it right. In this same video, one sees present-day Catholics at worship, a Northwestern University professor explaining the convulsive changes Vatican II brought to parish life, and other speakers raising questions about the ordination of women and the social/political implications of the Catholic perspective on the “sacredness of life.” In the last two galleries, objects also suggest the contemporary challenges faced by the church, for instance a black t-shirt with the words “CATHOLIC. LIBERAL. FAITHFUL.” on the back, and paper bag puppets made by students in the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) Studies program at De Paul University.

To be fair, the exhibition delivers exactly what it promises, an opportunity to “explore the history of Chicago’s largest religious community and its influence on education, architecture, social activism, and city traditions” (*CHM Guide*,

Fall 2008, 4). Also, the intended audience for the exhibition was primarily the Catholic community, and Catholics have attended in droves. The exhibition does what it does extremely well, and I can’t recall seeing a better treatment of a religious tradition in a recent museum exhibition. Furthermore, in many ways, religion *is* what we do. In *Catholic Chicago* this point is driven home by the frequent choice to exhibit ritual clothing: vestments richly embroidered in gold and silk brocade, a nun’s habit, carefully preserved baptismal gowns, beautiful white wedding and communion dresses. This clothing helps us imagine Catholics as living bodies engaged in practices that define their communities. *Catholic Chicago* is about ethnic diversity, education, tradition, change, conflict, activism, and all of this takes place within a materially and visually rich context. This is laudable, and maybe it is as far as a museum like CHM will go towards the interpretation of religious subjects. But to truly understand another religious tradition and perspective, belief must be part of the conversation. We need to know *why* people do what they do. Only a patient visitor to *Catholic Chicago* might discover what a Catholic believes. †

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fiction

A Father's Secret, A Child's Grace

Erin Dalpini

Kim Edwards. *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*.
New York: Viking, 2005.

WHEN KIM EDWARDS FIRST HEARD THE story that inspired *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*, she thought it would make a great novel, then quickly dismissed the idea. It was a true story, a heart-breaking story, and a scandal—twins, separated at birth, were hidden from each other for a lifetime. One child was born with Down Syndrome and sent by his father in secret to live and die in an institution; the other grew-up unaware of his banished brother, and only learned the truth after his twin's death. Although Edwards didn't write about this story at the time, she continued to think about it: "The idea stayed with me... as necessary stories do.... It was the secret at the center of the family that intrigued me."

Some years later, while conducting a writing workshop for the mentally disabled, she again felt the urge to tell this story. One year later, she began that task. *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* is not Edwards's debut piece, but it is her first novel. In *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*, Edwards explores what would motivate a father to hide his child and the consequences of keeping such a secret. It is a picture of the struggles and heartaches of a broken family, a vision of the redemptive strength of love.

Edwards's novel begins on a wintry January evening in 1964. In the midst of a snowstorm, Dr. David Henry rushes his laboring wife Norah to the nearest clinic, which happens to be where he works. When weather prevents the couple from arriving in time, David is forced to perform the delivery, aided by his devoted nurse Caroline. Norah gives birth to twins, Paul and Phoebe. Paul is healthy, but

Phoebe has Down Syndrome, the same disorder that caused David's sister to die at a young age, a loss that devastated his mother.

To "spare [his family] terrible grief" (19), David instructs Caroline to take Phoebe to an institution for children with Down Syndrome. Caroline, who secretly loves David, is shocked, but does not question his judgment. In fact, in the 1960s it was still common practice to send children with Down Syndrome to institutions. David then tells his wife that their newborn daughter passed away, for fear the truth about Phoebe would destroy Norah. This moment sets the tone for the future of their marriage, and it haunts David for the rest of his life. That same evening, upon arriving at the institution, Caroline is unable to bear the thought of leaving Phoebe there, and she decides to raise Phoebe on her own, in secret.

The passage of time in this novel is marked by sections, the chapters containing a patchwork of fragmented scenes from alternating view points, much like photographs. Edwards focuses on poignant moments that define or represent an era in the characters' lives. At times, this strategy is highly effective and at others somewhat halting. Much like Ian McEwan's plots are driven by chance events, the decisions made in the first two chapters of this novel dramatically alter the course of these characters' lives. Though it is based on a true story, the beginning of this novel feels somewhat contrived, especially because Caroline and David are utterly entrenched in their separate decisions, both of which were made in haste.

The Memory Keeper's Daughter is a story that truly "turns on the idea of a secret," says Edwards, one that examines how the weight of a lie can shape a person. David's consciousness is dominated by guilt and regret, his secret comes to define him, a penance he cannot discard. The

text is often heavy-handed in reminding readers that David's decision to give his daughter away was wrong, leaving little room for dissent. Yet, Edwards does not frame David as a villain; in fact he is an incredibly sympathetic character. Her dark descriptions of David's struggle to come to terms with his past grief and his decision to give away Phoebe are where Edwards's prose is most successful. She describes David remembering the pain that Down Syndrome had caused his sister June and his family:

Fall came, and winter, and June did not sit up and did not, and then it was her first birthday and she was too weak to walk far. Fall came again and a cousin visited with her son, almost the same age, her son not only walking but running through the rooms and starting to talk, and June was still sitting, watching the world so quietly. They knew, then, that something was wrong. He remembers his mother watching the little boy cousin, tears sliding silently down her face... this was the grief he had carried with him, heavy as a stone in his heart. This was the grief he had tried to spare Norah and Paul, only to create so many others. (266)

Like David, many characters in *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* are well-developed and accessible. Each longs for a sense of wholeness, but each looks for it in different ways—an intricate study of the human condition. Themes of alienation and domestic troubles that Edwards first explored in her collection of short stories, *The Secrets of a Fire King* (W. W. Norton 1997), resurface in the distinct thoughts of her characters. Norah aches with pain at the loss of Phoebe as she watches her son grow up. As a young mother, she feels desperate to escape the loneliness she finds at home, often taking long reckless car trips. After Paul starts school, Norah becomes a travel agent, a choice symbolic of the emotional distance between her and her husband. Norah develops from a young, shy housewife into an independent, powerful woman. Yet, underneath

it all, Norah is still grieving, and she turns to affairs to quell the quiet storm in her heart.

As the distance grows between him and his wife, David immerses himself in his work as a doctor and a new hobby, photography, in attempts to quell his pain. "The Memory Keeper" camera, an early gift from Norah, becomes David's lens to view the world. Edwards said she was inspired by Susan Sontag's *On Photography* to write about photography as a metaphor for David's secret sorrow and self-imposed alienation. He takes pictures because he cannot fully participate in the world around him. He would rather hide in his dark room, watch film develop, and admire the beauty of the world in private. "To be *in camera* was to operate in secret. This was what (David) believed: that each person was an isolated universe" (381).

Unlike David, who seems to fall apart as time passes, Edwards's female characters become strong, self-sufficient women who find meaning and strength from their relationships with family. Caroline, like Norah, grows in character from meek to self-assured. Once a love-sick young girl with romantic notions of being rescued by David, she raises Phoebe independently and fights hard to obtain a better life for her and other children with Down Syndrome. As Phoebe's mother, Caroline finds identity, purpose, and peace. Norah's and Caroline's risings from weakness to independence echo the rise of feminism during this era. Although both women are socially and financially independent, motherhood is integral to their sense of identity, an idea criticized by second-wave feminists. Loving relationships between mothers and their children are central to the happiness of characters in the *Memory Keeper's Daughter*, an important theme in contemporary fiction today, seen in works such as Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Anne Patchett's *The Patron Saint of Liars*, and Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*.

With her novel, Edwards puts forth the questions: What defines a family and what holds it together? How do our families affect our personal development and our happiness? Her novel's parallel construction lends itself to answer

these questions as Norah and David's family life with their son Paul is juxtaposed against Caroline and her husband Al's life with Phoebe. Paul is privileged and grows up in a comfortable home thanks to his parents' demanding jobs, but their rocky, disconnected relationship causes Paul to become withdrawn and angry. Although raising Phoebe has its added challenges and difficulties, Caroline fights to give Phoebe every opportunity, and the child grows up in a nurturing, loving environment.

Phoebe, a child who is underestimated by some who surround her, becomes a symbol of love's importance. Her unquestioning, quiet, simple love causes many characters to find solace. In a scene where Paul is reunited with his sister, Edwards vividly illustrates the redemption that comes from this uncomplicated, whole-hearted

love: "For the rest of his life, he realized, he would be torn like this, aware of Phoebe's awkwardness, the difficulties she encountered in the world simply by being different, and yet propelled beyond all this by her direct and guileless love... And, he realized... by his own new and strangely uncomplicated love for her"(401).

Like the true story that inspired Edwards to write this novel, *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* stays with readers long after they have read it. It is a dynamic, compassionate exploration of guilt, regret, family dynamics, and the human need to give and receive love. †

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WHAT NELSON SAID

I was helping Nelson Bentley fold chairs
after a visiting poet's reading, and said
"Some of us give beautiful readings,
but some of us only fold chairs."
Smiling, he said, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Dorothea Kewley

life together

Christmas versus Materialism

Lake Lambert

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, STANDING KNEE DEEP in torn wrapping paper and discarded boxes, I had a feeling that could only be described as nausea. I was of course grateful for the generosity shown to me by family and friends, but something was different. My queasiness resembled that feeling usually felt later on Christmas Day after a generous turkey dinner with all the fixings. The difference was that I was not staring at the carcass of a carved bird. I was instead looking at the remains of too many presents for too few people. And I was wondering if something was wrong.

My reflections on that morning continued for several months. I realize now that it was something like an epiphany—a moment when I realized that my beliefs and actions were not in congruence. The hypocrisy that I discovered was the conquest of Christmas by materialism. The word conquest is appropriate, I think, because the two should normally be in conflict. We need only think about it. Christians around the world are celebrating the birth of God's son—a birth that occurred in a barn of all places. We also believe that this child was sent for our benefit, to teach us of God's kingdom and to die for us on a cross. Our churches teach that we are not to regret the birth of Jesus. We are instead to celebrate the birth, rejoicing in the gift God has given us and giving to one another in a love that naturally flows from our faith and gratitude.

Giving and gifts are not the problem per se, and I am not calling for a new form of ascetic piety where we all sit and solemnly remember God's blessings. The issue is what we are giving. The wrapping paper and boxes that littered the floor just minutes earlier had covered sweaters and socks, gadgets and gizmos. All of the many gifts had been selected with care and met many

of my personal needs, but they were still a feeble attempt to accomplish their purpose. We were trying to show our love for one another and our gratitude for God's priceless gift of Jesus Christ with items that actually had prices. When you are of sufficient means (and we are so blessed), this means an almost never ending ratcheting up of Christmas gifts. Limits come only under two possibilities: one is that you reach the financial limit of your love for a friend or family member, or you reach an overall financial limit. For most, at least with their closest family and friends, the limit faced is the second one, meaning that if we had just a little more money, there would be even more gifts under the tree.

Almost all the faithful have heard someone decry the commercialization of Christmas. It is almost impossible to escape the secular, market-oriented nature of the holiday. But the blame is wrongly placed on business whose leaders, people say, seek to expand and promote the "Christmas shopping season" as a means for increased profits. We must instead realize that our entire society uses Christmas shopping as a measure of economic health. If sales are down in November and December, it is seen as an indication of recession and hard times ahead. Reporters in malls ask people how much they plan to spend on gifts and whether this equals the amount spent last year. People are not asked: How do you plan to remember the birth of Jesus?

The commercialization of Christmas is, however, just a symptom of materialism's conquest. We think that if we could only discard all the plastic reindeer and snowmen, Christmas sales and blinking lights, then our problems would end, and Christ again could be the central focus of Christmas. This is an illusion. The cancer has grown to such an extent that nothing less

than radical surgery can remove it. The long prevailing notion that Christ and commercialism and materialism can all be part of Christmas, as long as we are careful and as long as Christ still comes first, is nothing less than a lie.

I thought it was once true—at least before my awakening last Christmas Day. I believed that my involvement in Christmas materialism was somehow excused because I also went to worship in Advent and truly sought to prepare my heart for the birth of our Lord. I made the mistake that many of us make as we reflect on our sins. In legal terms the idea is called a “victimless crime,” and it means that though something is illegal, no one has been wronged. Prostitution and illegal drug use are often classified in this way, but Christians should know better. We should know that all sin causes pain and suffering among our fellow human beings. Maybe there are such things as “victimless crimes,” but there is no such thing as a “victimless sin.” It is especially tempting to believe that we are the only victims of some sins, but I now know that is impossible.

How do I know? Just last December a variety of news agencies reported that Target, Wal-Mart, and other retailers were selling Christmas decorations made in a Chinese sweatshop employing children as young as twelve. The children made only half of the Chinese minimum wage and were forced to work up to fifteen hours per day, seven days per week with no workplace safety equipment. While this piece of information was in many ways not a big surprise, it made my initial Christmas nausea even worse.

Most would agree that items produced by exploited and abused workers should be avoided, and child laborers in China clearly are part of such an exploited group. But what about the normal workers in China, Vietnam, or Singapore who produce Christmas tree lights, dancing Santa Clauses, and other decorations? It is true that people are exploited making other products; we have all heard of the sweat-shops here and abroad that operate under deplorable conditions. But my guess is that most of these people at least know what they are making. Some dignity remains in a person's work as long as the person knows what she is doing. A worker may produce Armani

suits or fur coats which she will never wear (or probably even know someone who will), but at least she knows how people use these coats and suits. There is a tremendous difference between saying “I make clothes” and “I make something, but I don't know what it is.” When a worker does not know what her product is or does, she has been exploited; her work has no meaning apart from the meager salary derived.

Many Asian workers may not have any idea what Christmas lights are. Some may not know about Christmas, and others may not even have heard about Jesus Christ. A worker who produces Christmas tree lights not only does not know what he produces but he might be experiencing the name of our Lord for the first time. In many cases, His name is plastered right on the box, albeit in a language the worker may not understand. In this respect, when we exploit these workers by buying these decorations, we exploit them in the name of Christ.

Not only does our Christmas materialism exploit workers by encouraging the production of an unknown product, but it exposes the workers to Christ and Christmas in that same act of exploitation. What are the ramifications for evangelism? How can Christ be proclaimed as liberator when He also functions as an exploiter? If we are lucky, and I pray that we are, a language barrier may prevent workers from realizing the double standard. The worker may hear the name of the Lord in her own tongue and be unable to read it on the Christmas tree light box in ours. I still believe, however, that our commitment to proclaiming the Law as well as the Gospel is at stake if we use Christ's name in vain exploitation.

The stakes change dramatically when the Gospel is at stake. If our purchase of Christmas decorations functions not only to exploit the physical and mental condition of the worker but also inhibits her willingness to hear the Gospel, then it must certainly be avoided. There can be no ifs, ands, or buts here. This is what is meant by the term “confessional crisis.” A global economy, whether we like it or not, makes us missionaries in everything we do. In our own work, we can show reverence to God's Creation by the type and

quality of product we produce. As consumers, we must continue to show reverence for Creation and our fellow creatures, and I also think we have the opportunity to at least hold back some of the evil which may prevent the proclamation of the Gospel.

If the commercialization of Christmas and the production of Christmas tree lights in China allowed more to hear the Gospel, I would be the first to yell for more tinsel. The truth is that it does not serve the Gospel, and, even more, it may actually be inhibiting it, both here and abroad. The removal of Christ from Christmas is an attack against the Gospel, and we should not buy one more gift or decoration until we are certain that those who produce and consume it know the "Jesus Christ our Lord who was incarnated in the Virgin Mary and made man."

We must begin to rethink the celebration of Christmas. It will be a long and difficult process, but it must be done. Most importantly, a distinction is needed between the Christ-Mass

and the cultural features of Christmas. Maybe a new date is in order! Until then, I suggest two things. The first is that we follow the lead of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's social statement on the environment and begin an environmental tithe, or a ten-percent reduction in consumption and waste. This would also apply to Christmas gifts and decorations. Second, I suggest that instead of giving family members and those we love store-bought gifts, we make gifts, or even better, we do what is done too seldom in modern American society: sit down with your friends and family and tell them what the birth of Christ means to you. The key to disentangling Christmas from materialism is a recognition that the gift of witness is always more valuable than gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ✠

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being lutheran

Where Is Jesus?

Paul Gregory Alms

A LONG TIME AGO, I HAD A PERSONAL relationship with Jesus. Under the tutelage of a Lutheran church youth group, I spent my teenage years trying to have a personal connection with my Savior. I learned to set aside quiet time, to go into my room for thirty minutes or an hour and read the Scriptures and pray and “get to know Jesus.” When I read the scriptures, I listened for what they said to me right then in my daily life, about my feelings and problems. I underlined meaningful passages of Scriptures in my Bible. I poured out my adolescent soul to Jesus, confessed my habitual sins to him, and prayed for deliverance.

I also went to the crowded weekly bible studies. I sang pop love songs addressed to the Son of God: “Your love is deeper than the deepest ocean, wider than the sky...” We split into small groups and were pressed to answer personal questions honestly and out loud. The muscular way that prayer leaders squeezed their eyes closed when they prayed or sang, the way they shared intimate details of their prayer life, the intensity of their emotions functioned as a road map. That was what I wanted, to be like them, to be that connected to Jesus.

But I could never quite get there. As I struggled to establish a rapport with this Jesus who seemed to want me to be emotional and talkative, I recall a distinct feeling of not getting it, of missing something.

Though I did not know it at the time, I was struggling to answer a question that is crucial to the post-Ascension church, in the pages of the New Testament, and in the experience of every Christian: “Where is Jesus?” Jesus is not present on earth in the way he was during his earthly ministry. He does not appear to us as he did to the twelve walking on the shores of Galilee. Where is

He, now, for us? My youth group said that He is apparent in emotions, in the joy of the devotional, in the intensity of the prayer closet, in the feelings of elation in singing a Christian song.

The New Testament’s answer to this question is more complicated than the simple urge to privately feel the presence of Jesus. The New Testament, of course, doesn’t ignore the individual. God became incarnate as one concrete, particularized man. God created one man, Adam, and recreated Him in the singular Son of Mary. The apostolic witness does not ignore the reality of the individual Christian experience of salvation either. Every one is baptized individually. The personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is real. But the New Testament centers that experience in the experience of the church and the church at worship, the church gathered out of the world by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. All the significant images of the church in the Scriptures are images of individuals gathered to form a larger body. Israel, as the people of God, is made up of individuals, formed into families, into twelve tribes all gathered into one people of God. The New Testament speaks of a vine made of branches, single sheep making up a flock. St. Paul acknowledges that we are all separate people, each a single Christian, yet he points us to our common connection to Christ. We are members of the body of Christ.

In my high school youth group, I was taught to try to plug into Jesus within myself, but it didn’t work. My personal relationship with Jesus never caught on. Most of the time, I didn’t feel elated or close to Jesus. Mostly I felt guilty for not being a better follower. My room began to seem claustrophobic and I gravitated more to the rock and roll records and the stereo at my bedside than to the Bible and prayer notebook.

Solitude broken by the music of (the born again) Bob Dylan and the secular fun of the Beatles was preferable to frustrating attempts to manufacture an inner life I did not have.

And soon enough it all just went away. I grew up. I moved to a new high school in a new town and then went to college. I continued to immerse myself in secular rock and roll and along the way stopped having quiet times, stopped trying to pray in a certain way, stopped looking for emotional songs to express my love for Jesus.

There always has been a tension in Christian experience between the individual and the group. Ancient monks fled the corporate church to practice their faith alone. The medieval mystics traversed the inner landscape of the soul seeking communion with God. Revivalist preachers urged Christians to surrender their hearts to Jesus in fervent, one-on-one prayer. Yet the best of the Christian tradition, while not rejecting that “Jesus and me” aspect of the faith, centered itself in the common experience of the church. The New Testament image of the church as a body has expressed itself in the collective experience of Christ’s presence. Monks were subject to the hierarchy of the church through abbots and bishops. The medieval mystics were connected to the sacramental system of the church. Wesley could speak of his heart strangely warmed and also of the necessity of the church’s worship and sacraments. These examples suggest that the church often has achieved a balance, a healthy tension, between the individual appropriation of Jesus and the experience that occurs in the gathering of the church together.

One unlikely experience brought much of this home to me as if in a flash of light. I distinctly remember sitting in a college dorm room passing around an illicit flask of whiskey and it occurred to me (and I said this out loud to my confused friends): “This is a sacrament.” There we were, a group of individuals gathered together, all sharing the same bottle, all experiencing the same effects. Several intellectual gears clicked into place at that moment. That alcohol soaked dorm room was the direct descendant for me of those youth group bible studies where we struggled together to reach a personal grasp of Jesus. In the dorm

room, it wasn’t Jesus we were after but intoxication. Yet there was that same tension between the individual and the group experience. The experience was drunkenness, an inner physiological effect, but it was mediated in the communal aspect of sharing the flask, of being together in this illicit, exciting adventure. The more experienced drinkers modeled the “fun” we were supposed to be having, how to lift the bottle, how to drink.

In a strict sense, of course, the statement “this is a sacrament” was false. That swig of whiskey did not bring the divine presence; it carried no promise of Christ. It certainly did not deliver the forgiveness of sins. Merely drinking alcohol, no matter how crowded the bar or exalted the thoughts that come with it, brings no blessings from above. In fact alcohol can be incredibly dangerous and destructive. But that sharing of a drink was sacramental with a lower case “s,” if you will. That dorm room moment carried greater meaning in much the same way that a family meal is more than just eating. In the starkest of terms, a family meal is a straightforward biological necessity. Nutrients, proteins, and vitamins are conveyed to biological systems. Yet a meal shared by a family on a regular basis is much more than food; it carries more weight than mere physiology. The repeated ritual of a disparate group of individuals who are tied by common bonds assembling around a common table all eating the same foods transforms the act of eating into a sacramental (lower case “s”) act of unity. The meal becomes a liturgy, a way in which the many are knitted into one.

A shared flask and the dinner table point onward to that one great Sacrament, toward the communion rail and the common cup of the Eucharist. There also each one drinks separately, yet in the company of other Christians. There is a common chalice and a common aim, receiving Christ. Each one receives the forgiveness of his or her own sins; each one’s individual faith is strengthened. Communion is an intensely private affair. Yet that individual appropriation of Christ and his presence is created and built in church, with others. If communion is an inner spiritual moment, it is also a very public one. No

one takes communion alone in his room. One celebrates it in the open, with others in a fellowship of Christians who all share the same beliefs. The body of Christ, all her individual members, gather as one to eat the body of Christ. At the communion rail the intensely personal meets the intensely corporate in a perfect balance.

That dorm room moment was the start of a journey back to the sacramental, liturgical church. From that room, I went forward to the study of the Greek New Testament, pre-seminary training, reading the church fathers and classical Lutheran theology, and eventually the seminary. In all of this, I came to trade my personal relationship with Jesus for a churchly one, the quiet time for the liturgy, the love song to Jesus for the hymns of the church. There in that dorm room, I realized in some dim way that the individual experience, the realness that I had sought in high school, the emotional validation, was present in the church setting I had taken for granted.

I only found Jesus to be meaningful and real to me individually when I looked for him in the shared experiences of "church." I "experienced" Jesus in the voices of shared hymns that had been sung for centuries. I "felt" the presence of God amidst my personal inner struggles and hurts in the prayers I knew by memory, in doing the same things over and over, in things with little or no immediate emotional content: chewing bread, making the sign of the cross, hearing a for-

mal, recited absolution of my sins. What became important to me as a Christian were these outward formal things. My personal relationship with Christ became rooted in the moments when I found myself surrounded by countless hosts of Christians in heaven and on earth, singing "Holy, Holy, Holy."

I do not regret the time I spent in that youth group. On the contrary, I treasure it. For it was there that I first began to learn that precarious balance between feeling Jesus in my heart and finding and trusting Him in outward concrete ways. The fact that I am now a pastor in the church has much to do with the impact of those Christians who surrounded me then. If, on some special occasion, while I am singing the "Te Deum" or "A Mighty Fortress," I feel a burst of emotion as I sometimes do, I thank God for it. At those times, I often recall the giddy rush I felt as I looked around at my fellow Christian teenagers when we were in those rooms singing all those songs, and I smile. For there, in an ornate sanctuary, gazing upon the altar, about to commune and partake of the very mysteries of God, I know that this is where Jesus is. ✠

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Always Sex, All the Time

A Christian Approach to the Legacy of Alfred Kinsey

Jenell Williams Paris

Bill Condon (writer and director). *Kinsey*. Twentieth Century Fox, 2005.

T. Coraghessan Boyle. *The Inner Circle*. New York: Viking, 2004.

Barak Goodman (writer, director) and John Maggiol (director). "Kinsey." In *American Experience*. United States: Public Broadcasting System, 2005.

Reumann, M. G. *American Sexual Character: Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

NORMALLY I'M INTERESTED IN SEX. I WRITE and speak about healthy sexuality and am nearly always energized by the work. Absorbing films and books about Alfred Kinsey, however, has left me in need of a break. When it comes to Kinsey, it's always sex, all the time. Though his work is challenging for Christians, Kinsey's science and social activism has shaped American sexual culture profoundly and is well worth understanding as we seek to be salt and light in our world.

A spate of Kinsey-related productions has been released in the last few years. The Fox Searchlight film *Kinsey* earned Laura Linney an Oscar nomination for her portrayal of Kinsey's wife Clara. *The Inner Circle*, a novel by T. C. Boyle, fictionalizes the lives of Kinsey and his associates. PBS aired an *American Experience* documentary titled "Kinsey" on 24 October 2005. *American Sexual Character*, an academic book, examines Kinsey's impact on post-World War II America. These productions track roughly with the fifty-year anniversaries of the publications of *Sexual*

Behavior in the Human Male (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), referred to colloquially as the Kinsey report(s) (Kinsey *et al* 1948 and 1953).

The Inner Circle and *Kinsey* (Fox) are both popular media products and, as such, are more salacious than the more academic treatments. The film uses a typical American hero narrative in which Kinsey struggles against oppressive social and religious forces to discover and tell the truth about American sexuality. Using numerous flashbacks, the film connects Kinsey's sexually frustrated adolescence and his sexual struggles in early marriage to his eventual research interests in human sexuality. Even more than his broad personal interests in sexual experimentation, the film emphasizes Kinsey's desire to teach engaged and married students about human sexuality in ways that would benefit their lives.

In one scene, a married student couple comes to his office to ask about oral sex because they'd heard it leads to infertility. Kinsey believes it doesn't, but the students are unpersuaded, and Kinsey is dismayed by the lack of scientific data available on such matters. An incredibly rigorous researcher, he is disgusted with the "morality disguised as fact" that is used to regulate the sexual behaviors of the young. Throughout his career, Kinsey argued that sexual choices should not be regulated by morality but by the drive for orgasm as understood from an objectivist scientific perspective.

In the film, as in real life, Kinsey looked for opportunities to debase the Judeo-Christian morality that he saw as harmful in his life and in society. Projecting from his own adolescence and early marriage, Kinsey believed individuals and marriages would be healthier if adolescents had sex earlier and more often, bringing more

knowledge and ability into adulthood. The film wastes time speculating about the psychology of his relationship with his Methodist pastor father, and the childhood origins of his father's moralized sexual aversions. It also too easily dismisses with humor the Judeo-Christian ethics that plagued Kinsey's conscience and shaped the tone of his scientific writing throughout his life.

Kinsey once said, "diversity is life's one irreducible fact. To see it, you need only open your eyes." The biological research that predated his sex studies focused on flightless creatures called gall wasps, and Kinsey saw humans as but "more complicated gall wasps." He expected, and found, great sexual diversity and individual uniqueness across the human species. Kinsey's powerfully nonjudgmental interviewing and observational techniques were rooted, in large part, in his rejection of morality and his belief that the behaviors of the human animal were value-neutral, like behaviors of any other animal. Unfortunately, neither the film nor the novel acknowledge that such "neutrality" is, in fact, an ethical stance. Notably, in real life, Kinsey's philosophy found subjective limits in his heart. He rejected non-consensual sexual practices as well as those that caused emotional pain and initially expressed disdain for adult-child sex (Gathorne-Hardy).

Accordingly, the most shocking part of the first Kinsey report, even more than what American men actually do, is the framework Kinsey used to categorize sexual acts. Marital intercourse is fifth in a list of nine ways men reach orgasm, not given priority or distinction from masturbation, adultery, or sex with animals. He found that marital sex, in fact, provides only 85 percent of total orgasms for married men (Kinsey *et al* 1948, 281). His methodology did not attempt to measure the emotions, relationships, or after-effects that provide context and meaning for the orgasm experience. *Kinsey* (Fox) problematizes neither this extreme behaviorism nor most of the more troubling aspects of Kinsey's research methods, including possible pedophilia, refusal to protect children from known pedophiles, and spurious statistical methods, nor aspects of his own sexual life which included risky, painful, and adulterous behaviors that increased in intensity over time.

A humane critique of behaviorism, if ever so brief, is perhaps the only redeemable aspect of *The Inner Circle*. The well-researched novel dramatizing events that receive terse description in biographies of Kinsey. Boyle bases his main character, John Milk, mostly on Kinsey's research associate Clyde Martin but takes license to amalgamate experiences of other associates into Milk's life. The book follows Milk's sex life from college virgin to pre-marital experimenter to marriage partner to homosexual experimenter to adulterer to voyeur to sex researcher, with plenty of masturbation and descriptions of research subjects' files along the way. By the end, the reader has been a voyeur to most of Kinsey's nine paths to male orgasm through this character.

The novel is just a sexy book that uses the research career of an historical figure for a plotline. Perhaps predictably, character development is more about experimentation with increasingly risky and esoteric sexual behaviors and less about the cultivation of virtue, vice, or relationships. In the end, however, Milk decides to stay with his son and his wife, Iris, who has been troubled by her husband's affairs and eventually refuses further participation in sexual liaisons among research associates and their wives arranged by Kinsey. The novel ends with Kinsey describing Milk's wife as "sex shy," and Milk, who begins to weep, saying that he loves her. Milk defends the behaviorism of the research to the end but gives in to his desire "to protect her, save her, comfort her, and I... took her in my arms...and held the embrace as if there were nothing more to life" (Boyle, 364). Something entangled, romantic, and potentially exclusive emerges from sex, even when people ignore it. This is a good lesson but hardly worth the 418 pages it took to get there.

"Kinsey" (PBS) and *American Sexual Character* are more staid treatments of Kinsey's life and legacy. In reporting on Kinsey's work, the documentary uses period photographs and film, data from biographies, and interviews with students, research associates, biographers, and family members. In contrast to the social reformer of the film and the charismatic authoritarian of the novel, Kinsey emerges as a curious, socially awkward scientist, whose personal sexual strug-

gles inspired his research. Gaining confidence over time, he tried to create his utopia—a sexual world with total freedom and no guilt—with his research associates and their wives. The documentary is descriptive and accurate with detail about what Kinsey did. It does not explore his legacy or controversies surrounding his work, except to mention that data on children’s sexuality came mostly from one notorious pedophile.

M. G. Reumann’s *American Sexual Character* considers Kinsey’s legacy more extensively in a well-researched but poorly subtitled book. The book is not about *Sex, Gender, and National Identity in the Kinsey Reports*. It hardly discusses the Kinsey reports or Kinsey himself. Instead, it uses the reports “as a Rorschach test for postwar Americans: Kinsey’s statistics were and are capable of many interpretations.” In Reumann’s interpretation, Americans’ reactions to the Kinsey reports coalesced around discussions of American national identity, family and gender roles, consumerism, individualism, and racial politics. She argues that after World War II, Americans viewed sexuality as a source of moral weakness and social decay and viewed traditional domestic life as a linchpin for holding together the nation. Sexuality was a lens through which Americans saw larger issues of moral character, civic roles, and politics. The Kinsey reports provided primary data from which Americans could interpret their own sexual lives, and their hopes and fears for society.

This time period is an interesting sandwich middle, between the 1940s, during which Kinsey said Americans were underexposed to sex and faced pressure to repress, and the 1960s, in which Americans were arguably overexposed to sex, facing pressure to express and explore their sexuality. This is the era in which contemporary notions of sexual identity coalesced—the notion

that sexuality, like spirituality, is a core part of human identity that is ignored and/or repressed at our peril. Readers may find the book helpful in imagining a world in which sexuality is something more than just potentially immoral behavior but something less than constitutive of the self.

The recent burst of media products about Kinsey may spark new interest among younger Americans who may not be familiar with him. Conservative activist Christians never lost interest, however, blaming Kinsey

for everything from values-neutral sex education to legal reforms enacted decades after his death to mint-flavored condoms. Some even launch posthumous personal attacks against Kinsey that are mean-spirited and speculative, if not fraudulent. Biographer Gathorne-Hardy comments, “It seems that the religious Right in America attributes all the liberal development of the last fifty-odd years, which it so hates, to Kinsey and thinks that if it can destroy Kinsey everything it hates will vanish” (Gathorne-Hardy, 223).

Predictably, Christian reviews of *Kinsey* (Fox) have been uniformly negative, complaining in large part about the sexual content of the film. One claims that Kinsey has been “discredited because of his debauched lifestyle and the misinformation he spread about sex,” though this simply isn’t true (www.christiananswers.net). Another summarizes the film as an “abhorrent humanist movie that attacks traditional Christian values, flaunts a libertine sexual worldview, and revises history to promulgate a radical, politically correct social and political philosophy,” and complains about portrayals of homosexual kissing and female nudity (www.nationalcoalition.org). Perhaps also predictably, Christians seem mostly to have ignored “Kinsey” (PBS), *The Inner Circle*, and *American Sexual Character*, their eyes drawn instead to the

These new examinations of Kinsey offer a fresh opportunity to consider how Christians may approach his legacy and to evaluate how we have responded to, and been influenced by, sex in contemporary American culture.

Hollywood products they frequently despise. I wasn't alarmed by the frank sexual content and the social vision of licentiousness in the novel, film, and documentary because I expected even worse. If it's about Kinsey, it's about sex. Launching one more sharp-tongued critique against these sorts of things, bad as they may be, is just pouring a thimble of water into the sea.

There is much to critique and question about Kinsey but also several strong points from which Christians may learn. One is Kinsey's ability to engage and understand other people's lives without judgment. I was raised in the judgmental borderland between fundamentalism and evangelicalism and became a cultural anthropologist in part because of the discipline's relativism. While this relativism can be taken to extremes, secular anthropology offered me a philosophy and techniques for exploring the world without a ubiquitous filter of moral judgment. Kinsey's interviews were effective and personally impactful for many subjects, for this reason. He listened without judgment to everyday Americans, rapists, and pedophiles and learned valuable information about American culture and criminal justice. He suggested, for example, that castration is not necessarily an effective deterrent against sex crime recidivism because sex crimes are driven by anger, rage, and power, not just a desire for intercourse. He also advocated the decriminalization of sex crimes such as oral sex, premarital sex, and homosexuality.

The Fox film begins with Kinsey training a research associate in how to ask questions and listen without appearing to be shocked or judging. Later on, a research subject describes giving a sex history as therapeutic. Confession, even to a secular priest, carries a measure of healing. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* describes Kinsey's interviewing technique in detail, and his technique still provides qualitative researchers a model for ethical, humane treatment of research subjects around sensitive and potentially shameful topics. For Christians, it poses a challenge to engage even the sinful parts of our world with eyes wide open, and with compassion and transforming love, forces more powerful than Kinsey's tolerance and supposed neutrality.

The matter of pedophilia, of course, is one of the most controversial aspects of Kinsey's work. He took sex histories from active pedophiles and did not report their illegal activities, a choice still debated by researchers today. He believed, however, that adult-child sex only harmed children a small fraction of the time. In his view, harm is caused by adults overhyping the issue because of Judeo-Christian morality and legal codes. This seems odd to me because *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* describes children reacting to sexual contact with convulsive movements and tears. This matter is treated seriously in each of Kinsey's biographies but is ignored in film, novel, and documentary. (Reumann ignores it, too, but it is outside the scope of her topic.) Subsequent research, and common sense itself, have shown Kinsey to be very wrong about the liberatory potential of adult-child sex, but he was not wrong to have explored the possibility, to the extent that explorations were guided by scientific ethical codes. Important debates continue about how to best protect children's nascent sexuality. Being wrong, even terribly wrong, is part of the scientific process.

For Christians, this issue offers reason for more engagement in the scientific process. Christian biologists, psychologists, and others working in the area of pedophilia and pre-adult sexuality can contribute reasoned arguments and evidenced studies to counter contemporary arguments about lowering age of consent laws, responses to pedophilia in society and church, or the content of sexual education curricula, and so contribute to the emergence of truth through the scientific process.

Kinsey hated Christianity, but the reasons behind the hatred remain challenging for Christians. He saw Christians as coercing people into behavioral morality through misinformation and threats of divine punishment. In the Fox film, for example, we see his father preaching wild invectives against sexual dangers including the zipper, which speeds sexual access in comparison to the button-fly. Indeed, Christians still place tremendous pressure on people to repress, misrepresent, or regulate their sexuality in order to avoid judgment or expulsion from the ranks

of the good, or even the saved. I recently heard a Christian radio psychologist state, in a superior tone of voice and with no evidence, that people who have sex before marriage live like animals, and that such people are much more likely to face sexual difficulties in marriage. In 2004, a federal report charged a number of abstinence-only sex education curricula, used in twenty-five states, with spreading misinformation about reproductive health, gender traits, and human development. Consistent with Christian-friendly abstinence-only objectives are “facts” including that a forty-three-day-old fetus is a “thinking person,” that HIV is spread via sweat and tears, and that up to 10 percent of women who have abortions become sterile. (Recent research puts the number around 3–5 percent.) The prophetic challenge to believers is the same today as in Kinsey’s day: to talk about sex honestly and truthfully, and to make sexual choices in communities marked by both holiness and grace.

Instead of posthumous potshots, a better critique of Kinsey and his legacy will, like the best of prophetic critique, implicate the prophet as well as the sinners, to spur redemptive change. These new examinations of Kinsey offer a fresh opportunity to consider how Christians may approach his legacy and to evaluate how we have responded to, and been influenced by, sex in contemporary American culture. Kinsey focused mostly on one quantifiable question: how often, and in what ways, do people achieve orgasm? His social vision, however, raises richer questions. How are humans like and unlike animals? How ought humans to express sexuality and pursue sexual pleasure? What sexual practices make for healthy selves, relationships, and societies? Ought sex to be regulated, and by whom? The most persuasive answers to these questions

should be lived, not merely researched, legislated, or preached. Each of our sexual histories is complicated by sin, and each may be redeemed by grace. With God’s help, healthy sexuality—including both the benefits of our wise choices and our healing from poor ones—may be seen in the lives of God’s followers. ✠

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books

Richard J. Evans. *The Third Reich in Power*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

THE HISTORIAN'S HAS BECOME a specialized craft, and the takers are few and far between for the task of synthesis. In this age of specialization, synthesis is perhaps only for the brave and insane. Given that academia is woefully deficient in both courage and sanity, profound works of synthesis are scarce. Is it not a sad commentary of the profession that National Socialism (a subject possessing an unfathomable amount of scholarship) has gone so long without a synthetic masterpiece?

Professors have had to play the role of Dr. Frankenstein when constructing their courses on the Third Reich. A monstrous "textbook" slowly emerges from their stitching. They patch together a bit of Ian Kershaw (for Hitler), a sliver of Karl Schleunes (racial policy), parts of Detlev Peukert (everyday life), masses of Timothy Mason or Richard Overy (economy), and so on until the creation is complete. Given the ever-increasing rise in publisher rates and campus bookstore mark ups, an unpleasant showdown pitting students

against professor loomed on the horizon. It is with much relief, then, that historians have received Richard J. Evans's recent work, *The Third Reich in Power* (the second volume in a trilogy on the Third Reich). The tome covers the years perhaps least understood by a lay public that tends to forget that the evening sun of 30 January 1933 did not wait to rise until the morning of 1 September 1939.

But isn't Evans a "nineteenth-century" man? Yes. He possesses a formidable reputation within the historical community for his works on the social history of nineteenth-century Germany. His imprint on the field is enormous: one thinks of his monographs on capital punishment, prostitution, and disease, his edited collections on the German bourgeoisie and peasantry, and his essays on the practice of history among other works. But that was before the Emory historian Deborah Lipstadt called the British "historian" David Irving a "Holocaust denier." Evans became an expert witness in the consequent libel case (which Lipstadt won). Evans's participation in the Lipstadt-Irving Trial sent him on his journey into the heart of the twentieth-century darkness.

It is precisely Evans's extensive knowledge of the nineteenth century that makes his commentary on National Socialism so fresh and compelling. This is evident, for example, in *The Coming of the Third Reich* (the first book of the trilogy), where he is able to delve deeply into the question of why the Nazis came to power. In that work and now in the "Prologue" of *The Third Reich in Power*, Evans weighs the relative strengths and weaknesses of the *Sonderweg* thesis (the argument that Germany traveled down a "special" or deviant path from a "normative" Western European model). Evans does not believe that National Socialism was a foregone conclusion based on the so-called failure of a German bourgeoisie.

That being said, Evans also does not believe that National Socialism came out of the clear blue sky. In this regard, Evans provides a different answer than that recently offered by fellow *Sonderweg*-critic Steven Ozment. In Ozment's *A Mighty Fortress* (Harper 2005), the reader is presented with a "Perfect Storm" of post-War catastrophe. The message being that the devastation of the First World War and its aftermath

cleaved the Germans from their historical past. Ozment's razor cuts too cleanly, however. Although correct that not all German paths led to Hitler, Ozment's attempt to distance the useable German past (read: the Protestant tradition Martin Luther bestowed) has diverted his attention from the very real bands of continuity that linked post-War Germany to its past.

Evans correctly points out that elements of the German past did cross the divide. For example, Evans acknowledges that "Bismarck's persecution, first, of the Catholics in the 1870s, then of the fledgling Social Democratic Party in the 1880s, got Germans used to the idea that a government could declare whole categories of the population 'enemies of the Reich' and drastically curtail their civil liberties" (3). In addition, Evans notes that anti-Semitism, Social Darwinism, and eugenics were present in German society well before the outbreak of the First World War. Despite these acknowledgements, Evans refuses to resurrect a cultural *Sonderweg* thesis. He undercuts the line of continuity by noting that "[Antisemitism, Social Darwinism, and Eugenics] were still minority strands of thought before 1914; nor did anyone weld them together into any kind of effective synthesis" (4). Like Ozment, Evans claims that the First World War did matter: "Antisemitism was widespread in German society, but overt violence against Jews was still rare. What changed

this situation was the First World War" (4). But unlike Ozment, Evans does not believe that the war cut Germans from their past. Rather, the war reinforced certain, present strands of German history at the expense of others.

According to Evans, police and propaganda were reinforced at the expense of the German tradition of the rule of law. This for Evans is the key to understanding both the "coming of the Third Reich" and the "Third Reich in power." In making this argument Evans builds upon central themes of his works on the nineteenth century, for example *Death in Hamburg* (Oxford 1987). In that work, Evans read the 1892 Hamburg cholera epidemic (and the reaction of the hitherto liberal, city administration) as a metaphor for the coming National Socialist plague:

More died in Hamburg in 1892 than just people. The epidemic... was the dividing-point between the old and the new; in particular, it struck the death-knell for the old system of amateur government by local notables under which Hamburg had previously been ruled. It marked, even if it was not alone in bringing about, the victory of Prussianism over liberalism, the triumph of state intervention over laissez-faire. It formed a significant, symbolic moment in the history

of the German middle classes, and set the scene for their entry into the twentieth century. (*Death in Hamburg*, viii)

The "Death" that occurred in 1892 was experienced by the country as a whole from 1933 to 1935.

The Third Reich was a police state. Quickly upon Hitler's ascension in 1933, the National Socialists began to clamp down on German associational, professional, and political life and stamp out all possible agents of resistance (within both society at large and the party itself). Evans's Third Reich is brutal and relentless. "In 1933 a huge apparatus of surveillance and control was rapidly brought into being to track down, arrest and punish anyone who opposed the Nazi regime, including a good third of the electorate who had voted for the parties of the left in the last free German elections" (113). The window of opportunity for any organized resistance to the regime quickly closed. "By the end of 1935," Evans argues, "organized opposition had been completely crushed" (113). After shutting down the traditional oppositional parties and purging potential rival forces within its movement (on the "Night of the Long Knives" of 29-30 June 1934) the regime could then turn the screw on isolated groups: "[F]rom 1936 onwards, overt terror was directed increasingly against relatively small minorities such as persistent

or committed Communists and Social Democrats, the asocial and work-shy, petty criminals and... Jews and homosexuals" (113–114).

Evans is critical of historians who have tried to undermine the notion that Germans were held against their will in a terror state, such as Robert Gallately in *Backing Hitler* (Oxford 2001) and Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann in *Die Gestapo* (Darmstadt 1995). He believes that recent scholarship has suffered from a myopic view of repression. By focusing solely on the repression of minorities, scholars have built an overly neat dichotomy between repressed minorities on the one hand and cooperative Germans *en masse* on the other. Evans argues that "to focus exclusively on [the placement of minorities into concentration camps] ignores the much larger number of political and other deviants condemned by the courts and put in state prisons and penitentiaries" (116). In short, Evans (as the title of his first chapter suggests) believes that Nazi Germany was a police state. Terror was real and should not be seen as solely focused on minorities, nor as universally accepted by a monolithic German populace of Gestapo agents or, worse yet, by those who Daniel Goldhagen referred to as "*Hitler's Willing Executioners*" (Vintage 1997).

For Evans, if one wishes to see whether or not the German populace accepted National Socialist ideology, one cannot limit the search to Gestapo

records, rigged elections, or the killing fields of Eastern Europe. Rather, one must examine the interface between population and party ideology: namely, propaganda. For this reason, Evans's chapters on culture are his most important. National Socialism was no ordinary political movement. Rather National Socialism strove to "mobilize the spirit" and "convert the soul" of the populace.

It becomes obvious that Evans believes that if one wishes to fully understand Germany of the years 1933–1939, then the protagonist must be Goebbels rather than Hitler. It is thus fitting that after establishing that the Third Reich was a police state, Evans turns immediately to Goebbels. In this sense, Evans provides counterpoint to Ian Kershaw's two-volume biography of Hitler (Penguin 1998, 2000). Goebbels wished to spark a revolution in the German masses. Evans points out that Goebbels's revolution:

...was not a social or economic revolution along the lines of the French Revolution of 1789 or the Russian Revolution of 1917... It was a cultural revolution. It envisaged the deepening and strengthening of the Nazis' conquest of political power through the conversion of the whole German people to their way of thinking. (120–121)

Evans demonstrates how Goebbels (and the National Socialists more generally) failed to "convert" the German populace to the cultural movement. This thesis underpins "The Mobilization of the Spirit" (Chapter Two) and "Converting the Soul" (Chapter Three).

In "Mobilization of the Spirit" Evans incorporates recent scholarship on music and art (120–121). His treatment of the art world of the 1930s is fresh and readable. His brief biographical vignettes of German artists infuse his cultural discussions with human drama. His portrait of the sculptor Ernst Barlach aches with sadness, for example; that of the composer Richard Strauss sizzles with scorn. Most delectable of all is Evans's description of the National Socialist in-fighting between Joseph Goebbels (head of the Ministry of Propaganda) and Alfred Rosenberg (leader of the Fighting League for German Culture and editor of the *Racial Observer*) over control of the cultural sphere. Evans balances the biographical sketches and art-world gossip with an appropriate amount of historical contextualization. It remains clear to the reader that the discussion is not all simply "Art for Art's Sake" but connected to Evans's larger point that ultimately Goebbels's revolution was a failure.

Goebbels's failure to spark a popular revolution in culture was replicated in religion and academia as well. Evans's negative conclusion could not

be blunter: “Nowhere was there any clear evidence that the Nazis had succeeded in their ambition of sweeping away alternative sources of moral and cultural identity amongst the great mass of Germans and replacing it with unqualified enthusiasm for their own world-view” (320). When it came to the minds of the German people, Evans’s argument begins to come closer to Ozment’s (probably closer than either author would like to admit). Both Ozment and Evans provide more positive portraits of the Germans than one usually finds. Although the two historians may differ in how and where the break came, they both believe that there was a disconnect between National Socialism and the German people.

Given the synthetic nature of his work, Evans’s source-base is heavy on secondary literature. The secondary sources span broadly through and deeply within English- and German-language publications. In describing his themes, Evans has mined the monographs of specialists as opposed to reflecting on the points made in other synthetic works. Evans complements the secondary sources with running commentary from the diaries of ordinary Germans. In addition to seeing the National Socialist transformation of Germany through the eyes of Joseph Goebbels, Hermann Goering, and Heinrich Himmler, the reader gets the perspectives of Victor

Klemperer (a politically-conservative Jewish professor, who is married to an “Aryan” woman), Luise Solmitz (a conservative Hamburg school-teacher), and Jochen Klepper (a former Social Democrat, who was married to a Jewish woman). Evans’s use of these primary documents of Klemperer, Solmitz, Klepper, and others gives a human face to the themes he presents. This is a quality that undergraduates (and everyone else, for that matter) will find extremely helpful about the book. Having used the text twice for the instruction of undergraduate students, I say this from experience. Students have voiced overwhelmingly praise for the book. Many students have even admitted to reading *beyond* the syllabus (selections and schedule) because they “couldn’t put the book down”! Furthermore, as far as I can discern, there have been no complaints about cost. With the publication of this fine work of historical synthesis, the time has come for the Dr. Franksteins in history departments to put down their scalpels and sewing needles.

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Kristina LaCelle-Peterson.
*Liberating Tradition:
Women’s Identity and
Vocation in Christian
Perspective*. Grand Rapids:
Baker Academic, 2008.

THE PROBLEM WITH THE women’s movement in the church is not that it has gone too far but that it has not gone far enough. This dilemma is not fueled by a lack of resolve or by short-sighted political aspirations. The problem is an absent ecclesiology. This void often leaves the women’s movement in the church with no choice but to turn to the political climate of the liberal democratic state for a framework for its efforts—the end of such efforts being mere equality. A more robust ecclesiology can, in contrast, recast the resolve of the women’s movement and thus deepen its political aspirations. As a result, appreciation for the unique nature of members of Christ’s body becomes the highest good instead of mere equality.

An example of this dilemma is found in Kristina LaCelle-Peterson’s otherwise exceptional book *Liberating Tradition: Women’s Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective*. From the very beginning, LaCelle-Peterson invites “women and men to live out life together in ways that reflect what we say we believe” (13). In order to issue such an invitation, she sees her work as “part of a tradition [the Wesleyan or Free Methodist] that goes back to the early nineteenth century in this country and taps movements in the church that go back much further than that” (15). While LaCelle-Peterson is right to link this tradition to an “appreciation of all of the stories of women in the Bible”

(231), such a form of appreciation lacks an understanding of the interpretive context offered by the sacramental practices of the church. As a result, LaCelle-Peterson can go no further in her argument in this book than to offer that “women and men are made equally in the image of God” (13). The problem with this argument, however, is that it does not go far enough. The practices of baptism and Eucharist demand that we see one other not only as equally created beings of a sovereign nature but also as equally created beings inextricably bound to one another as part of a larger body.

The target audience LaCelle-Peterson has in mind for her book is perhaps advanced undergraduate students as well as advanced laypersons in the church. If so, she does a thorough job of introducing these groups to figures who have made distinct contributions to how the church has come to understand the women’s movement. For example, in these pages we meet figures such as Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Rosemary Radford Ruether. LaCelle-Peterson does not assume audience members already know of the importance of such figures. As a result, she offers brief introductions to them and to the significance of their work. In addition, she does a thorough job of presenting some of the current debates surrounding issues such as language for God, body image, and roles for marriage.

In addition to an audience comprised of advanced undergraduates and advanced laypersons, LaCelle-Peterson likely has evangelicals in mind. Evidence of her interest in such an audience stems from her choice of theological method. In particular, LaCelle-Peterson views her work as being comparable to efforts made by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Craig Keener. As “evangelical feminists” Kroeger and Keener “assert that the Bible, interpreted fairly, affirms women, and that the church’s teaching of women’s inferiority is a problem of sexist interpretation rather than a directive in the texts themselves” (21). A primary point of emphasis found in LaCelle-Peterson’s own work is not only to correct such misinterpretations but to also bring to light passages in the Bible where women have filled important and large-scale leadership roles. As a result, she marshals a significant amount of Biblical examples to support this point. In the end, she demonstrates that Scripture offers a high standard “regarding love and the just treatment of all human beings” (21).

In order to demonstrate this high standard, LaCelle-Peterson divides the eleven chapters in her book into four parts. These parts each focus on a particular challenge facing women and the Church. Part One opens by developing an understanding of women’s identity and how such an understanding stems from women being created in God’s

image. This foundation eventually allows her to move forward and rightfully challenge prevailing understandings of body image. Part Two focuses on marriage. Again, she opens this section by developing an understanding of marriage rooted in the Bible, drawing on images found in both the Old and New Testaments. Her interpretation of these passages leads her to develop an understanding of marriage as a partnership defined by a spirit of mutuality. Part Three focuses on roles women are called to fill in relation to the leadership of the Church. Finally, Part Four explores the importance of language not only in terms of these roles but also in terms of how the Church understands God. As a result, LaCelle-Peterson is able to come to the conclusion at the end of her book that we are called to live “less artificially, less constrained by societal expectations and even church expectations and more according to who we are” (230).

While LaCelle-Peterson is trying to free the church “to be the church in this world, characterized by supreme love for God and sacrificial love for the other” (230), she never offers a full explanation of what she means by the church and thus what constitutes such a body. As a result, she finds herself continually drawing on the language of equality. In this sense, members of Christ’s body are viewed as sovereign beings worthy of mutual respect. Equality is not necessarily an

improper aspiration. Given the unfortunate treatment of women in both the church and the larger public, equality is a marked improvement. However, the sacramental acts of baptism and Eucharist propel the church to go even further. The church is not simply a gathering of sovereign beings but a gathering of members whose well-being and very identity are inextricably tied to one another. The well-being of men cannot be advanced apart from the well-being of women. In the same sense, the well-being of women cannot be advanced apart from the well-being of men. In this context, the created distinctiveness of men and women does not merge with one another into a larger homogenized whole but becomes part of an appreciation for the diversity that defines the body of Christ.

In *Marks of His Wounds: Gender Politics and Bodily*

Resurrection (Oxford 2007), Beth Felker Jones makes a comparable argument concerning the body of Christ. In particular, she argues "We are reordered through the body of Christ when we participate in the ecclesial life of that body" (108). At the center of the church are the sacraments. Our participation in these practices comes to define our very nature. Jones thus goes on to offer that "Through baptism, communion, and other practices variously called sacrament or sacramental, we are truly bound to the only body that is properly called 'holy'" (107). In the context of this body, the well-being of men and women become inextricable from one another. Equality thus proves to be an insufficient understanding of how the body of Christ is to order its existence.

On one level, Kristina LaCelle-Peterson's *Liberating Tradition: Women's Identity and*

Vocation in Christian Perspective offers a comprehensive overview of the challenges and the opportunities facing the women's movement in the church. On another level, the manner in which she formulates this overview proves to be insufficient. By identifying equality as her highest aspiration, LaCelle-Peterson underestimates the transformative nature of the body of Christ. When bound together by the sacramental nature of the church, men and women are called to appreciate the nature and well-being of one another. As a result, such an understanding would deepen the challenge which LaCelle-Peterson is rightfully trying to make to the church in her otherwise impressive book.

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the attic

Advent 1980

John Strietelmeier

MY SONS TELL ME THAT ONE of their happiest memories of Christmas past is the custom we had of gathering around the tree on Christmas morning to re-read Robert Benchley's delightful essay, "Editha's Christmas Burglar."

All too briefly summarized, this happy little story tells about Editha, a darling child, who wakes on a Christmas Eve upon hearing noises downstairs and, concluding that it must be a burglar, determined to go downstairs and convert him. But the burglar proves resistant to her innocent sweetness and ends up taking a rope out of his bag and tying her up good and tight, with a nice bright bandana handkerchief around her mouth, and trussing her up on the chandelier. "Then, filling his bag with the silverware and Daddy's imitation sherry, Editha's burglar tiptoed out by the door. As he left, he turned and smiled. 'A Merry Christmas to all and to all a Good Night,' he whispered and was gone."

There was never any doubt where the boys' sympathies lay. Childhood may be any of a number of the sweet things sentimentalists say it is, but the one thing it is not is innocent. The old, now unhappily aban-

doned Order of Holy Baptism had it right when it instructed the minister to inform the people that children are conceived and born in sin and so are under the wrath of God. The cheerful conclusion to those otherwise forbidding words is that, however one's life may unfold, it can't get a whole lot worse than it began. For parents, there is the equally happy thought that any small progress they may make toward civilizing and Christianizing the child is to be accounted a major accomplishment worthy to be set over against their all too many manifest failures.

Anyway, justified by Baptismal grace but not yet far advanced toward sanctification, our boys cheered the burglar on and rejoiced at the thought of Editha pendant from the chandelier, "sore as a crab." It seemed to them only right and proper that, in a universe governed by justice, the little con artist got her comeuppance while her intended quarry tiptoed out with the silver and the imitation sherry. For even at their tender age, they had an instinct that a straightforward burglar is better than a sanctimonious little manipulator.

It is an instinct which needs to be cultivated, espe-

cially as each happy Christmas dawns on earth again. For there is in the very air of a modern sentimentalized, commercialized Christmas the fetid odor of manipulation. Every heartstring gets tugged by somebody, every surge of warm sentiment gets enlisted in the service of some cause, good, bad, or indifferent. We are tempted to buy more than we can afford, or even want, to assuage guilt-feelings that we cannot fully explain. We are invited to revel in a nostalgia which becomes the subject of slick jokes on the comedy shows of the day after Christmas.

Pope Liberius, in 354 AD, fixed 25 December as the date of Christmas, apparently in the pious hope that the celebration of the Nativity would provide Christians with a wholesome alternative to the wild festival of the Saturnalia, which was celebrated at the winter solstice. Alas! It hasn't turned out that way. Saturnalia has triumphed—the chief difference being that our Christian excesses are more commonly those of the spirit than of the flesh. And so the question becomes one of whether we should not simply write off the good Pope's noble experiment and follow the Puritans

in eschewing the celebration of Christmas.

My tentative answer is No. I still think that Christmas may be salvageable. But I am sure that it will take some doing.

What the world will finally do about Christmas I do not know or greatly care. But Christian people, I suspect, will learn someday that they cannot make anything more of Christmas than they make of Advent. And what we presently make of Advent is very little. Advent is chiefly the season of X number of shopping days until Christmas. It is a time of foot-sore shopping, of baking and decorating

and making lists. For some, it is even a season of irritation with the church, for it is a time when "liturgical nuts" insist on Wednesday evening services and austere, undecorated chancels, and penitential hymns that contrast bleakly with the carols pouring forth from the downtown PA systems.

How, then, to get across to the faithful that there is nothing like a proper Advent to get one ready for a proper Christmas? How to invest the idea of Coming (which is what Advent means) with hope and joy and expectation?

I do not know. But I do know that the birth of this

Child can mean little or nothing if we are unaware of how desperately we need the love and salvation which He brings. And I do know that this awareness will not come from the manipulation of our emotions, but the searing of our hearts and consciences. Until Israel knows that she is captive, she will not cry out for Emmanuel to come. And until she cries out, He will not come. But when He does come in response to her cries there will be such rejoicing as you never heard before in your life.

So—a blessed and penitential Advent! ♣

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on the cover —

Krzysztof Wasko is a Polish-American artist who arrived in Chicago in the late-1990s. His “Chicago Madonna: *Urbs in Horto*” is one in a series of Madonna icons that Wasko was inspired to paint after meeting Pope John Paul II. Wasko’s Madonna icons evoke the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, a treasured relic of the Catholic Church in Poland. This example integrates numerous references to the artist’s new home city, including a sailing ship and a Native American—both images found in Chicago’s city seal—and a steel frame, made by the artist’s sister, that commemorates one of the city’s great industries.

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