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First-Year Writing Conference Award Winners

First-Year Writing “equips students to grow as writers in the Wheaton College classroom and beyond. The course is designed to prepare students to write effectively in a variety of social contexts and to improve student learning and performance in many other facets of their undergraduate education.” At the end of the course, students present their research papers to one another at a student conference, and instructors award prizes for the best papers. The winners are chosen through a two-step process: instructors nominate students’ papers from their classes and then a panel of judges selects the best papers from the nominations. The following research papers received FYW awards in 2016-2017.

The Band-Aid: An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Politically Correct Language in American Society

Rachel Hand



If the norm of using politically correct language is supposed to be uniting America as a nation, then why do we seem to be more divided over issues like race, gender, and sexuality than ever before? I propose that politically correct language is not working because it's essentially functioning like a Band-Aid on a wound; PCL fixes our social issues on the surface, but does not have the capacity to heal them in and of itself. Only once we recognize both the necessity and insufficiency of PCL can we begin to truly heal our country's social wounds and find unity.

If Donald Trump is famous for one thing, it is his way with words. Even before his entrance into the political sphere, the billionaire was known for unapologetically speaking his mind, and for using stark, brazen, highly controversial discourse to do so; but last November, his distinctive and, at times, offensive rhetoric was the catalyst for the unearthing of one of the most bitter, aggressive, and crucial debates America has seen in years: the debate regarding political correctness.

Ironically, even though the term is being used more than ever before in academia, social media, and politics, it seems that American society cannot seem to come to a consensus as to what, precisely, "political correctness" is. This is partly due to the fact that, since its conception in the 1960s ("Imagined Tyranny" 51), the term has grown more and more colloquial, and has been used to cover a broader and broader range of ideas and concepts. Today, political correctness is most commonly used as a catch-all term referencing a leftward-leaning set of ideas, attitudes, or beliefs about discrimination-based personal factors ("Peer Review" 150-151); however, at its root, political

correctness is not only an ideology, but a form of language. According to the Encyclopedia of Political Communication, politically correct language (or "PCL") is "language that seems intended to give the least amount of offense, especially when describing groups identified by external markers such as race, gender, culture, or sexual orientation" (Roper 575). It is a characteristically careful and delicate style of speech, a linguistic walk on eggshells motivated by the deep desire to eliminate inequality, elitism, and the victimization of certain people groups via language ("Peer Review" 152). It is also intended to promote unity, non-offense, and diversity in the presence of a number of social issues, including racism, sexism, environmentalism, mental and physical disability, socioeconomic class and feminism ("Peer Review" 151).

With such noble goals, it is no wonder that this style of speech has become the new norm in American society today; however, as is the case with the emergence of many new norms, American citizens have developed very polarized opinions about it. Some love PCL, insisting that it is a necessity

for a healthy, functioning, and equal society, as it protects the dignity of minorities and helps to prevent individuals from using their First Amendment rights to harm others (Taylor). However, those who are pro-PCL seem to be the minority, as it appears the vast majority of people in academia, politics, and even the public vehemently oppose PCL for multiple reasons. Donald Trump is one of the loudest voices in this majority (having run for president on an anti-political correctness platform), and has used his Twitter account to express the majority's opinion that "being politically correct takes too much time" (@realDonaldTrump "Being politically correct...") and that "political correctness prevents good people from reporting terrorism before it happens" (@realDonaldTrump "Political correctness prevents..."). Millions of other Americans staunchly oppose PCL on the grounds that the new norm is an encroachment on their right to freedom of speech, and that the lexicon of PCL panders to those who are thin-skinned, prompting people to seek out offense where none was intended (Roper 575). Many against PCL also commonly liken it to a shady politician's political jargon—mere rhetoric meant more to deceive the public and cover up problems than to protect the feelings of minorities.

This fiery controversy stems from the reality that, while most people on both sides agree that PCL's goals are pure and desirable, the PCL norm does not seem to be accomplishing these goals. At its root, this type of language seeks to establish unity, diversity, equality and justice—values that are dear to our country, and a great source of national pride. And given that the use of PCL has become the social norm in American society today, one would think that we would be more unified as a country, and that by using PCL, we would be making more progress towards its ideals. However, this past year's political season and the aftermath of Donald Trump's election serve as clear evidence that our country is deeply divided. This then leaves conservatives and liberals alike with one simple, frustrating question—a question that, if we are to have any hope of truly making progress towards the ideals of PCL, must be answered: why is PCL not accomplishing the goals that it was intended to accomplish? After reviewing much research examining the linguistic and

psychological underpinnings of PCL, I have come to the conclusion that PCL isn't working because it is essentially functioning as a Band-Aid on the wound of America's social issues. Though a Band-Aid covers and disguises a wound, it cannot in and of itself heal it; in a similar way, though PCL maintains a surface-level peace and non-offensive discourse in American society, it cannot in and of itself heal America's social problems because it cannot change the underlying attitudes and beliefs causing them. Rather, the PCL norm merely perpetuates or even worsens these harmful attitudes and beliefs.

Of course, many more progressive, leftward-leaning individuals disagree with the very premise of this debate, insisting that the PCL norm *is* accomplishing its goals of unity and diversity, because it is successfully maintaining general peace and civility in political discourse and social interactions. To support this claim, citizens like Langston Taylor—writer for the *Tampa Bay Times* newspaper—first cite the way in which the norm acts as a safeguard against needlessly offensive speech in discourse. Though the PCL norm is a source of frustration and resentment for many citizens, Taylor makes the point in his 2016 article "Why Political Correctness is a Good Thing" that "whenever someone feels handcuffed by political correctness, those handcuffs are likely protecting and respecting someone else" (Taylor); in other words, while the PCL norm might be viewed as a burden by many academic and public communities, it is actually a crucial construct that helps to prevent the verbal harassment of minorities and other vulnerable groups in everyday social situations.

Further supporting these pro-PCL citizens is research demonstrating that the PCL norm can promote social peace and civility not only by eliminating offensive speech, but also by eliminating factors that tend to inhibit positive social interaction—specifically, the factor of interpersonal tension. In one study entitled "Creativity from Constraint? How the Political Correctness Norm Influences Creativity in Mixed-Sex Work Groups," researchers from Cornell, Washington, Berkeley, and Vanderbilt Universities came together to study how instituting a salient PCL norm in a mixed-sex work setting would affect the tension and uncertainty that many members experienced when communicating

with the opposite sex, as well as the group's overall creativity. In the end, they found that the PCL norm "reduces otherwise high levels of uncertainty in mixed-sex groups and signals that the group is predictable enough to risk sharing not only more ideas but also ideas that are more novel" (Goncalo et al. 20)—in essence, that a PCL norm can reduce tension in a mixed group of people, which increases group creativity. In theory, these results could apply not only to tension levels in mixed sex groups, but also to tension levels in mixed race, religion, or sexuality groups as well. Assuming this is the case, then the PCL norm proves to be an invaluable tool for achieving peace and civility in a multicultural nation, as it reduces the interpersonal tension that is responsible for so much social conflict within our diverse nation.

While these arguments for the PCL norm's effectiveness certainly inspire optimism, there is a catch to the unflinchingly positive view of PCL. Although I wholeheartedly agree that the PCL norm is a necessity in our society given the way in which it keeps our discourse civil and non-offensive, as well as how it can reduce interpersonal tension, the problem with PCL is that maintaining surface-level harmony *is all it does*. The norm is as effective at healing America's social problems as a Band-Aid is at healing a cut: all it can do is cover and disguise the problem. This is not to say, of course, that PCL norms are useless and that we as a society should simply abandon them; on the contrary, PCL norms are necessary to do the good work of preserving broad societal standards of decorum. But in order to truly bring about unity and resolve social issues such as racism and sexism, superficial social interactions are not the only thing that must change about American society. Rather, the individual *attitudes* and *beliefs* perpetuating the harmful social issues must be dealt with in order to truly heal them—and the unfortunate reality is that PCL is incapable of doing so.

The explanation as to *why* PCL is unable to truly change the harmful attitudes and beliefs at the root of America's social issues lies in both PCL's psychological and linguistic nature. From a psychological perspective, the PCL norm's inability to change a person's opinions can be explained by the basic psychological principle of conformity. In

her textbook *Social Psychology and the Christian Perspective*, clinical psychologist and associate professor of psychology Angela M. Sabates defines conformity as "the act of changing one's behavior in response to real or imagined social pressure" (215)—specifically (as Sabates notes), the social pressure to conform to group norms. PCL is one such group norm, and as it has grown more and more universally accepted in recent years, the pressure placed on American individuals to conform to it has grown enormous. And though there is no universal law or iron-fisted dictator demanding that everyone adhere to the PCL norm, the social pressure to do so is so intense that it is not uncommon for individuals to feel as though they are, in fact, being forced to conform. As a result of this feeling, individuals engage in what is known as *public conformity*—a phenomenon in which individuals conform superficially to the group purely out of the desire to be accepted by (or to protect themselves from the harassment of) the larger group. However, as Sabates notes, "public conformity often results in a superficial change in observable behavior without an actual internalized change in attitude or belief" (215). Thus, when individuals conform to the PCL norm simply out of the desire to avoid becoming a social pariah, these individuals are very unlikely to *actually* change their private, socially harmful attitudes because of it. This would explain why the PCL norm manages to foster pro-social and non-offensive discourse, and yet is simultaneously failing to achieve its goals and solve the social issues in America today, as this psychological approach reveals the PCL norm's inability to change the harmful attitudes responsible for America's social problems at the individual level.

A linguistic perspective of PCL also offers an explanation for why PCL is unable to change socially destructive attitudes and beliefs—an explanation that author Ben O'Neill offers in his 2011 journal article entitled "a Critique of Political Correctness". In this article, O'Neill points out the fundamental problem with PCL's process of semantic change—the problem referred to as "The Euphemism Treadmill" (282). According to O'Neill, words relating to some personal condition or characteristic (for example, the word "retarded") become offensive when they are used as insults, because doing so falsely implies that

the condition or trait is something to be ashamed of. The purpose of PCL, then, is to replace those now offensive terms with brand-new, non-offensive terms, and by doing so to eliminate the source of a lot of social discord. The issue with this, as O'Neill points out, is that merely referring to a condition or a trait by a different name changes neither the underlying social realities of the situation, nor the implicit attitudes towards the condition or trait (286). For example, simply referring to a poor person as "economically disadvantaged" will neither increase their income, nor change any negative attitudes another might harbor about such a person.

The only thing that the PCL system changes is the number of potentially offensive vocabulary words available to the "bullies" (as O'Neill calls them). Inevitably, they catch on to the new lingo, and begin to use the politically correct words offensively. This then necessitates the creation of *new* politically correct terms, which will soon be used derogatorily, which will subsequently lead to the production of new terms, which will be abused, and so on, resulting in a never-ending cycle of replacement that never makes actual progress (the "Euphemism Treadmill") (282). Over time, the words themselves will change, but the harmful connotations will stay the same. Thus, the continual use of PCL makes for technically peaceful and politically correct conversations throughout society, but does so without actually changing the underlying, socially detrimental attitudes or negative opinions, which would explain why so far, PCL has been an ineffective treatment for America's social wounds.

Of course, while one does not expect a Band-Aid to cure a wound in and of itself, one *does* expect it to at least prevent the wound from getting any worse. Similarly, one would expect PCL to at least prevent the spread of adverse attitudes and beliefs. However, PCL somehow manages to defy these expectations, as a study performed by researchers at the University of Montana entitled "When Self-Censorship Norms Backfire: The Manufacturing of Positive Communication and Its Ironic Consequences for the Perceptions of Groups" demonstrated that PCL norms have the potential not just to perpetuate, but also to actually *worsen* the negative attitudes and stereotypes at the heart of America's social issues.

In this study, published in *The Journal of Basic and Applied Social Psychology* in 2009, the researchers wanted to test and see whether or not self-censorship norms can actually lead a person's communication about a certain group to be more negative. They conducted three experiments in which they had participants read a fictitious account of a positive dialogue between a group of friends about the "Sigma Sigma Sigma fraternity", in the middle of which one of the group members introduced either a fraternity member, an unaffiliated and well-known friend, or a stranger. The participants were then asked to rate on a scale of one to nine the extent to which the positive talk about the Sigma Sigma Sigma fraternity was due to actual group opinion, or merely the presence of fraternity members. The results showed that "participants were more likely to attribute the positive statements about the Sigma Sigma Sigma fraternity to something other than the communicators' real beliefs when a fraternity member was present... than when he was absent" (Conway et al. 340), and that "participants were more likely to later talk disparagingly about the fraternity when a fraternity member was present at the initial discussion... than when he was absent" (Conway et al. 340). In other words, when the self-censorship norm was instituted (i.e., the presence of the fraternity member), the reader was able to sense that the expressed attitudes of the group were not necessarily legitimate, which not only invalidated the positive opinions, but actually led more harmful and negative opinions to be voiced later on, after the fraternity member had left.

Given that the PCL norm is a type of self-censorship norm, these results are particularly worrying for our society. If these results are applicable to the PCL norm (as I believe they are), it would mean that although PCL continues to maintain the pretense of positivity, diversity, and equality in conversation, it is entirely possible that in reality no one believes that this pretense is true. This superficial consensus merely delegitimizes the goals of PCL, perpetuates the problematic opinions, and even worsens them—a fact that is evidenced by how, in censoring their beliefs and true opinions, the participants actually ended up communicating the censored beliefs even more (Conway et al. 344). In the end, these findings demonstrate that the PCL norm

has the dangerous tendency to backfire, and that it can actually promote the spreading of stereotypes and group-directed negativity, rather than reduce it.

Ultimately, after examining both the psychological and linguistic underpinnings of the PCL phenomenon, it becomes clear that the answer as to why PCL is failing to “do its job” and unite America is found in the phenomenon’s very nature. In order to make any true progress in solving America’s social issues (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, etc.), we need a system that will not only ensure peaceful, surface-level decorum, but also change the harmful individual attitudes and opinions at the heart of these social issues. And however repressive it may feel, the PCL norm is undoubtedly excellent at and necessary for maintaining peaceful and non-offensive societal standards. However, as most of the aforementioned psychological and linguistic research has evidenced, though the PCL norm might encourage (or even demand) conformity, it cannot change individual attitudes in and of itself; rather, PCL merely adds new potential insults, and perpetuates harmful attitudes via silent social communication. At the end of the day, it is because of this inability to change detrimental attitudes that PCL is, by its very nature, incapable of solving anything but surface level aspects of America’s social issues.

Recognizing this is crucial if we as Americans are to intentionally pursue the values of unity, equality, diversity, and justice that are so dear to us. Because if it is truly the case that the PCL norm is not solving our social problems, then all Americans—liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats—desperately need to start approaching the problems differently. If we are to be united as a nation, we cannot be bickering over the usefulness of PCL or the PCL norm; rather, we must both acknowledge the system’s necessity and admit its insufficiency. Only then will we have the freedom to explore new solutions, and only then will we be able to stop trusting in a Band-Aid that will not work and start searching for an actual cure.

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Representation and Pedagogical Canonicity

Alexandra Rivera



The formation of a literary canon is an inherently political act. Historically, societal power dynamics have determined which works are included and which are excluded. Working to move pedagogical canons away from Eurocentric texts and toward more inclusive, representative, and diverse texts challenges the status quo, and calls the old power structures into question. Because the study of literature presents opportunities to “understand more about the world and those who live in it” (Hateley 77), educators should strive to intentionally expose students to a variety of “representative” texts. The object of teaching literature cannot merely be to nurture critical thinking skills. “Representativeness” acts as an essential aspect of literature, and should be utilized to present many perspectives and experiences to students.

Many of our cultural and political conceptions and expectations come from reading literature. As Erica Hateley writes, teachers, therefore, have the opportunity to “foster a culture of reading as cultural agency” (71), giving students critical thinking tools with which to grapple with complex sociopolitical issues on their own. Quoting Chris Baldick, Hateley reiterates that canon is essentially “a body of writings recognized by authority” (71-72), which gives pedagogical canon peculiar significance in the development of students’ ideas about the world. We must strive to remain conscious of the way canons form and reform, and must not hesitate to engage with canon formation critically. Reading is a “culturally-endorsed strategy of negotiating between self and society” (72), and as such, nothing about the selection of literature for a classroom is apolitical. No surprise, then, that canon formation often becomes contentious among scholars and educators.

While it seems most literary and education scholars acknowledge the relative importance of representative inclusion, some are hesitant to make it a priority, either because they believe the

intentional representation of multi-ethnic literature unnecessarily politicizes literature education or they wish to emphasize literary aesthetic merit over all else. However, I believe literature education to be political by nature, and the inclusion of multi-ethnic and international literature in the classroom contributes greatly to its literary integrity. Continuing to exclude multi-ethnic literature misrepresents the real scope of literature and is harmful to students. Exposure to a variety of “representative” texts is crucial—and intentionally, not incidentally. The object of teaching literature cannot merely be to nurture critical thinking skills. The study of literature presents opportunities to “understand more about the world and those who live in it” (Hateley 77). “Representativeness” acts as an essential aspect of literature, and should be utilized to present many perspectives and experiences to students.

In her article “From ‘Representative’ to Relatable,” Stephanie Stiles asserts that when approaching pedagogical canon formation, one should primarily consider the relatability of the works’ ethical framework; that is, its emotional resonance. When

students are presented with material they find “relatable,” Stiles believes they are more able to engage the text ethically and critically, and argues that this is both more effective and more truthful than choosing literature based on its “representative” value. I disagree and would contend that representation and relatability are not in opposition, but two sides of the same coin. Relatability’s power resides in awakening the reader’s personal sympathy through some level of similarity; the power of representation lies in compounding relatability with dissimilarity, stirring empathy regardless of likeness or unlikeness. Representation does not work against relatability, but functions as an integral part of it. Stiles has valid concerns regarding the problematic nature of literature chosen to “represent” minority voices when it is expected to adequately or even accurately stand in for all within that specific people group; presenting one or two books as “representing” people groups or cultures could come dangerously close to tokenism. However, these concerns can be addressed in a classroom setting. It seems incongruous that while she waxes eloquent on students’ ability to relate to characters in completely dissimilar circumstances and their ability to grasp literary theory, she apparently does not consider them capable of reaching a nuanced understanding of representation. When presenting a representative text to students, one must avoid overburdening it with supposed cultural significance, which may lead to unbalanced emphasis, decontextualization, or plain misreading, but these dangers can be addressed as well.

Some scholars “strongly question how representation in the literary curriculum leads to social justice” (Stiles 496), and assert that reading the literary work of marginalized authors does nothing to actually benefit those they “represent” who suffer marginalization. Though Stiles adds a slight disclaimer that “it could be argued” students may benefit from reading a diverse range of authors, she follows this by stating that reading texts written by authors in marginalized minorities “has little to no material impact on the everyday lives” of others in those minorities (496). I cannot accept this claim, which seems to come from a surprisingly blind position of privilege. She appears to assume that all the readers of these texts will not belong to an ethnic

minority (and that relating to someone who has fewer advantages than oneself does not have the potential for “material impact” on one’s surrounding culture). Not only does she fail to support this statement, she fails to consider the “material impact” reading marginalized authors may have on students who are from underprivileged backgrounds themselves—or what “material impact” the opposite may have, of students of color reading only the work of white authors. In her article, Hateley quotes African-Canadian professor Dr. Njokia Nathani Wane on her personal experience in this area: “Unknown to me, the act of being schooled in the literary canons so valued in Europe caused me to be disassociated from, and devalue the cultural knowledges and wisdom of my ancestors, my community, and my family” (77). For me, as a Hispanic woman who grew up in underprivileged conditions, I can say with conviction reading books by Hispanic authors and women of color have a huge impact on my life. Just knowing of their existence encourages me. As a child, after years of wishing I were blonde and blue-eyed like the heroines in the books I read, the advent of Josefina Montoya, of American Girl fame, was a revelation. I can mark the period of my life when my mother read me the stories about a nine-year-old Mexican girl living in 1824 Santa Fe as the time when I began to feel comfortable in my skin. True, reading about Josefina did not change my outward circumstances, but I will say without reservation that it changed my life for the better.

In addition, reading literature from a variety of ethnic origins *can* “materially impact” the lives of the underprivileged and marginalized by making those in places of relative power and comfort aware of their privilege. Laurie Grobman, in her article “The Value and Valuable Work of Multi-Ethnic Literature,” argues that inclusion of multi-ethnic literature creates a canon that is both “imaginative *and* political,” prompting its readers “to feel *and* to act” (88). Grobman presents a case for “classrooms [as] sites of dialogic struggle with the unfamiliar,” stressing that literature’s value lies in the combination of “aesthetic pleasure and political possibilities” (87). Even Stiles’ arguments in favor of relatability fit remarkably well with Grobman’s insistence that literary artistry and social justice are “interconnected” (82). Stiles

emphasizes how students engaging with literature emotionally prompts “ethical reflection” (Stiles 494), wherein students are “attuned to the moral implications of the text” (488). If that is so, then it would follow that representative texts would further students’ ethical reflection on a variety of subjects that then present opportunities for discussion and heightened awareness of social issues.

For the same reason, the examination of texts included in a canon is perhaps no more important than the conscious criticism of canonicity itself (Hateley 72). Quoting pedagogical activists Aronowitz and Giroux, Hateley reminds us that the canon must “justify itself as representing the elements of our own heritage” (72), and therefore presenting any classroom in the United States with a predominantly Anglo-European canon is in this sense misleading. Some, like Stiles, may wish to avoid confronting political issues when discussing literature, but when it comes down to it, all criteria for literary excellence, even that of relatability, is socially constructed and thus “inescapably political” (Grobman 86). After all, “aesthetic judgments are not made within an individual vacuum but are, rather, intimately connected with dominant cultural standards of value” (Grobman 83). Therefore, we must be careful to avoid reducing minority literature to simple reactions against the dominant culture. In her analysis of Native American writer Craig Womack’s work, “Canonizing Craig Womack: Finding Native Literature’s Place in Indian Country,” Michelle Henry argues, to generalize her slightly more specific case, minority literature in the United States does not function solely or even primarily to subvert “Euroamerican” culture. Rather, it exists, as any “type” of literature exists, as an expression of personal experience and worldview; and as such is valid and worthy of study on its own terms, not just in order to meet a quota.

Henry supports Womack’s assertion that Creek Nation writers do not write to add to the Euroamerican canon, but belong to their own canon, as their experience and cultural tradition and worldview is unique to them. Womack and Henry are adamant that literature should be primarily interpreted through the lens of its own cultural heritage, not the lens of outsiders. Henry points

out that while scholars make much of the influence of “Euroamerica” on Native America, outside of Native American studies, “Euroamerican [culture] is rarely considered as a product of Native American contact” (43). In the classroom, one must be careful not to “other-ize” multi-ethnic literature, with a too categorical distinction between it and “traditional” literature, or to consign it to a “side note or chapter on ‘diversity’” (Henry 37); but keep in mind the cultural origins of a text and endeavor to present it authentically. There need not be an “us and them” mentality in literature; all human beings have experiences and stories worth acknowledgement. When we listen to previously silenced voices, we need to hear them “on their own terms, not just as a reflection of the dominant worldview” (Henry 49). In Grobman’s article, she quotes Christina Crosby, saying that the true value of literature is that it “poses value as a question not an answer” and involves students in “humanistic inquiry” into “the value of the human and human creativity” (87). If that is the case, then it is imperative that educators and literary scholars, as well as anyone who engages with literature, acknowledge the “legitimacy and sovereignty” (Henry 35) of diverse texts. When we do this, we engage in what Grobman calls the “mutually enriching connection between the political and the creative in a process of cultural specificity and cross-cultural negotiation” (83).

To carry the point a bit further, this “enriching connection” would be strengthened even more if world literature were more often included in English literature studies. World literature is still generally underrepresented in Western classrooms (Yiannakis), and translations of non-Classical texts are difficult to obtain. Last year, when I was shopping for a 1914 Japanese novel, assigned in a course on modern East Asia, I searched specifically for the translation on the syllabus, assuming the professor preferred that translator, only to discover it was the only English translation available. We can do better than this. And indeed, I believe translations are on the rise in the recent decades. As our world becomes more and more globalized, the study of international literature should not be confined to universities; every level of literary study would be enriched by the inclusion of the perspectives of multiple nationalities and cultures.

If we can translate Dante and Tolstoy for literary study, what stops us from including literary giants from other cultural traditions? I would echo Hateley, that “texts are not ends in themselves so much as they are invitations” to expand one’s knowledge and appreciation of the world (77). In the classroom, teachers have the opportunity not only to provide students with tools with which to understand themselves and their own spheres, but also to challenge their students to think beyond themselves. There is so much potential for social change in the study of literature.

Regardless of what shapes it, canonization necessitates power structure, which indicates political dynamics and motivations. Working to move pedagogical canons away from Eurocentric interpretation and toward more inclusive, representative, and diverse standards challenges the status quo, and calls the old power structures into question. The world will not end if students read less Shakespeare and more Langston Hughes. Something tells me the Bard will stick around. And in the meantime, more students will see how “beautiful... are the souls of [Hughes’] people.” Including authors and cultural demographics that have historically been excluded grants those voices power, and their contribution to the conversation only benefits literature as a whole. For that reason, minority authors should be read on their own terms, not because it leads to social justice, but because listening to voices previously silenced is in itself an act of social justice.

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The Rice Cake We Break: Rethinking the Traditional Use of Bread and Wine for the Eucharistic Meal in Light of Cross-Cultural Contexts

Rachel Coker



At the end of the 20th century, prominent Anglican Church leaders gathered to determine whether or not non-Western Anglican churches would be permitted to substitute the traditional bread and wine for other, more culturally appropriate food and drink during their regular Eucharistic meals. Because of the abuse suffered by many non-Western countries in the last several centuries, foods like bread and wine—which were once simply everyday staples to a first century Jewish community—have become synonymous with European and North American culture and often raise unpleasant connotations of colonialism, racism and oppression for non-white Christians. However, despite agreeing that Eucharistic substitutions are acceptable and even preferable in many cross-cultural contexts, the Anglican Church at large has still failed to express this sentiment in their statement of doctrinal beliefs—a move that I argue would lead to more established unity in the Church at large and a better representation of Christ’s original mandate to remember Him in the daily acts of eating and drinking together.

The Lord’s Supper is perhaps one of the most widely practiced and recognized traditions of the Christian faith, uniting believers of varying denominations, socioeconomic statuses, and cultural backgrounds from around the globe (SC). The traditional Eucharistic meal, first demonstrated by Jesus Christ on the night before His crucifixion and death, set up an example of communal remembrance through the breaking of bread and drinking of wine that has characterized Christian church tradition for the past two thousand years (SQ). Matthew 26:17-30 provides an eyewitness account of the original Lord’s

Supper, sharing that “As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (New King James Version). In a similar manner, the Christian tradition of churches

observing the Lord's Supper on a regular basis has almost exclusively been characterized by the sharing of bread or crackers and wine or grape juice. In the days of the early church leaders and theologians, the primary controversies surrounding the Lord's Supper were centered on the issues of transubstantiation¹ and the use of leavened versus unleavened bread. Theologians debated whether or not to use thin wafers or thick, spongy bread and many, like the great Protestant theologian John Calvin, decided that "whether the bread is leavened or unleavened; the wine red or white—it makes no difference. These things are indifferent, and left at the church's discretion" (Calvin, 167).

However, in the past two decades, church leaders of the Anglican faith have called for a reevaluation of the traditional Eucharistic meal in favor of practices that would better serve a cross-cultural Gospel mission (DC). In 2002, Paul Gibson of the Inter-Anglican Liturgical Commission sent out a letter with a survey attached to all Provincial Secretaries of the Anglican Church at large (IALC Report on Elements Used in Communion, 1). The survey was compiled after a series of IALC meetings in the late 1990's and early 2000's and brought up an important and, until then, rarely discussed question regarding Eucharistic tradition: is it, in our day and age, appropriate for non-Western churches to substitute the bread and wine of the Eucharistic meal into other forms of food and drink that would be more suitable for their cultural contexts? The questionnaire asked Anglican leaders across the globe whether questions of substitution of bread and wine had ever arisen in their diasporas, and under what situations they had permitted a substitution. According to the IALC's report, seven leaders responded that the question of substitution had arisen, while ten admitted that they had permitted substitution under circumstances of allergies, cost, concern for alcoholics, and other personal desires (CB). In addition, the report stated that the biggest factor for non-Western Anglican leaders to embrace Eucharistic substitution seemed to be cultural adaptation, stating: "For some Anglicans their local culture reads very different meanings into

bread and wine as these are 'foreign' imports. Other elements from the local culture convey the notion of celebratory meal far more than bread and wine" (IALC, 2). However, despite growing recognition of the use of Eucharistic substitutes among Anglican scholars, the Anglican Church as a whole still promotes the use of traditional bread and wine in their doctrinal statements, even going so far as to state on their website that Holy Communion is "a shared 'meal' of bread/wafer and wine". It seems that, despite growing explorations of Eucharistic substitutes opening new possibilities for a twenty-first century interpretation of Christ's example at the Last Supper, many Anglican leaders are still hesitant to advocate for an official change of policy to be published in regards to Holy Communion. After centuries of Western domination in the Christian faith, it may be time for the Anglican Church to publically accept an expression of the Eucharistic meal that reflects the customs of a myriad of cultures—a sentiment that would best be exemplified through the substitution of bread and wine for more culturally significant food and drink in order to bring about renewed communal unity in the Church at large (C). In the future, other Protestant and even Catholic denominations may follow suit and raise these issues within their own contexts. In fact, there are several non-Anglican scholars who have debated the issue of substitution and are quoted in the pages to follow. However, Anglican leaders have devoted more time and attention to the specific topic at hand than other Protestant denominations, which is why the Anglican Church in particular may soon be ready to publically defend the use of Eucharistic substitutions in non-Western cultural contexts.

In order to understand why cultural context within the Eucharistic meal matters, it is important to note that liturgy at its core is meant to promote unity and community within the church (R). According to William Seth Adams, Professor of Liturgies and Anglican Studies at Austin's Episcopal Seminary, liturgical events are defined by four significant aspects: "(1) the texts of the liturgy, both ritual texts and rubrics; (2) ritual action, 'the work of the ritual

¹The doctrine, primarily supported by the Roman Catholic Church and some Eastern Orthodox churches, that the Eucharistic elements at their consecration become the (literal) body and blood of Christ while keeping only the appearances of bread and wine (Miriam-Webster, 2017)

community which accompanies, animates and accomplishes the texts' (3) the environment 'within which the action takes place, the setting, the things used'; and (4) the interpretive framework" (Meyers, 1). In unpacking an analysis of the early church's traditional use of bread and wine, Phillip Tovey of the University of Oxford points out that in the original Lord's Supper, Jesus most likely used unleavened bread since the night of the meal fell during Passover, a period in which Jews were commanded not to eat leavened bread. However, Tovey also states that many have argued that by the time of the apostles Christians had already switched from unleavened to leavened bread. Even today, many churches use wafers instead of loaves, although neither authentically replicates the meal Christ instituted for His followers the night before His death—proving that for centuries now Eucharistic substitutes have already been implemented by the Western Church at large (Tovey, 44-45).

However, although substitutes have already been used by the Church for years, many theologians still claim that veering from the traditional single loaf of bread is in complete opposition to Christ's original mandate—an argument that may account for why the Anglican Church still resists formally accepting the doctrine of Eucharistic substitution in its doctrinal statement. In 1 Corinthians 10:17, Paul writes: "For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (NJKV). University of Nottingham's Thomas O'Loughlin argues that "the shape of the whole loaf is crucial. A loaf is the result of the transformation of hundreds of grains of incredible wheat into a single wonderful reality: a loaf of bread. The loaf is the metaphor for the community—scattered Israel is gathered, transformed, and made one in Christ... The whole notion of gathering, being united in Christ, transformed through discipleship, and then having a share in the life of Christ is made completely invisible when we use pre-cut 'bite-sized' wafers" (O'Loughlin, 413-414). In a similar way, O'Loughlin's argument could be applied to the notion of substituting the bread for other food items and thereby destroying the concept of unity inherent in Christ's original decision. However, if the loaf is indeed the metaphor for the community, then the concept of Eucharistic

substitution does not need to oppose the sentiment behind O'Loughlin and others' argument. In many cases, using other locally-grown food instead of bread may actually better emphasize the need for community unity and signify the "oneness" Christ was demonstrating through the single loaf. The Kanamai Consultation of 1993 led many African Anglican leaders to not only encourage local believers to grow their own bread, but to "consider whether they should permit the use of local staple foods and drinks for the Eucharistic elements, also carefully considering this alongside biblical tradition" (Meyers, 90) Ruth Meyers goes on to suggest that "when the Eucharist is understood as a communal meal, it is appropriate to ask whether the elements used for that meal should consist of local food and drink in places where bread and wine are essentially foreign... Items such as liturgical furniture and vessels ought to enable the congregation to see a connection between the Eucharistic meal and their everyday meals...in order to emphasize the unity of the body of Christ in its celebration at the Eucharist" (Meyers, 91). If the Biblical principle of the Lord's Supper may be interpreted as the breaking of an everyday object to signify a community's unity, then the breaking of a rice cake, pita roll, or plantain may be just as if not more significant to a local church than a loaf of bread. When the concept of "one loaf" is demonstrated through a manner of communal living and Eucharistic worship that emphasize a unified faith over a literal interpretation, believers in all cultural contexts are best following the example set by Christ and His disciples. Unity, not legalism, was the quality Christ most strongly commanded His Church to seek after.

If that is so, and the congregation's unified observation of the Lord's Supper is the key element that Christ emphasized, it is evident throughout Scripture that bread and wine were most likely chosen by Christ not only for their practical daily function, but for their associations with life and celebration—two values that should characterize unified Christian community. Therefore, other foods with similar cultural connotations may produce the same effect in a Eucharistic Meal (R). We know, because of a passage in Matthew that gives the account of the first Lord's Supper, that Christ gathered with His

disciples on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Matthew 26:17). This feast was first ordained by the Lord in Exodus 12, when the Spirit of the Lord wreaked havoc in the land of Egypt, killing every first born son in every Egyptian household but passing over the homes of faithful Israelites who had marked their doorways with the blood of a lamb. In commemoration of the Lord's deliverance of their sons, Israelites were commanded to yearly celebrate the Passover by eating unleavened bread for a week. The first day—the day in which Christ instituted the Lord's Supper—was designated to become a “holy convocation” in which no work could be done and everyone must eat (Exodus 12:16, NKJV). Traditionally, this feast that Christ chose for the institution of the Eucharistic Meal not only represents a historical event in the story of the Jewish people, but, according to Rabbi and Reverend S. Fyne of Swansea, a promise of the Redemption to come: “You shall observe the unleavened bread.’ Why? ‘Because,’ continues the text, ‘on this self-same day have I BROUGHT you out of the land of Egypt.’ You, implies the text, *did not*—because you *could not*—come out of your *own* accord, by your *own* efforts, but had to be *brought* out. You were past self-rising. Yours was not a self-emancipation as to make ‘Chamez’ (leavened foods)...your Emancipation was a *Redemption*, pure and simple, and for a Redemption ‘Mazah’ (unleavened bread) is the appropriate symbol. Hence on this anniversary ye shall eat ‘Mazah!’” (Fyne, 2). The very night during which Christ drew His disciples near to share this meal with Him was regarded by observant Jews already to be an evening of solemn remembrance and celebratory anticipation for the Redeemer to come. In the same way, other New Testament accounts of Scripture referring to bread and wine are often synonymous with tidings of life and joy. In John 6:35 Jesus tells His disciples, “I am the bread of Life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and He who believes in Me shall never thirst” (NKJV), while in John 2:1-11 He begins His earthly ministry with a miracle at a wedding that turns six pots of water into wine, thereby “manifest(ing) His glory” and leading many to believe in Him (NKJV). It is clear that throughout His life and ministry, Christ drew connections between the everyday food staples of bread and wine and the glimpses of redemption

His life and death represented. On the night He broke bread and shared wine, His disciples were already familiar not only with the pagan rituals of Gentile religions, but also with the ways in which Christ had redeemed these sacraments throughout His ministry.

While it was culturally understood in first century Jewish settings that unleavened bread and wine as part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were able to carry strong connotations of redemption, remembrance, and celebration, such values are not always evident in twenty-first century contexts. As previously stated in the IALC Report, many non-Western countries immediately associate bread and wine with foreign American or European exports—often expensive, inconvenient to access, and bearing strong associations with war, colonialization, or racial oppression. Many non-Western cultures have a longstanding history of their own celebratory traditions and festivals that incorporate food, drink, dress, and ceremony particular to their cultural context. Historically, however, many Christian missionaries have rejected the intermingling of the Gospel with heathen traditions. Gerald Cooke sums up the attitudes of many contemporary Christians toward the “threat” of non-Christian cultures in his work on Christians and “rival religions”: “The general insecurity and lack of reflective thought about religion is demonstrated in the fact that many are loath to undertake a critical evaluation of the existence of multiple systems of belief, ways of life, policies, and issues which characterize our time. The shreds of living faith and commitment are for many so fragile that any proposal for rigorous examination of problematic aspects of religious life is shunned: ‘Better to cling to the little that is left to us than to jeopardize it in attempts to mix faith with understanding. We want answers, not questions.’” (Cooke, 21) The same sentiment could be applied to common misconceptions many Christian missionaries may have first carried with them when they shared the Gospel and traditional Christian sacraments with indigenous peoples on the continents of Asia and Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For the Anglican Church, the idea of restating their Eucharistic doctrinal beliefs may cause worry for some that this conflict between Western Christianity and indigenous culture may

rear its head again. However, in more circumstances than not, the intermingling of Christian orthodoxy and non-Western cultural tradition has proven to be robust and theologically rich, rather than dangerous.

Perhaps one of the most famous and significant examples of the interculturalization of the Eucharist into a non-Western setting is found in the traditional Japanese tea ceremony. Many historians have documented the time in Japanese history when Christianity was outlawed and Jesuit missionaries, in an attempt to weave Christian doctrine into the lives of Japanese believers without being caught by the government, partook of the Lord's Supper through the ancient and widely-practiced tea ceremony. But Naoko Frances Hioki goes one step further in her work and claims that while it may have been difficult for some to discern the doctrinal differences between Buddhism and Christianity, many Japanese Christians found partaking in the tea ceremony as part of their Eucharistic tradition enabled them to cross the bridge between Japanese culture and Christianity. The tea ceremony is described by Hioki as "focus(ing) on a small gathering in which the host lays fresh charcoal to boil water, serves a meal, then prepares powdered tea whisked with hot water. The tea is made in two forms: first, thick, in which a large amount of tea is carefully kneaded with hot water, and which the guests partake in turn from a single tea bowl; then thin, in which a smaller proportion of tea to water is deftly whisked for each individual guest" (Hioki, 128-129). Some Japanese converts and tea masters indebted their understanding of the Christian faith and community to these shared tea rituals. Justo Takayama Ukon, one such believer, was quoted as remarking that "he found *suki* (the tea service) a great help towards virtue and recollection for those who practiced it and really understood its purpose. Thus he used to say that in order to commend himself to God he would retire to that small house with a statue, and there according to the custom that he had formed he found peace and recollection in order to commend himself to God" (Hioki, 140). Hioki goes on to further comment that "Notwithstanding its origin in Zen, it was the radical inclusiveness and spiritual openness inherent in the tea ceremony that helped the Japanese Christians to advance in contemplation and find peace in the Japanese accommodation

of Christianity established in the realm of tea" (Hioki, 142). During a time in which the traditional Eucharistic meal of bread and wine would have been not only foreign but illegal in Japan, believers were nevertheless celebrating the life of Christ and the unity His death and resurrection brought the global Church through the sharing of a meal that was distinctly Japanese yet redeemed through the sharing of the Gospel.

If the sacred aspect of a communal meal and its ability to create a culturally recognized environment of remembrance and celebration were the key emphases of the first Lord's Supper, then promoting Eucharistic meals that are suited to pre-established cultural customs may better assist the advancement of the Gospel shared in cross-cultural contexts and strengthen the Anglican Church's global mission. Of course, the obvious problem with promoting a policy change in regard to the Anglican Church's stance on cross-cultural Holy Communion is that cultural customs are always changing, and oftentimes newly established traditions can hold as much weight as ancient traditions. Many Christians may fear that the allowance of Eucharistic substitutions may be taken too far, and soon any ordinary foods may be allowed at the Communion table, regardless of their historical significance or not. Gibson admits that "in the 1960's there were rumors, never confirmed in my experience, of Eucharists celebrated with Coca-Cola and potato chips. I sympathize with the distaste to which this gossip was greeted... It is true that we must find the sacred in the ordinary, but it is not true that we must confuse the ordinary and the trivial" (Gibson, 453). Perhaps the key difference in the indifferent casualty of a bag of potato chips and the honesty of an ordinary meal lies in the Eucharist's ability to transform a culture from the inside out. Pedro Arrupe defined the "interculturalization" of faith and culture as: "The incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs, and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about 'a new creation'" (Meyers, 92). Meyers goes

on to emphasize that a liturgical rite such as the Eucharist, when interculturated, “will take seriously the language, thought patterns, and ritual practices of the local culture” and stresses that such liturgy will enhance the Gospel in its dynamic expression of Christian faith intermingling with rich culture (Meyers, 93).

Potato chips may not make the cut, but this approach to the marriage of Gospel and culture brings new life to the sacrament of the Eucharist when celebrated through the breaking and sharing of everyday food—whether rice cakes, bananas, raisin water, potatoes, or any other aspect of common life that Christ’s glory can be seen working redemptive grace throughout. The tensions that Western Christians have placed on believers in other countries could be eased and transitioned into a more globally unified expression of shared faith through the practice of Eucharistic substitutes that make sense within pre-existing cultural contexts. To Christians growing up within the United States or the majority of European countries, a historical narrative of bread and wine is closely linked to both cultural and religious heritages. In some ways, Western Christians are very similar to the Jews Paul references in his first letter to the believers in Corinth: “But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23, NKJV). Just like the first century Jews, Western Christians contain the groundwork for the Gospel woven into our heritage. Understanding the significance of the Eucharist may be at first difficult for many Westerners to understand, but the foundation of the Gospel narrative is usually already present, through childhood Sunday school stories, the faith of a grandparent, or the images of the first Lord’s Supper glorified in art history textbooks and illustrated Bibles. Non-Western believers, however, could have been more closely related to Gentiles in their original state. The concept of the Eucharist would be not only a stumbling block, but pure foolishness. Without any cultural understanding of the importance of bread and wine in a religious context, celebrating the Lord’s Supper would be so far removed from their everyday lives that many might feel not only Christian but Western to observe it in the traditional sense. Eucharistic substitutes provide opportunities for the

Gospel to flourish in a myriad of cultural settings and for Christ’s death and resurrection to be celebrated not only with many tongues, but with many distinct cultures.

The Anglican Church has made progress toward a wider acceptance of the interculturated of the Lord’s Supper, but their lack of a formally stated doctrinal acceptance of this practice means that Eucharistic substitutions remain widely unpracticed and unacknowledged. However, a better understanding of how this practice is able to radically transform communities in a Gospel-oriented way will hopefully push the Anglican Church toward rewording their doctrinal statement on Holy Communion in a way that will reflect these studies and reflect the diversity of their congregations. Perhaps more theologians of other Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox churches will also take this issue to heart and examine how the sacraments of worship are expressed through different denominations in the global Church. For if the Church is not able to address and make sense of every tribe and tongue, must it not also become an aspect of life that interweaves with, instead of competing with, every conceivable people and culture?

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First-Year Writing Award Winners Coker

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Jameson Award Winners

The Jameson Critical Essay Contest awards prizes for academic essays that engage their subjects from a distinctly Christian perspective. Judges pick winners from each of the three academic divisions: Arts, Media, and Communications; Humanities and Theological Studies; and Natural and Social Sciences. The following essays received Jameson awards in 2016-2017.

Babette's Feast as Sacramental: The Eternal and the Mundane Meet

Madeleine Ruch



The literary discussion surrounding *Babette's Feast* focuses on whether the feast was transformational due to it being either symbolic of a Eucharistic feast, a work of art produced by Babette, or a combination of both elements making it transcendental. I have found, however, that through applying the theological lens of Alexander Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World*, it is evident that the feast need not be anything beyond food to instigate a sacramental experience; God chooses to inhabit the mundane in order that we might experience his transformational presence, and we can access his presence by giving thanks for the food before us. By gaining a deeper understanding of the sacramental worldview as presented in *Babette's Feast*, the actions of the everyday, such as eating a meal with others, can become for us opportunities to encounter the Lord's presence.

Babette's Feast (1950) by Isak Dinesen tells the story of a French woman named Babette, a refugee who comes to live with two Danish sisters and serves as their cook. The story culminates with a meal prepared by Babette for the sisters' pietistic community. As the elaborate meal begins, the guests, who initially refused aesthetic enjoyment, begin to experience reconciliation, both over past grievances with each other and past regrets within themselves. The transformation caused by the meal, as well as Babette's role in it, has inspired much critical scholarship, most of which falls into two camps: critics who argue that the feast is simply a product of Babette's artistic expression, and critics who claim that the feast is both an artistic expression and is symbolic of a Eucharistic feast. For example, Stephanie Branson argues that the power of the feast lies mainly in it being art. She notes that inside the

house where the meal is served "due not to religion but to art all is warm and light" (Branson 52). On the other hand, critics Ervin Beck, Laurie Brands Gagne, Alice Grossman, and Diane Tolomeo Edwards present a nuanced reading of the text that names the feast both as Babette's work of art and a type of Eucharistic meal. Beck points out that while "Babette unwittingly creates a sacramental experience," the meal "brings atonement (at-one-ment) to its participants" as occurs in the Catholic Eucharistic mass (Beck 212). Beck also acknowledges that Babette is able to give herself completely to creating the "sensory marvels of her culinary art" and that this artistic sacrifice brings the community in contact with "spiritually saving grace" through "partaking of her food" (Beck 212).

I agree with Beck, Gagne, Edwards, and Grossman that the meal is Babette's ultimate artistic expression, and also that the meal appears to be

symbolic of a Eucharistic feast. However, while Grossman and Gagne both name the meal as sacramental, they do not provide the crucial context and understanding of the sacramental worldview. What does it mean that the meal is sacramental and how did the villagers access it as such? Through Alexander Schmemmann's theological work on the importance of the world's matter, we can gain a fuller understanding of the intersection of the divine and the mundane in earthly things. In Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World* (1963), he presents the case that in embracing the entire world as a sacrament we can find true meaning in the world and access God's presence. Through this lens, Babette's feast need not be labeled as an artistic work or as a symbolic Eucharistic meal in order to be powerful; the power of the meal resides in the fact that the *whole world* is sacramental and material things are conduits through which we can experience the transforming presence of God. Babette's feast was more than symbolic: it was a manifestation of and connection with the divine in an ordinary meal. The feast ultimately reflects the transformation that occurs from the community's engagement with the "cosmic sacrament," Schmemmann's term that names the whole world as a means by which we can access the divine (Schmemmann 15).

One might question whether appropriating Schmemmann's theological worldview to *Babette's Feast* is pertinent. Schmemmann and Dinesen were not contemporaries, and therefore Dinesen could not have been aware of Schmemmann's work. At the time that Dinesen wrote *Babette's Feast*, however, she "had an enormous interest in Christian theology" (Lane 21). In fact, Dinesen conducted a few "theological dinners" at which she conversed with "a Catholic priest, a Lutheran pastor, and several other Christian church authorities" (Lane 21). It appears she never came to embrace the Christian faith, but she was seeking to understand it more fully and had certainly been exposed to Christian theology. This interest of Dinesen's in Christianity and theology opens the door to including Schmemmann's theological perspective in a discussion of *Babette's Feast*. We can see, throughout the text, that Dinesen is exploring these questions of the importance of matter. Additionally, she was eating with Christian leaders, some of whom would have

had a sacramental worldview.

Let us begin the analysis of *Babette's Feast* by considering a perspective Schmemmann presents: giving thanks for our food is a fundamental practice as humans. We, with all of humanity, have a unique opportunity to thank God for the food he gives us. In so thanking him, we acknowledge the gift that food is and live out an integral aspect of our humanness. Schmemmann writes that just as Adam was called to name things in creation, so we are called to "name a thing [a meal]" and to "bless God for it and in it" (Schmemmann 15). He further clarifies that "in the Bible to bless God is not a 'religious' or a 'cultic' act, but the very *way of life*" (Schmemmann 15). Giving thanks for food is not merely something that occurs in the church setting in the Eucharistic liturgy; it is a practice that can permeate our mundane lives. We can embrace this "*way of life*," this act of thanksgiving, as something more integrated in our everyday lives than scheduled church practices (Schmemmann 15). In *Babette's Feast*, the community begins the meal by singing a song of thanks to the Lord: "May my food my body maintain...may my soul in deed and word / give thanks for all things to the Lord" (Dinesen 48). The community is engaging with this practice of thanksgiving and in so doing is already interacting with the "cosmic sacrament" of this world (Schmemmann 15). Edwards writes that Babette transforms "everyday elements into what signifies the presence of the transcendent for others to perceive" (Edwards 426). But Schmemmann expresses that a meal can be named and given thanks for *in order* for it to become transcendent—a vehicle by which we can experience God's presence. There need not be a *transformation* of "everyday elements;" there need only be a *thanksgiving* for them (Edwards 426). The mundane things themselves can gain transcendence through our attitude towards them. Grossman almost portrays an understanding of this feast as sacramental apart from a "religious' a 'cultic' act" (Schmemmann 15). What is missing from her comment about the feast as sacramental is a discussion of *what* makes the feast sacramental. Grossman writes that "Puritans are transformed by the sacrament of food and wine" (Grossman 325). It is unclear to what Grossman attributes her view of the feast as a sacrament. While the feast can certainly be sacramental, naming it as a

sacrament oversteps the bounds of the terminology; the sacraments themselves are limited to the literal bread and wine of Eucharist. This aside, even if Grossman meant that the “food and wine” eaten by the Puritans was sacramental (not a sacrament), it still remains that she gave no insight into *how* the meal became such (Grossman 325). Is the sacramental nature of the meal a matter of chance, some mystical occurrence? In light of Schmemmann’s work, the sacramental nature of the meal was not one mystical instance. Instead, Babette’s feast serves as an example of the sacramental state at which food arrives when thanks is given for it to God.

In addition to the fact that we can access the transcendence of a meal through thanksgiving for it, the mere practice of dining with others draws us into deeper relationship and fellowship with them. Schmemmann comments that “secularism...[has] failed to transform eating into something strictly utilitarian. Food is still treated with reverence. A meal is still a rite—the last ‘natural sacrament’ of family and of friendship, of life that is more than ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’” (Schmemmann 16). Schmemmann observed that although eating is a necessary and integral part of our secular lives as humans, “To eat is still something more than to maintain bodily functions” (Schmemmann 16). The very institution of breaking bread with others has a unique bearing in our lives. Indeed, “People may not understand what that ‘something more’ is, but they nonetheless desire to celebrate it. They are still hungry and thirsty for sacramental life” (Schmemmann 16). His label of the meal as a “natural sacrament” appears to refer to its intrinsic identity as a means by which we connect to something beyond ourselves. A meal binds up in reality the things of another world—peace, grace, and true connection with others. The sacramental worldview of the meal acknowledges that matter matters and that the divine can intersect with the mundane things of our world. A meal is, if I may, a type of primitive rite. While meals are certainly not limited to a church practice, they are indeed a timeless ritual of sorts that serve to bind people together.

This idea of a meal as “the last ‘natural sacrament’ of family and of friendship” is certainly displayed in the meal Babette makes (Schmemmann 16). Through

the eating of the meal together, there is a removal of old grievances among the guests and a renewal of the bonds of friendship. Two of the women present at the meal “who had once slandered each other” returned “to those days of their early girlhood” when they had been lovely friends (Dinesen 53). They are not the only ones who experience renewal of friendship, however. Two Brothers resolved an unsettled dispute over whether the one Brother had cheated the other on timber; the one admitting to cheating his friend: “Yes, I did so, beloved Brother...I did so” (Dinesen 53). These two Brothers were, in the course of the meal, drawn back into friendship and family fellowship with one another. In this way, the meal and its sacramental nature made way for the guests to have a transcendent experience of transformation and renewal amidst their relationships with each other. “Time itself had merged into eternity” as a result of engaging in a meal that is “something more” than ordinary food (Dinesen 53, Schmemmann 16); it was ordinary food for which they gave thanks and that became for them a means by which to engage the grace of God. The guests experienced the transforming power of the “sacramental life” that enables us to interact with eternal realities that are bound up in the most mundane realities, such as a meal shared with other human beings (Schmemmann 16).

Some critics have named the reconciliation of family and friendship as evidence that the meal is Eucharistic. As previously mentioned, Ervin Beck holds that the meal “brings atonement (at-one-ment) to its participants” due to the fact that “Babette unwittingly creates a sacramental experience” that mirrors the Catholic Eucharistic mass (Beck 212). Indeed, the meal serves as a means of transformation for the characters; as they engage with the sacramental meal, they are certainly brought into greater unity with each other. I find Beck’s perspective on the nature of the meal to be too narrow, however. He argues that “Many details contribute to seeing Babette’s feast as a commemoration of the Last Supper” and that the “Berlevaag food becomes the actual body (wafer) and blood (wine of Christ), according to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation” (Beck 212). While the feast is certainly a sacramental meal that restores wholeness,

the reason it is such is because the *entire world*—and therefore food itself—is “the ‘sacrament’ of God’s presence” (Schmemmann 15). Likening the meal to a Last Supper communion meal, and even going so far as to argue that transubstantiation occurs at the meal, presents a forced sacramental understanding. Food need not be literal transubstantiated bread and wine to have transcendent import. In addition, the meal need not even be purely religious in order to be sacramental. According to Schmemmann, our world, and the things of this world, gain their meaning when we view them as the “‘sacrament’ of God’s presence,” a conduit through which we can experience the presence of God (Schmemmann 15). While a connection can certainly be drawn between the feast Babette makes and the Last Supper, so can a connection be drawn between every meal and the Last Supper. Meals represent engagement both with the world as a “cosmic sacrament” and as “the ‘matter’” and “material of one all-embracing eucharist” (Schmemmann 15). If the world is indeed composed of the “material of one all-embracing eucharist,” then we have access to the presence of God whenever we engage in anything earthly (Schmemmann 15). The food needn’t be transubstantiated for God to use it to transform the villagers. The power of the specific sacrament of communion should assuredly not be diminished—in the bread and wine of communion God’s real presence dwells in a unique way—but Schmemmann extends this bridging of the eternal and the mundane to all the ordinary food we eat. This what the villagers experienced at Babette’s feast. In the story, the guests remarked that at the Wedding at Cana “grace had chosen to manifest itself there, in the very wine” (Dinesen 48); perhaps unbeknownst to them, this appearance of grace also occurred at the meal in which they were partaking.

As outlined above, Babette’s feast becomes a sacramental reality for the villagers when they give thanks to God for it, and the feast has transformational power due to the eternal bound up in the mundane food. But what role did Babette play in this transformation? Did she draw the guests into this sacramental experience through some action of her own? Edwards asserts that Babette “functions as artist and priest, transforming everyday elements into

what signifies the presence of the transcendent for others” (Edwards 426). Within this understanding, it is the “creativity and grace that operate together” to “renew those who sit at the table” (Edwards 426). I would argue that while Babette is drawing the people into a transcendent experience by making the meal, she does not transform the elements of the meal (as was addressed earlier on) and it is not the “creativity and grace” that bring about the transformation of the participants. Rather it is in experiencing the *very presence of God* bound up in the earthly realities of the food Babette makes that the villagers are renewed.

Just as Schmemmann makes a case for the entire world “created as the ‘matter,’ the material of one all-embracing eucharist” he also asserts that therefore “man was created as the priest of this cosmic sacrament” (Schmemmann 15). All of humanity—indeed, perhaps, the “priesthood of all believers”—has access to the presence of God through Christ, access enabled by the Great High Priest’s sacrifice once and for all (*English Standard Version Bible*, 1 Peter 2.9). All of humanity can emulate Christ’s mediation between us and God as we draw people into the presence of God, where we now have full access. We can act as mediators of the “cosmic sacrament” to those who do not know God (Schmemmann 15). In this way, Babette does act as a sort of priest, but only in that she serves to draw the villagers into the presence of God by making the food through which they can experience the sacramental. She acts as a priest in the way that Schmemmann names: as a minister of the presence of God by her impartation of a piece of the “cosmic sacrament”—the food she makes for them (Schmemmann 15). According to Schmemmann, each one of us has potential to draw people into an experience of the sacramental. Thus Babette, who had been known to turn a “dinner...into a kind of love affair...in which one no longer distinguishes between bodily and spiritual appetite or satiety,” can draw people into experiencing the sacramental in an ordinary meal. The story of *Babette’s Feast* shows that God chooses to make himself accessible to us in the mundane and that someone like Babette can be a minister of this reality to others—even if unintentionally.

I would concur with Edwards, as well as Gagne, Gossman, and Branson, that Babette is an artist

who produces a magnum opus in her creation of the meal. Gagne is also right in naming the feast as “one of those events which...transcend the artist’s intention” (Gagne 232). Branson argues that the grace present at the meal “is the generosity of the artist Babette, not an abstract principle of religion,” which attributes the entirety of the transformation to Babette’s art (Branson 51). The fact that the meal is a work of art does not adequately explain the influence of it, however. The true power of the art form, however, is in the fact that when Babette creates she is modeling the Creator God. She is living out an intrinsic part of our human nature—the act of creating. In fulfilling her vocation as a creator, an artist, Babette creates something that bridges our world and eternity. Through Babette’s creation of beautiful, delectable food, she draws the community into the presence of God at the meal, and to a place of greater connection to the eternal. I do concur with Grossman when she writes that “Babette triumphs in the exercise of her art and enables her guests to achieve communion with each other,” but Grossman leaves her comment entirely unresolved (Grossman 326). Attributing the renewal of the guests’ friendships to Babette’s “exercise of her art” and to the guests “eating and drinking in what they regard as the proper spirit” leaves the event as an unclear and miraculous occurrence, as does Branson’s argument for art’s power (Grossman 326). How does such a transformation occur merely in response to a work of art? While it certainly could have been miraculous, it need not be entirely mysterious. We can assuredly claim that what the guests experienced in the art of the feast, produced by Babette, was the actual presence of God in their midst. It was the presence of God that brought about the transformation and the binding together of their community. Babette’s culinary artwork of the feast tapped into an otherworldly reality beyond her intention or ability, and became a conduit through which transformation was experienced by the dinner guests. This transcendent element must be in part attributed to the fact that, in creating the meal, Babette emulated her Creator God.

In the same way that Babette modelled her Creator God by working in her art medium—food—so Dinesen herself modelled her Creator by

working in her art medium—the written word. By employing words, Dinesen did exactly what Babette did when she made the feast: she created something beautiful through which the presence of God could be experienced by others. In Dinesen’s case, she did not, to our knowledge, do so wittingly. But such is the power unleashed when God uses the beautiful things of this world! God, seeking to connect with us, makes himself present in these works of art and uses them as a conduit through which to reach his people. Dinesen provided us with this text, this art piece, that serves to bridge for us the eternal and the mundane. She draws us into, as Babette did the dinner guests, a transcendental experience through which we can come closer to the presence of God. So may we, in our various forms of creating, strive to create conduits through which others can experience the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

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There is Power in Blood: Towards a Eucharistic Interpretation of Ivan Ilyich's Paradoxical Death and Life

Brady Woods



According to a certain interpretation of Heidegger, relying solely on his reference to Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, there is no possibility for a religious authentic being-towards-death. In this paper, I seek to refute this position through a reconsideration and reinterpretation of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Namely, I present five interrelated textual insights demonstrating the sacramental authenticity of Ilyich's being-towards death, and use Jean-Luc Marion's Eucharistic phenomenology to weave these threads together to show one way a religious person may possess authentic being-towards-death.

In this paper, I argue for an optimistic interpretation of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* which intersects with the phenomenological theology of Jean-Luc Marion, from which it can be suggested that living to die well must involve accepting the "excessive" gift of the sacramental presence of Christ. To do so, I first summarize the significance of this text for Heidegger's account of authentic and inauthentic being-towards-death in *Being and Time*. Significantly, *Being and Time* excludes the possibility of the

religiosity of Ivan Ilyich's, or any, authentic death. To show this wrong, I will present several textual arguments to show that Ivan Ilyich's authentic death is not only religious, but arises from sacramental presence. I will then present an interpretation of the text from the standpoint of Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of Eucharist. Finally, I will draw some conclusions about the question of how to die well from *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.¹

¹ From the outset, it may be objected that literary analysis does not allow one to arrive at the truth, that in order to arrive at truth one ought to bracket out literature, art, and other "emotional" enterprises and instead pursue "objective" philosophy. This objection is significant, but I do not here have the space to adequately consider it, and intend to come back to it as the subject of another paper. However, at this stage I may at least minimally attempt answer how in the face of this critique this project possible, and what its aim is, though undoubtedly in an unsatisfactory manner. It seems the retreat of philosophy into method from art and literature has, in fact, cut off much of its access to truth. Gadamer, in contrast with the scientism of much of contemporary philosophy, insists that "the experience of art is the most insistent admonition to scientific consciousness to acknowledge its own limits" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, esp. xxiii). And in the rest of *Truth and Method*, he argues that the methodological approach is not the only approach to truth. This project rests on the project of philosophers as practitioners-of-dying, seeking wisdom in art and literature, as well as philosophical texts. In fact, as may be seen in the next section as I begin the consideration of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, the realms of literature and philosophy are much more porous than may initially be thought. As such, this analysis is not only possible, it may even be likely to point towards wisdom, though it will certainly not reveal truth in its totality or with a high degree of certitude.

**THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF AUTHENTIC
RELIGIOUS DEATH: IVAN ILYICH AND BEING
AND TIME**

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger questions the meaning of Being.² In Division I, he explores Dasein (entities “who have an understanding of Being”; the word is translated literally as “being there.”) and existence, but without an account of authentic existence: the “way of Being in which Dasein is truly itself . . . liv[ing] with clarity and integrity.”³ As such, he turns to the question of authenticity. Significant for Dasein is the being-towards death, as it gives Dasein its individuality and possibility: “what makes my life my own is ultimately the sheer fact that it is mine to live, mine to make something of, in the face of my possible non-existence.”⁴ In fact, contra Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*, death “is the basic certainty of Dasein itself . . .”⁵ Authenticity responds to the certainty of one’s own death by accepting and living in light of it.⁶ In contrast, inauthentic being-towards-death is a “falling prey” characterized by “temptation, tranquillization (sic), and estrangement,” which veil from oneself one’s own imminent death: “. . . death is understood as an indeterminate . . . which right now is *not yet objectively present* for oneself, and is thus no threat.”⁷ In this analysis, Heidegger references *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.

In the inauthenticity of the everyday approach to one’s being-towards-death, the “they”⁸ hide death’s reality, and thus the possibility of approach to an authentic being-towards-death, from Dasein. While discussing the social inconvenience of death

for the they, Heidegger has the following footnote: “L.N. Tolstoi hat in seiner Erzählung ‘Der Tod des Iwan Iljitsch’ das Phänomen der Erschütterung und des Zusammenbruchs dieses ‘man stirbt’ dargestellt.”⁹ Crucially, this may be translated into English in two different ways. The first translation emphasizes its application to the public: “In his story ‘The Death of Ivan Ilyitch’ Leo Tolstoi has presented the phenomenon of the disruption and breakdown of having ‘someone die’”¹⁰ Second, it may also be translated as Stambaugh renders it: “L.N. Tolstoi (sic) in his story ‘The Death of Ivan Ilyitch’ has portrayed the phenomenon of the disruption and collapse of this ‘one dies.’”¹¹ This translation emphasizes Ivan Ilyich’s conversion from inauthenticity to authenticity.

The first translation holds to an extent but does not encompass Heidegger’s full meaning. Heidegger is using the text to illustrate inauthenticity of the public. This is most clear in the first chapter of the novella, where it is revealed just how much the public covers over the reality of death. The first response to the news occurs when his former colleagues immediately began wondering about the impact on their positions. At the funeral, his wife only uses the occasion to make sure of her financial position, and Pyotr Ivanovich, one of Ivan Ilyich’s closest friends “Never once [looked] at the dead man or succumb[ed] to depression, and he was one of the first to leave” and then proceeded to play cards.¹² Under this interpretation, Heidegger is identifying that inauthentic submission to the they-self is manifested whenever the word “propriety” appears, whether implicitly or explicitly: this is the “social

² Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein Und Zeit*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996. For an excellent introduction to both this text and the works of the later Heidegger, see Richard Polt’s *Heidegger: An Introduction*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.

³ Polt, *Heidegger*, 29-31, 85.

⁴ *Ibid.* 87. See also Heidegger, *Being and Time*, esp. 232.

⁵ Polt 87.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 235 and 234, respectively.

⁸ Heidegger uses the “they” to refer to one dominating an other’s care. See Heidegger 114. One may here think of Kierkegaard’s concept of the mob or public as being analogous. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Crowd Is Untruth* [Place of publication not identified]: Merchant Books, 2014 and *The Present Age: On the Death of Rebellion*, Translated by Alexander Dru, New York: Harper Perennial, 2010.

⁹ Bernasconi 76, citing *Being and Time* 235 n. 12.

¹⁰ Bernasconi 76, citing a translation by Macquarrie and Robinson.

¹¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 235 n. 12

¹² Tolstoy, Leo. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Translated by Lynn Solotaroff. New York: Bantam Dell, 2004. 32, 36-41.

inconvenience, if not . . . downright tactlessness, from which publicness should be spared.”¹³ The reality of one’s own imminent death is, like the funeral service, simply a nuisance to “the so-called friends of Ivan Ilyich . . .”¹⁴ Clearly, the text shows the reality of the covering-over of death by the public in its inauthentic everydayness. However, the first translation of the footnote is inadequate because it hides what Heidegger was primarily doing here. The second footnote is closer to the German. Further, like he does with a fable in an earlier section, Heidegger uses the text to show his account to be existentially based: “. . . to show that there was a prior ontico-existential basis for this ontological interpretation.”¹⁵ Thus, Heidegger interprets the story as a gradual shattering of inauthentic being-towards-death and a dawning into the light of authenticity.

Why is this literary example significant? As Heidegger must show that there was a prior “ontico-existential basis for [his] ontological interpretation,”¹⁶ so he needs similar confirmation here to show that his entire argument concerning being-towards-death is not arbitrary. Therefore, as Bernasconi notes, a religious/Christian interpretation of the ending of the text would undo Heidegger’s reasoning in *Being in Time* for the character of authentic being-toward-death. This is because the only case shielding him from the charge of arbitrariness is *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, and, as Bernasconi interprets him, a religious death would mean that Ivan Ilyich’s inauthenticity is not ultimately shattered.¹⁷ However, Bernasconi thinks that *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is flexible enough to account for a non-religious reading.¹⁸ I disagree. In the remainder of this paper, I will show how *the Death of Ivan Ilyich*’s structure and content is unavoidably Christian, and how it offers support

to a possible interpretation using the Eucharistic phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion.

LOVE AND SACRAMENT: THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYICH INTERPRETED AS CHRISTIAN MYSTICAL DEATH

In this section, I argue that the Heideggerian interpretation of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is subverted by the text’s religiosity. Specifically, the text itself is directed by and towards Christianity. To argue for this interpretation, I will analyze five distinct yet interrelated textual arguments. First, the use of time and eternity of the text suggests a religious interpretation. Second, the text’s structural use of lightness and darkness will be shown to convey the ending’s religious meaning, and further that the journey of the text is parallel to Christian mystical accounts. Third, the presence of Gerasim, a religious believer who is authentically being-towards-his-death, suggests a religious interpretation. Fourth, the description of Ivan Ilyich’s final state suggests a religious interpretation. Finally, the placement of the Eucharist in the text emphasizes sacrament, profoundly suggesting Christ’s Eucharistic presence. This final argument will allow an interpretation of the text based on the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion, showing that it is Christ’s invisible presence in the novella who moves Ivan Ilyich from darkness into light.¹⁹

(1) The usage of time and eternity, both in the content and structure of the text, suggests its religiosity. Early on the text, a seemingly trite detail of Ivan Ilyich’s wardrobe has significant symbolic meaning: “When he graduated from law school . . . [he] hung a medallion inscribed *respice finem* on

¹³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 235.

¹⁴ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 33.

¹⁵ Bernasconi, Robert. “Literary Attestation in Philosophy: Heidegger’s Footnote on Tolstoy’s ‘The Death of Ivan Ilyich.’” Chapter in *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993. 76-98. 80, 87-88.

¹⁶ Bernasconi, “Literary Attestation,” 87.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85. See also Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 230, 286.

¹⁸ Bernasconi, “Literary Attestation,” 96-7.

¹⁹ Note that in the following is not based on the claim that Tolstoy intended for the text to be read in an orthodox Christian manner. In fact, it seems clear that he did not intend for the text to be read in this manner: “Jesus is represented [in Tolstoy’s *The Gospel in Brief*] as a human being who happened . . . to be much more closely in touch with God’s will for human life and behavior than the ordinary person. Thus Jesus is, in Tolstoy’s account of him, not a deity . . .” (Gary R. Jahn, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich: An Interpretation*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993, 89). Nonetheless, I argue that, contra the author’s intent, the text *considered in itself* should be read in this way.

his watch chain . . .”²⁰ *Respice finem* means “consider the end.”²¹ Time is viewed as being segmented and subservient, which is reinforced by watches. The public “share a desire to give life an ordered and controlled appearance . . .”²² Throughout the novella, this controlled, public time reinforces inauthentic propriety: e.g., when Ivan Ilyich’s daughter uses the time to leave Ivan, and thus the consideration of the imminence of her own death: “it’s time we left,” she said, glancing at her watch. . . .”²³ In contrast, Ivan develops a different valuing and experiencing of time by the end.²⁴ In fact, it becomes apparent from the structure of the text and its content, that the shattering of time occurs in a move to eternity: Ivan’s available time shrinks until the moment becomes eternity.²⁵ This entering into the unchanging eternity from diminishing time is structurally suggested by the novella; as the plot progresses, the chapters shorten.²⁶ The text thus accelerates, until in the last moment it freezes and encompasses all, eternally.²⁷ Finally, the timeline of the final events is significantly symbolic of Christ and the Trinity. Ivan’s death takes place over three days (“three days . . . in the heart of the earth”), and the hour before his death somehow consists of three hours (three-in-one): “. . . an hour before his death . . . for those present, his agony continued for another two hours [and thus, three hours total].”²⁸ This conveys the participation of Ivan Ilyich in Christ, and the connection of the Trinity and Ivan Ilyich’s death. All of this provides a strong defense of the religious and Christian meaning of the text.

(2) The usage of darkness and light in the text is

religious. The text symbolically presents the reader with darkness as untruth, and two kinds of light: the false, superficial light and the true light.²⁹ The text structurally moves from false lights into darkness, and from darkness into the true light. The false lights, indicated linguistically in Russian and symbolically, include: Ivan’s position as judge, the doctors, Ivan’s marriage, Ivan’s family, daylight, and whist.³⁰ These things have the form of light, but in fact “have no spiritual content, no inner light . . .”³¹ Pain draws Ivan into darkness, into the realization of the false lights’ falsity. This is reinforced by the text’s use of dark imagery, e.g., the “black bag” dream.³² Yet Ivan’s perspective shifts:

Day becomes night; life becomes death. . . .
darkness takes on new meaning for Ivan. . . .
darkness initially stands for all that is false about
Ivan’s life; he eventually comes to see the value of
the darkness as a guide to the true light . . .³³

The shifting of his perspective allows him to see darkness as being an apophatic approach to true light. There are three true lights which he “flies” towards: “his servant Gerasim, his childhood, and the light at the end of the black bag”: the light at the end.³⁴ The change allows Ivan’s “External form [to be] filled with spiritual content . . . Gerasim’s view of death is taken to heart and from figurative childhood Ivan progresses (regresses) to spiritual rebirth.”³⁵ As the former two true lights (Gerasim and Ivan Ilyich’s childhood) are ontologically real, it seems to be highly likely that the final true light really is True

²⁰ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 44-5.

²¹ Verno, Michael. “Exact Times and Watches in Leo Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.” *The Explicator*, 67, no. 2 (2009): 123-125. 123.

²² *Ibid.*, 124.

²³ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 97. See also Verno, “Exact Times,” 125.

²⁴ Verno, “Exact Times,” 124.

²⁵ Jahn, *The Death of Ivan Ilich*, 96-7.

²⁶ Jahn, Gary R. *Tolstoy’s the Death of Ivan Il’ich: A Critical Companion*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1999. 25-26.

²⁷ See Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 113.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 111-13. See also Mt. 12.40b, NRSV.

²⁹ Danaher, David S. “Tolstoy’s Use of Light and Dark Imagery in *The Death of Ivan Il’ich*.” *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 39, no. 2 (1995): 227-240. 227.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 228-31. Some of the linguistic subtleties appear to have been lost in the translation into English.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 229

³² Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 99.

³³ Danaher, “Tolstoy’s Use of Light and Dark Imagery,” 234.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

Light: the Truth. Further, the relation of this pattern of false light to darkness, darkness to true light is indicative of a kind of Christian mysticism.

For some Christian mystics, literal darkness begins to lead one into the spiritual light of the realization of God's presence.³⁶ To know God, one must first take the path of "unknowing" in the deconstructionist mode of theology.³⁷ In a similar way to the mystics, Ivan Ilyich must come to unknow what he 'knows'. This comes in two profound, interconnected moments. The first, after he partakes of the sacraments and speaks with his wife, and her appearance "said to him: '*Not the real thing*. Everything you lived by and still live by is a lie, a deception that blinds you from the reality of life and death.'"³⁸ At this moment, he is plunged into darkness and unknowing. All that he 'knew' was a lie holding him in inauthentic being-towards-death. In Russian, there is wordplay that indicates that "Not only was his life "wrong"; it was not life at all . . . not life, but death."³⁹ This unknowing finally breaks, after an intense struggle, he is finally in a place where he can see the truth, and true knowing sets in: "Instead of death there was light. 'So that's it!' he exclaimed. 'What bliss!'"⁴⁰

(3) Gerasim further confirms the religiosity of the text. As stated in the last section, he is described as a true light to Ivan Ilyich. Further, he is one of the only other characters in the novel who approaches death authentically, as he admits the possibility of his own death, stating: "We all have to die someday."⁴¹ As Ivan Ilyich realises, "Gerasim was the only one who did not lie; everything he did showed that he

alone understood what was happening . . ."⁴² Even Bernasconi concedes Gerasim's authenticity, though he attempts to brush it off.⁴³ It is not insignificant, therefore, that Gerasim is introduced as a believer in divinity: "It's God's will, sir."⁴⁴ The fact that Gerasim, a religious believer, is clearly existing in authentic being-towards-death, indicates the falsity of the Heideggerian viewpoint. This point will become significant later in this paper, for Gerasim serves an even deeper purpose in the novella: "Gerasim is a sacramental presence who enters into communion with Ilyich, freeing Ilyich to do the further work of dying."⁴⁵

(4) The textual details of Ivan Ilyich's death and funeral explicitly support the religious reading of the text. The way that the One Ivan is rectifying to is described in a pronoun: "knowing that He who needed to understand would understand."⁴⁶ This is anything but ambiguous; the text practically forces the reality of God onto the reader. The encounter which Ivan Ilyich has with the Divine Light has a transforming effect even on his corpse: "his face had acquired an expression of greater beauty—above all, of greater significance—than it had in life."⁴⁷ In the face of this evidence, it seems clear that the text is unambiguously religious. Now I may turn and consider the Eucharist's place in the text.

(5) In the light of the above, I can interpret the Eucharist's place in the text.⁴⁸ At the end of chapter eleven, at his wife's encouragement, he does confession and receives the Host. As he does so, he is thinking of his possibility of being cured of his "caecum", saying "I want to live, to live!"⁴⁹ Initially, the

³⁶ St. Julian of Norwich. *Showings*. Translated by Edmund Colledge, and James Walsh. New York: Paulist Press, 1978. 128: "After this my sight began to fail, and it was all dark around me in the room, dark as night, except that there was ordinary light trained upon the image of the cross . . ."

³⁷ Turner, Denys. *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 19.

³⁸ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 110.

³⁹ Jahn, *Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilyich: A Critical Companion*, 204.

⁴⁰ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 113.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴³ Bernasconi, "Literary Attestation," 91.

⁴⁴ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 41.

⁴⁵ Brungardt, Gerard. "Teaching The Death of Ivan Ilyich: A Guide to Introducing Tolstoy's Classic". *Journal of Palliative Medicine*. 12, no. 8 (2009): 679-682. 680.

⁴⁶ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 113. Emphasis my own.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁸ Note that this fifth argument is dependent upon the others; without them, this point is ambiguous.

⁴⁹ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 109-10.

scene appears inauthentic because of his distraction and his plunging shortly thereafter into a new weight of pain and three days of screaming.⁵⁰ However, a careful reading in light of the arguments above shows that the Eucharist has an effect on him. First, the “I want to live, to live!” of chapter eleven is rhetorically repeated in the beginning of chapter twelve: “I don’t want it! I don’t!”⁵¹ Recall from above that this time symbolically references the time in which Christ is in the grave. Combined with the inversion of death and life that occurs at the end of the text, this may be seen as Ivan’s internal struggle: he wants life, but does not want the life which is given in death. The Eucharistic moment is what propelled him forward, launching him into the darkness from which he will finally see the Absolute Light. In the end, he is finally able to love, but only after partaking of the sacrament.⁵² He required grace to love, one might say. Finally, the understanding of Christ’s Presence as being in the Host, and the subsequent participation of Ivan in Christ’s death and resurrection, hints that it is *because* of the sacrament that he can participate. “In his brokenness and utter humility, Ilyich is now able to receive—in the sacraments of confession and communion—the grace necessary for the resolution of his spiritual suffering, his chief torment.”⁵³ This allows the interpretation of the text using the Eucharistic phenomenology found in Jean-Luc Marion.

EUCCHARISTIC GIFT: MARION’S PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE LIFE AND DEATH OF IVAN ILYICH

In this section, for the purpose of coming to an

increased understanding of the life and death (or, more properly, the life-in-death and death-in-life) of Ivan Ilyich, I will turn to the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion. First, I will offer a necessary introduction to his phenomenology. Second, I will articulate his Eucharistic phenomenology and theology. Finally, this will enable relating it to the text and drawing some conclusions.

Jean-Luc Marion is a French phenomenologist, and a significant figure in the so-called ‘theological turn’ of phenomenology. He is fundamentally concerned with givenness: “he wants to dissolve any conditions of possibility for the appearing of an object to appear . . . [he takes it] that an object is given to consciousness . . . is the *primary* aspect of phenomenology.”⁵⁴ Key to the understanding of Marion is his concept of saturated phenomena: “phenomena where ‘intuition always submerges the expectation of the intention,’ and where ‘givenness not only entirely envelops manifestation but, surpassing it, modifies its common characteristics.’”⁵⁵ Saturated phenomena are powerful in that they transform Da-sein from active to passive receiver in their excessiveness.⁵⁶

Key to any understanding of Jean-Luc Marion is his Christology and sacramental theology. In order to avoid the charge of onto-theo-logy levelled by earlier phenomenologists, (such as Heidegger) against theology as an ontological project, Marion works to show that his theology is imaging rather than idolatry.⁵⁷ In contrast with onto-theo-logy, Marion presents God without being, who discloses Godself to us. Christ is simultaneously saturating phenomenon, gift, and giver *par excellence*.⁵⁸ The Eucharist is a substantial site where this occurs.⁵⁹

⁵⁰ Ibid., 110-11.

⁵¹ Ibid., 111.

⁵² Ibid., 112.

⁵³ Brungardt, “Teaching The Death of Ivan Ilyich,” 681.

⁵⁴ Simmons, J. Aaron and Bruce Ellis Benson. *The New Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 63.

⁵⁵ Horner, Robyn. *Jean-Luc Marion: A Theo-Logical Introduction*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co, 2005. 123.

⁵⁶ Rivera, Joseph. 2012. “*Corpus Mysticum* and Religious Experience: Henry, Lacoste and Marion”. *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. 14, no. 3: 327-349. 341.

⁵⁷ See Heidegger, Martin. “The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics.” In *The Religious*. Edited by John D. Caputo. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. 67-75.

⁵⁸ Marion, *Being Given*, 238-39; Rivera, “*Corpus Mysticum*,” 342; and Simmons and Benson, *The New Phenomenology*, 150.

⁵⁹ Horner, *Jean-Luc Marion*, 72 and Rivera, “*Corpus Mysticum*,” 343.

This self-giving saturating phenomenon is external to any consideration of subjectivity, even belief.⁶⁰ The Eucharistic gift gives one identity, hope, remembrance of Christ, and even the possibility of understanding the gift (the gift proceeds understanding).⁶¹

This analysis allows an interpretation of the significance of Eucharistic presence in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*.⁶² In his participation in the Eucharist, I remarked earlier how Ivan Ilyich seemed inauthentic. In a sense, he was. Yet the externality of Christ present in the Sacrament, like Gerasim, had a transformative effect, despite Ivan's lack of authenticity and distraction.⁶³ Though he thought he was hoping for a return to life through medicine, his cry for life reveals a deeper desire that the sacrament in love is able to manifest: a desire for *real*, eternal life. The Eucharist plunges him into his final darkness, his last unknowing, baptizing him in shadow for the dawning of the Light of lights.⁶⁴ The presence of Christ discloses to him—him as the passive *me*, and not the active *I*—that what came before was not real, but the eternal bliss into which he is plunged. And the *Ānanda*, the Bliss, as David Bentley Hart notes is true of most Classical Theist traditions, is God.⁶⁵ This gives him, in the end, a greater significance in 'death' than he had in 'life'.⁶⁶ Ivan Ilyich did not 'live' his life well, because he did not live.⁶⁷ But in the end, Mercy is waiting for him. In sum: the Gift and Giver is God, saturating Ivan's life-of-death. In God's saturation, Ivan realizes an absolute paradox of Christianity: life is death and death is life.

LIVING TO DIE WELL: SOME CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, after considering the possibility of the permeability of literature and philosophy, I considered the significance of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* for Bernasconi's interpretation of the Heideggerian

claim of religion's inauthentic being-towards-death. I found that, in fact, this novella subverts Heidegger's analysis, destabilizing his account of death. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* not only disclosed the possibility of authentic religious being-towards-death, but also the need for sacramental presence for an authentic being-towards-death. Using the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion allowed me to philosophically confirm and expound these literary insights. How, then, does this text address the question of how to live so as to die well?

Of course, as I am working from and in literature, none of this should be taken as necessarily certain (there has been no demonstrable proof of these claims). However, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* does suggest some *possible* answers. To philosophers, it suggests that, insofar as philosophy is the preparation-for-one's-own-death as in the *Phaedo*, cannot rely on itself alone. In fact, the gift which offers one the authentic being-towards-death and good death must be accepted *before* it is understood. On this account, the Kierkegaardian 'knight of faith' is, to a degree, vindicated. Yet, unlike Kierkegaard, this faith is not grounded subjectively. Though there is a leap of faith, this leap itself only occurs from a gift, and is a leap contingent on an external reality; as Marion shows, it is a leap based on and into Christ's Presence as Christ presents Himself in the Paschal Mystery. In the reality of Christ's Eucharistic presence, life is made death and death is made life. To die well is to partake of the Saturating Gift of the Body and the Blood.

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⁶⁰ Rivera, "Corpus Mysticum," 343 and Purcell, Michael Purcell, "Sacramental Signification and Ecclesial Exteriority: Derrida and Marion on Sign," *Studia Phaenomenologica*. 9, no. 1 (2009): 115-133. 118.

⁶¹ Rivera, "Corpus Mysticum," 343-44 and Purcell, "Sacramental Signification and Ecclesial Exteriority," 121.

⁶² Note that Eucharistic presence is not limited to Ivan Ilyich's participation in the sacrament; it includes all of the true lights he encounters, especially Gerasim, who as noted above is himself a Sacramental presence.

⁶³ See (3), above.

⁶⁴ See (2), above.

⁶⁵ Hart, David Bentley. *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2013. 238-92.

⁶⁶ Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 35. See also (4), above.

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The Womanist Christology of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point"

Krista Johnson



While scholars have applied feminist lenses and have considered a Christian framework in relation to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," critics have yet to apply either a consciously womanist analysis nor an analysis through the lens of a specific branch of Christian theology. A womanist Christological analysis of the poem reveals that the protagonist experiences metaphorical crucifixion in the beginning of the poem, has an afterlife experience, and is "resurrected" in a way that accords with the spirituality of historical black American women in slavery. The analysis demonstrates the importance of considering intersectional interpretive frameworks when evaluating appropriation and empowerment issues in literature.

In 1847, Victorian English writer Elizabeth Barrett Browning published the poem "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point." The poem features a black woman slave in the United States who runs away and then narrates the painful events of her life to the slave hunters who are chasing her. She falls in love with a fellow slave, who is inexplicably killed by slave masters. She is then raped by a gang of white men and bears a child, whom she subsequently smothers to death. At the end of the poem, before she is stoned to death by the slave hunters who have followed her, the protagonist dramatically calls for justice for her people. Throughout the poem, she seeks to understand her suffering in light of a supposedly kind Father God and a suffering Christ.

Scholarly criticism of "The Runaway Slave" is in general scant, though patterns across this criticism merit attention. Four contemporary critics of the poem have taken up an expressly feminist (read: white

women-dominant) lens (Battles; Brown; Ficke; Stone "Between Ethics and Anguish"). Others have written from a feminist perspective while also addressing the prominent Christian elements of the poem (Brophy; Cooper; Miller; Parry). However, the poem has yet to be analyzed from a consciously womanist perspective, nor has the poem been investigated through the lens of a specific branch of Christian theology. The application of a womanist theological lens to "The Runaway Slave" is woefully long past due, especially given that the protagonist is a black, Christian woman.

With the lens of womanist Christology, this essay will address the issue of when the protagonist's metaphorical crucifixion occurs. Existing published writing on the poem that likens the woman to Jesus in all cases places the time of the woman's crucifixion at the end of the poem, when she is stoned to death by her attackers (Brophy 279-80; Cooper 121; Miller

643). However, I argue that womanist theology must dialogue with the poem before a comprehensive picture of the poem's theological landscape can be drawn. The writings of womanist theologian Jacquelyn Grant offer contextually-relevant insight. Grant writes of the nature of slave women's suffering, asserting that "[Jesus'] suffering culminated in the crucifixion. Black women slaves' crucifixion included rape, and babies being sold" (Grant 212). Because of the additional suffering black women experienced by bearing oppression-receiving identities in both gender and race, black women slaves experienced a heightened share of suffering. In other words, if Grant's statement about the nature of slave women's suffering is correct for "The Runaway Slave," then the protagonist's "crucifixion" does not occur when she is killed in the end of the poem, but in the middle of the poem, when she is raped by a gang of slave owners. Another work by Barrett Browning, the epic novel *Aurora Leigh*, also features a woman who is the victim of rape. Linda Lewis likens the character Marian Erle's sexual assault to death (Lewis 65), but a similar application to the rape of "The Runaway Slave" protagonist has yet to be made.

From a womanist theological point of reference using Grant's observation as its basis, this paper will first outline how the protagonist of Barrett Browning's poem experiences a metaphorical crucifixion. Secondly, a demonstration of how the infanticide portion of the poem is akin to an afterlife experience in a hellish heaven. Last, I will demonstrate that before the woman is physically killed at the end of the poem, she comes alive again in articulating a vision of justice, resurrecting from the metaphorical crucifixion that occurred through sexual assault in the beginning of the poem.

1. CRUCIFIXION

In his 1973 article "Theodicy: The Controlling Category for Black Theology," influential philosopher and theologian William R. Jones writes that a main theological characteristic of "black suffering" is its "maldistribution" (qtd. in Brown Crawford xii). People do not all experience an equal amount of suffering, and black people suffer disproportionately. Barrett Browning seems to account for this

maldistribution of suffering in including sexual assault in the poem's plot. A well-read abolitionist, Barrett Browning would have known that black women in slavery experienced such atrocities as frequent rape justified by their legal status as property (Stone "A Heretic Believer" 30). As Helen Cooper writes on the historical background related to "The Runaway Slave," raping slave women was for slave masters a means of magnification, or "dramati[zation] of ownership of the slaves' bodies" (116). By inserting the "excessive" act of rape into the poem's plotline, Barrett Browning accurately writes the protagonist's story within the context of maldistributed suffering. This maldistribution is what undergirds Grant's comparison between rape at the hand of slave masters and crucifixion.

Beyond including a historically-accurate plot item that reflects the excesses experienced by the fictional protagonist's real-life counterparts, further, Barrett Browning accounts for the excess by depicting the protagonist struggling under the weight of this maldistributed suffering. The protagonist considers having been sexually assaulted shortly after her lover is killed. The woman reflects: "Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong! / Mere grief's too good for such as I" (99-100). Rape was a "deeper wrong" following what was already "wrong." The protagonist's racist, patriarchal society believes that merely experiencing "grief," a mental sort suffering, is "too good" for her. Precisely because she is a black woman, she deserves to suffer to a degree above and beyond what would otherwise be appropriate. Importantly, the biblical crucifixion narrative owes some of its power to the excessive and disproportionate way in which it appears Jesus is killed. After experiencing her lover killed without explanation, Barrett Browning's protagonist through the sexual assault experiences a further suffering—a suffering that, due to its excessive nature, falls squarely within the historical context that leads Grant to compare the suffering of slave women to crucifixion.

2. HELLISH WHITE SUPREMACIST HEAVEN

Second, after experiencing a "crucifying" sexual assault, in logical order the protagonist's narrative continues into a metaphorical afterlife. Spanning

stanzas XXVI through XXVIII, this middle section of the poem contains the most shock factor: a mother smothers her infant child as he struggles for breath and dies.

In response to Barrett Browning's decision to include such disturbing violence as infanticide in the poem, critics assume a variety of positions. Sarah Brophy criticizes Barrett Browning's decision to 'kill off' the baby from the poem. For eliminating the child which represents the main conflict of the story suggests that Barrett Browning has given up on the possibility that a woman could ever fulfill the role, in this case a motherly role, she wants to (Brophy 277). While it is possible that Barrett Browning's choice to eliminate the child from the story conveniently serves the poem's plot, Grant's theology illumines an alternate view of including the infanticide. Within Grant's theological framework, it is impossible for the infanticide to constitute the protagonist's pursuit of the path of least resistance -- her attempt to live an easier life. For if the rape is a "crucifixion," then by the time she commits the infanticide, the protagonist has no life left; metaphorically, she has been crucified and is dead. Cooper's reading of the poem affirms the infanticide's existence in an ambiguous no-man's land where no amount of resistance can alter the woman protagonist's circumstances. Cooper writes that "Though horrible, this infanticide becomes, within the terms of the poem, tragically grand and inevitable, the logical conclusion to the slave's situation" (119). Similarly, Susan Brown writes, "horrifying as the infanticide may be, it is part of a larger pattern of violence initiated by the white 'hunter sons' of the pilgrims" (130). The nature of the woman's oppression made the infanticide a natural manifestation of her circumstances. Fittingly, this impenetrable, otherworldly space in which the protagonist's life experience must take its due effect appears in the text as an afterlife.

Specifically, this controversial infanticide portion of the poem appears as an experience in a hellish heaven. The text indeed reflects both the anguish of hell and the angelic beings associated with heaven. The description of the process of killing the child spans five stanzas (XVIII-XXII). From the tedious narration of the child's "moan[ing]" and "beat[ing] with his head and feet" in its struggle for breath (124,

127), to the woman's twisting the baby's head around in her shawl afterward (146-47), the five stanzas are graphically painful in a way akin to the prolonged suffering of hell.

Additionally, the infanticide narrative as it continues in stanzas XXIII through XXVIII is sprinkled with references to the heavenly beings "God" and "angels." Throughout the infanticide, the woman believes herself to be victimized by white angels. Addressing God, or perhaps her attackers, she states, "Your fine white angels . . . plucked my fruit to make them wine,/ And sucked the soul of that child of mine" (157-160). She did not kill her child, she says; the angels of a white supremacist god took him for their own pleasure. The protagonist did not have the power to make her son live. The same white supremacist ideology that shaped the woman's circumstances leading up to the infanticide is the same ideology which would make it impossible for this mother and son to live as they should. In this hellish heaven, the woman can only experience the effects of systematic oppression. Within a Christological framework, crucifixion is necessarily followed by a murky period in which the weight of unadulterated death can sit. The protagonist's afterlife infanticide certainly centralizes death, and appropriately the event is both heavy and alarming.

3. RESURRECTION

According to this womanist Christological reading, the protagonist two-thirds of the way into the poem has experienced both a "crucifixion" through sexual assault and a hellish heaven afterlife marked by infanticide. The ending section of the poem, occurring in stanzas XIX through XXXV after the infanticide but before she is stoned to death in the last stanza, appears as a "resurrection" experience for the woman whom sexual assault has rendered metaphorically crucified.

As mentioned earlier, previous scholarly criticism of "The Runaway Slave" locates the woman's "crucifixion" at the end of the poem. Admittedly, the woman's physical death at the end of the poem and her monologue which precedes it are undeniably crucifical. She addresses her hunters in the forest at exact spot where she had been previously tied to

a flogging post. She is murdered by people with no justification for wanting her life. And just as Jesus refuses to curse his mockers, asking God the Father to forgive them, the woman in the second-to-last line of the poem declares, “White men, I leave you all curse-free” (352-353). Given the protagonist’s move to compare the suffering slaves to the suffering Jesus in stanzas XXXIV and XXXV, in addition to the multi-faceted Christian expressions present in Barrett Browning’s other work (Mermin 70), these parallels are likely intentional. The author’s intentions related to the location of the protagonist’s crucifixion need not negate the womanist theological possibilities of the poem, however. This reality is attested by the corpus of feminist and critical race theory analysis of texts written far before the writers of those texts would have recognized either feminism or critical race theory. Notwithstanding Barrett Browning’s designs over the Christian narrative of the poem, she follows the protagonist’s crucifical sexual assault experience and hellish heaven infanticide with a “resurrection.”

The nature of the “resurrection” experience Barrett Browning gives her protagonist accords with historical womanist theology. Specifically, the protagonist’s resurrection aligns with what womanist theologian A. Elaine Brown Crawford has demonstrated was a mode of empowerment typical for historical black American women in slavery. Knowledge of these historical patterns is crucial to recognizing the resurrecting quality of the end of the poem. Brown Crawford examines the limited existing evidence of what the spiritual lives of black women slaves looked like. She draws from the accounts of four women: Mary Prince, Old Elizabeth, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Jacobs. Brown Crawford concludes that the hope of black women in slavery was grounded in the possibility of justice in life on earth. For example, after narrating how her master expressed that she owed him complete deference, Harriet Jacobs wrote, “[t]he war of my life had begun; and though one of God’s most powerless creatures, I resolved never to be conquered” (qtd. in Brown Crawford 40). Rather than living a life of passive hope, Jacobs sought to live a life of resistance as best she could. As Brown Crawford articulates of slave women in general: “slave women did not

just talk about the possibilities for their lives and communities—they pursued [sic] the possibilities” (40). They were most comforted by their belief that their incarnational God would make wrongs right in the here-and-now. Further, since black women slaves’ voices were systematically silenced, simply having an opportunity to articulate this vision empowered them (Brown Crawford 102).

The protagonist of “The Runaway Slave” exercises this same life-giving vision of justice, which Brown Crawford calls “passion for the possible,” at the end of the poem. After commanding the slave hunters to abandon their stones and reminding them that it was in their so-called “free America” where she was bound and flogged, the woman dramatically addresses fellow slaves. She proclaims, “From these sands/ Up to the mountains, lift your hands,/ O slaves, and end what I begun!” (229-231). The woman calls other slaves to speak as boldly as she has spoken and to act as she has acted to end slavery. At this point in the narrative, the woman is standing in the middle of the forest and is surrounded by white men, one of whom holds a stone in his hand. She must know that her death is imminent. And yet rather than fixing her gaze on a suffering-free, justice-saturated life after death, the woman crescendoes on her appeal for her fellow slaves to fight for justice now.

As simply expressing “passion for the possible” would have constituted empowerment in the protagonist’s historical context, the protagonist in calling for slaves to fight for justice is operating in hope for life—even though she personally will not experience it. No longer in a hellish heaven afterlife, the protagonist is for a short time allowed to dwell once again in the land of the living, hoping for what may take place there. Jesus spent a brief time in his resurrected state before being “taken up” bodily into the sky. Likewise, Barrett Browning’s protagonist spends a brief time in a resurrected state before being bodily taken off through physical death in the last stanza. Perhaps unintentionally, Barrett Browning gives her protagonist a life-giving “resurrection” experience that aligns with the spiritual lives of real black women in slavery.

In the last stanza of “The Runaway Slave,” the slave hunters kill the protagonist by stoning her. As she is dying, she states:

I am floated along, as if I should die
 Of liberty's exquisite pain—
 In the name of the white child, waiting for me
 In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
 White men, I leave you all curse-free
 In my broken heart's disdain! (346-353)

Death for the woman brings “liberty,” and its pain is “exquisite,” so death brings some good. She leaves her attackers “curse-free”; the woman must feel some peace. However, readers gather that entering the afterlife does not bring the woman full satisfaction. She refers to the afterlife with the ambiguous metaphor “death-dark.” Her heart is “broken,” and it is full of “disdain.” Death is beneficial, and yet all is still not right. In line with the present-rooted “passion for the possible” described by Brown Crawford, the protagonist’s ambiguous attitude toward her own death in the last stanza firstly suggests that nullifying what happens on earth and experiencing justice only in the afterlife is not as liberating as it may seem.

A reading of “A Runaway Slave” based on Grant’s insights on crucifixion and slavery also bears implications for discussion of appropriation of voice in literature. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was an upper-middle class white woman who spent most of her life in England. Despite being a well-read abolitionist and probably having black heritage two or three generations removed, she naturally would have had limited knowledge of what empowerment looked like in the everyday realities of black American women in slavery. And yet in “The Runaway Slave,” Barrett Browning writes what Grant’s womanist Christology would identify as the protagonist’s “crucifixion,” follows the tragic experience with what is strikingly reminiscent of an afterlife, and then empowers the protagonist with the opportunity to articulate a counter-cultural vision of justice in a way that is culturally native to black women in slavery. The protagonist of this poem may be more empowered than what previous criticism acknowledges. While this paper does not address how the author’s intentions may or may not affect the potential of the poem to empower real black women, nor does it attempt to evaluate to what degree parallels that may appear between a fictional

account and historical accounts can empower real black women, what should be clear is that without respecting the intersectional identities of characters in literature by using interpretive frameworks from those perspectives—in this case from a Christian, black, woman’s, and womanist perspective, a conversation about how empowered a character is will be inevitably disinforming.

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A Christian Perspective on the Responsibility to Protect

Caleb Jenkins



The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is an international legal norm that reinterprets state sovereignty to offer justification for humanitarian interventions, and its practical and ethical implications have been analyzed by scholars like Alex J. Bellamy, Gareth Evans, and Mohamed Sahnoun. This paper evaluates R2P in light of a Christian worldview and concludes that it is consistent with a biblical view of humanity, sin, the role of the state and violence, but one should be wary of any salvific notions that it will end all atrocities. This argument contributes to the discourse because although much has been written about Christianity and Just War or pacifism, even less is written about the Christian ethics of military intervention, and hardly anything integrating a conceptual understanding of relevant international norms.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is an international norm which offers a new framework for thinking about humanitarian interventions. It rearticulates state sovereignty to include the responsibility to protect the people within its borders. Thus, if the state fails to protect its people from crimes against humanity, then the international community has the right to take on this protective responsibility. Intervention would override the principle of non-intervention because the state had abdicated a part of its sovereignty by failing to protect.¹ Until recently, this framework held widespread consensus, but now it experiences criticism because of perceived abuses of R2P by Western countries and the framework's inability to accomplish its intended goals. This paper

will address a Christian perspective on R2P, in light of its perceived strengths and weaknesses.

II. NATURE OF R2P

1. Background

R2P was developed by the Canadian-sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001, after a decade containing many high profile intervention mishaps. They include both poorly executed interventions, like Somalia, and failures to intervene at all, like Rwanda. Additionally, the controversy of legitimacy surrounding NATO's Kosovo intervention in 1999 demonstrated the lack of a normative, coherent framework for international interventions.² This context led to R2P's formulation. The felt need for a new humanitarian intervention

¹ "The Responsibility to Protect," XI.

² Evans and Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect."

paradigm led to its unanimous acceptance by the UN General Assembly in 2005.³

Supporting this framework are two principles. First, state sovereignty necessitates responsibility, and the primary responsibility is to protect its people. This shifts the definition of sovereignty from a Westphalian concept of absolute authority by creating limits to its power. Second, when the state fails in its responsibility to protect its people (more on the specifics later) then the international responsibility to protect trumps the individual state's right to noninterference.⁴

However, the R2P framework is broader than mere military intervention. It entails three elements of that responsibility: to prevent, to react, and to rebuild. First, the responsibility to prevent entails the international community working towards a world where conflict does not happen in the first place.⁵ The report identifies that this is done by addressing political needs, contributing to economic development, and strengthening legal institutions.⁶ Second, the responsibility to react includes having to the will to act when conflict arises through political, economic, humanitarian, and if necessary, military means (more on the process of justifying armed action later).⁷ Third, the responsibility to rebuild means that the international community, after a situation of conflict, must seek peace, justice, and reconciliation so that future violence does not happen.⁸

Despite this, when R2P is talked about, it is most often referring to military interventions. There are six tests which a situation must pass in order for intervention to be considered legitimate by R2P, which are derived from the 'Just War' tradition.⁹ These are the just cause threshold, four different

precautionary principles, and right authority.¹⁰ First, the just cause threshold requires that a situation either include the large loss of life or ethnic cleansing. These both could result from either the state's direction action or negligence. Additionally, even if the cleansing or loss of life has not occurred yet, there is still just cause if it is clearly imminent.¹¹ The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document makes this more specific by identifying four crimes that would meet the threshold. These are genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.¹²

Once the threshold is met, four precautionary principles evaluate whether military intervention would be right. The first is right intention. This is not to say that a state must not have any vested interest in the outcome, but rather that the primary driver must be the well-being of the targeted population. Second, last resort must be established by exhausting nonmilitary options. Third, means must be used that are appropriately proportional to the situation. Fourth, there must be reasonable prospects of success. In other words, intervention should not have a more disastrous effect than inaction.¹³

After this, right authority must be established to legitimize military action. It is important to realize that R2P does not offer any new legal duties, but rather is a framework for utilizing ones that already exist.¹⁴ This is primarily done through the Security Council, as the already established means in the UN. Securing their approval is important so that there is a world order based on established norms.¹⁵ In the case that the Security Council is unable to give approval, there is the possibility for a special session of the UN General Assembly, as already established under the 'Uniting for Peace' procedure. If the UN still cannot grant authority, the ICISS report is mute on exactly

³ Bellamy, *The Responsibility to Protect*, 1.

⁴ "The Responsibility to Protect," XI.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹ Evans and Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect."

¹⁰ "The Responsibility to Protect," XII.

¹¹ Evans and Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect."

¹² Bellamy, *The Responsibility to Protect*, 15.

¹³ "The Responsibility to Protect," 35–38.

¹⁴ Amstutz, *International Ethics*, 188.

¹⁵ "The Responsibility to Protect," 47–52.

what should be done. It does, however, leave us with the ethical dilemma and emphasized the importance of the UN getting interventions right.¹⁶

2. *Positives and Negatives of R2P*

The biggest positive that R2P has is that it is a framework that works in our already conceptualized world of nation-states and international law.¹⁷ The crimes it addresses and means it utilizes already exist in UN international law. It contributes a coherent, normative framework for assessing interventions. Another positive is that its rearticulation of sovereignty as responsibility places a healthy limit on absolute sovereignty. Furthermore, it is a framework that broadens the scope of traditional intervention to include prevention by strengthening institutions.¹⁸

However, R2P is not without faults and criticisms. The largest problem is that R2P lacks the effective mechanism for judiciously authorizing lethal force to protect civilians everywhere. This results from the nature of the international system being composed of nation-states which primarily seek to advance their own interest. From this point, two additional criticisms are derived.

First, many claim that it only seeks to advance a Western agenda, and will be selectively applied by the stronger nations against the weaker.¹⁹ The NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 is an example of this. Although initially justified by R2P, during the course of the incursion, regime change was added to the mission's objective. This is not a viable purpose under R2P, and it appears the framework was coopted to achieve Western goals. Additionally, the result of the intervention was leaving Libya in a mess. The goal of R2P is to save civilian lives, but military action caused many more deaths than would have otherwise occurred.²⁰

Second, a broader criticism is that R2P is unable

to accomplish its intended goals. This is evidenced by the fact that it has done little to change state behavior. The failures to prevent atrocities in Darfur and Syria reinforce this idea. States will always be primarily motivated by national interest, and thus thinking that the international community will altruistically work towards ending violence is naïve.²¹ A different strain in the same argument is that R2P fails because it does little to address the systemic and ideological causes of violence because it focuses too much on the nation-state.²² After an initial analysis, it is clear that R2P promises much, but has yet to deliver. However, before evaluating R2P with a Christian worldview, it is imperative to examine relevant biblical norms.

III. RELEVANT BIBLICAL NORMS

Since the Bible is not a manual for international relations, one must distill universal moral and ethical principles before making a direct pronouncement on an issue. There are four biblical principles that undergird any Christian perspective on R2P which I wish to highlight. They are: 1) the dignity of each human person, 2) the depravity of humanity, 3) the role and limits of state sovereignty, and 4) the validity of violence to prevent greater evil.

1. *Human Dignity*

The Bible teaches that every individual human person hold dignity. This is root in the truth that every person, male and female, is created in the image of God.²³ One of the most direct implications of this is that every person's life is from God, and to arbitrarily take life opposes God. He commands Noah after the flood that "whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."²⁴ The witness of scripture confirms to us that God considers violating human dignity

¹⁶ Ibid., 53–56.

¹⁷ Bellamy, *The Responsibility to Protect*, 15–16.

¹⁸ Evans and Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect."

¹⁹ Reed, *Theology for International Law*, 178–179.

²⁰ Amstutz, *International Ethics*, 190–192.

²¹ Bellamy, *The Responsibility to Protect*, 93–101.

²² Ibid., 102–103.

²³ Genesis 1:26, English Standard Version.

²⁴ Genesis 9:1

a great offense. He is moved by the “devastation of the afflicted” and “the groaning of the needy.”²⁵ The prophets are filled with commands calling out God’s people for not caring for the oppressed. For example, Isaiah tells Israel to “learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless,” and to “plead the widow’s cause.”²⁶

2. Human Depravity

Since the fall, humanity experiences a broken, fallen nature. Since we are totally depraved and are unable on our own power to perform perfectly right actions, dignity is trampled on. Thus, we see the killing fields of Rwanda. Humans can, and do, make righteous choices, but these are only by God’s grace and they will not occur all the time. This is evident throughout scripture, but is stated most clearly in Romans. Here Paul says that “None is righteous, no, not one.”²⁷ In the passage that follows, he references six different Old Testament passages (Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-4; 36:1; 140:3; Isaiah 59:7-8) to bolster his claim. The entire biblical account does this to emphasize that only God through Christ is able to save humanity from their sins. Moreover, it is not only the relationship between humanity and God that was damaged at the fall, but also the one between humans.²⁸ Because of this, no human institution will be able to end sin, but common grace does allow restraints to occur.

3. The Role of the State

The state serves the God-ordained purpose of restraining sin, and its authority is limited by God. Government as organized authority, however, is not a result of the fall. Adam and Eve were charged to

‘have dominion’ over the earth, and we as Christians will rule with Christ in his final kingdom.²⁹ In our current fallen world, the state is an instrument of God’s common grace to establish justice and order to temper the effects of sin. Paul describes their role when he says that the state is “not a terror to good conduct, but to bad” by being “an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.”³⁰ Peter affirms this, saying that rulers are “sent by (God) to punish those who do evil.”³¹

However, it is not unchecked rule. The Bible teaches that the state, like all authority, derives its power from God. Paul makes this very clear when he says that “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”³² Furthermore, we are to “be subject for the Lord’s sake.”³³ Since the authority is from God, those in authority are held to his standards. Christians can and should disobey when the government goes directly against what God. Additionally, The Bible shows God disposes of unjust regimes, often by using other humans. For example, God used Cyrus “his anointed” to remove the Babylonians from power so that the Jews can return to Israel.³⁴ Despite this, the church does not have the mandate to take up the sword to enforce what they perceive to be God’s will. The church is to preach the gospel and submit to those in authority.

4. Violence as a Lesser Evil

It is my argument that the Bible condones the use of violence to prevent and punish evil. This is a point of controversy as some Christians hold that the nonviolent personal ethic of Jesus ought to be applied to governments as well. I do maintain that

²⁵ Psalm 12:5.

²⁶ Isaiah 1:17.

²⁷ Romans 3:10.

²⁸ Genesis 3:12, 16.

²⁹ Genesis 1:28; Revelation 20:4.

³⁰ Romans 13:3; 5.

³¹ 1 Peter 2:14.

³² Romans 13:1.

³³ 1 Peter 2:13.

³⁴ Isaiah 45:1; Ezra 1:2.

Jesus calls the church and every Christian as a part of their discipleship to be “peacemakers.”³⁵ However, as Reinhold Niebuhr argues, we cannot equate the Gospel only with the law of love. He contends that we cannot take a personal ethic of love and apply it directly to state policy.³⁶

Furthermore, the whole counsel of scripture, when taken together, permits military action by the state. The previous three biblical norms discussed here support this conclusion. The violation of human dignity in a fallen world and the God-ordained role of the state to bear the sword to punish evildoers allows for violence as last resort. One can isolate a few verses to construct Christian pacifism, but that does not factor in the view of war throughout the Bible.

IV. A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON R2P

On the basis of these biblical principles, a Christian perspective on R2P is optimism for the possible good that this framework can accomplish, but skepticism of any salvific notion that it will end human atrocities. This is largely the conclusion reached by the Vatican and the World Council of Churches in their statements between 2003 and 2008. They initially expressed enthusiastic acceptance of the norm, but as time wore on they expressed more caution.³⁷ My conclusion is nuanced from theirs in the following way. If we think of R2P as a framework that ought to end violent atrocities in our time, it has failed. However, if we rightfully think about it as a helpful framework which can serve to reduce, albeit imperfectly, the amount of atrocities, it is more acceptable through a Christian worldview.

As far as the foundations of R2P go, there are three primary points of connection with biblical norms. First, the disgust against systematic violence is grounded in an appreciation of human dignity. The driving force behind the formation of R2P was the horror at the atrocities committed in modern times

and the inability of the international community to address it.³⁸ Second, framing the responsibility to protect as an integral part of sovereignty is compatible with the biblical charge for states existing to punish the evildoer. Absolute sovereignty and nonintervention has its roots more in Westphalia than the Bible. Third, the recognition that military force can be used as a lesser evil to prevent and end atrocities coexists with a Christian view of violence.

Through a scholarly international relations lens, many of R2P’s critiques are unfounded. The charge that the nation-state system is the problem is antithetical to thoughtful political science discourse. In the current world order, this is the way that authority and legitimacy must be established.³⁹ Also, claims that R2P merely advances a Western agenda are refuted by knowing that it was unanimously passed as a norm in the UN, and many non-Western NGOs support and advocate for the norm.⁴⁰ The accusations of a double-standard in R2P should rather be levied at state actors as opposed to the principle itself. Furthermore, a moral foreign policy has to be pursued in conversation with practical interests and outcomes.⁴¹ An example of this is the current crisis in Syria. Due to practical considerations, it is likely that any Western intervention will produce more suffering than it would desire to alleviate.

Despite these positives, I claim that a Christian worldview cautions us against any notion that R2P can end all atrocities. I agree with Esther Reed’s conclusion that “a questioning response from the churches to (R2P)... is warranted.”⁴² States will always first be driven by national interest, and that is permissible because it is their role to primarily protect their own people. Additionally, in our fallen world, even our supposed selfless actions can easily disguise darker motives. We ought to strive and push our governments towards implementing a more just society, but always realizing that this will not be

³⁵ Matthew 5:9.

³⁶ Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist,” 301–303.

³⁷ Reed, *Theology for International Law*, 172–181.

³⁸ Bellamy, *The Responsibility to Protect*, 18–39.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 113–114.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 136–137.

⁴² Reed, *Theology for International Law*, 215.

realized in its fullness till Christ returns.

V. CONCLUSION

R2P provides a coherent and normative framework for working towards the reduction of violent atrocities in our world. It is far from perfect, largely because of the lack of effective mechanisms for its judicious implementation. However, it does present an ideal to strive towards. The principles behind this norm are compatible with Christian views of human dignity, the role of the state, and acceptable uses of violence to restrain evil. However, the presence and reality of sin pushes Christians to cautiously question any salvific notions we might have about the effectiveness of R2P.

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The Christian Response to Globalization: Work and Dispossession for the Sake of Another

Casey Balikian



The market-driven economy has increased human flourishing in the western world but it is also coincident with outrageous levels of global wealth inequality; scholars have long wondered if this trade-off is inevitable. I suggest that it is not, and that Christians should not be surprised that governmental mechanisms meant to prevent or combat this inequality are unable to create a viable solution. Throughout the Bible, the responsibility to care for the poor and oppressed is consistently assigned to the Church because a sustainable solution will only come through Christians who are willing and able to creatively and radically use their wealth for the benefit of others.

THE ISSUE WITH GLOBALIZATION

Markets are the primary drivers of globalization. The modern western ethos of competitively seeking progress and development came as a side-effect of the Enlightenment and gave rise to the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. Since then, western society has never looked back—for better or for worse. Resulting processes have taken us to previously unimaginable medical, financial, mobile, and communicative heights, but these same processes have also created more than their fair share of issues in the globalized world.

Maddison's depiction of the Great Divergence (Figure 1) uses estimations of GDP per person before and after the middle of the 18th century to illustrate the biggest issue that a global economy must contend with. Although there are some questions about the exactness of Maddison's data, there is an undeniable departure of western countries from the rest of the world which is anything but insignificant. Data from the World Bank in 2015 corroborates this story as

it recorded GDP per person in the United States at \$56,115.70; that same measurement in Brazil yielded a result of \$8,538.60, and in Ethiopia it was \$619.20 per person per year.

There is clearly a serious issue here, but I want to be very specific about what that issue is and what it is not. The issue is not that western societies have developed and implemented systems and institutions which generate great wealth. Instead, the problem is that economic growth has overly stratified the world's population by elevating an elite upper class and leaving others behind. Many of those who had average welfare before industrialization got stuck on the outside of the revolution and are now trapped in horrendous relative poverty. To make matters worse, not only are these people excluded from the benefits of globalization, but most of their contact with the progress of the western world has been on the same level as a pack-mule's contact with precious cargo.

Despite Christians' explicit call to care for the poor and oppressed (c.f. e.g. Matthew 19:16-30; Luke 4:18-19, 12:13-34, 16:19-31; 1 John 3:16-18), we have

not yet formulated an adequate approach for doing so considering the challenges of globalization.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

On the face of the matter, there are two potential approaches we could take: we could either advocate to get rid of the free market structure which stoked these social stratifications, or we can attempt to mitigate the detriments of the market without losing its benefits in the process. It should be noted that there are some remnant Marx disciples who advocate for the former option due to their conviction that an inequality-breeding market economy should be replaced by a model of full redistribution. However, most modern economists support a market-driven economy because they recognize that a certain degree of wealth inequality is both healthy and necessary in promoting maximum human flourishing through innovations and inventions.¹

A simple example is helpful in illustrating this point: Nancy is an engineer who just created the first washing machine ever. For her to sell her innovation to a buyer, the buyer must be willing to pay \$ δ for it. When there is a willing and able buyer, the result is a pareto optimal transaction (a transaction after which neither party is worse-off) wherein wealth inequality is created; assuming both parties entered the transaction with equal wealth, Nancy is now \$ $\delta \times 2$ wealthier than the buyer. In this market-driven economy, it is expected that Nancy and other innovators would end up wealthier than most of their peers—this relatively moderate inequality is evidence of a healthy economy with full participation. On the other hand, if full redistribution were mandated, there would be no incentive for Nancy to produce a washing machine in the first place because the personal benefit for her would not exceed the personal sacrifice of learning and applying engineering to a new problem, marketing her innovation, etc.² In this alternative economy, there would be no innovations or inventions and total

human flourishing would suffer.

The question, then, is this: do innovations and inventions contribute so greatly to human well-being that they are worth risking the criminal levels of inequality that can (and do) arise when members of the global community are excluded from or used by the global economy? The difficult answer is yes for the following reasons: It is hard to demonize advanced health care technology considering drastically improved health outcomes world-wide. Additionally, advanced transportation and communication systems present obvious benefits to a world where people, cultures, and institutions across the globe are connected. Finally, agricultural technology allows farmers to grow crops more efficiently, providing more food for an ever-growing world population. Without markets and market-driven globalization, these things could not have come into existence and prominence on a world-wide, and human flourishing would have been infinitesimal comparatively.

I have argued that working with market-driven economies is the best way to promote flourishing for the impoverished and oppressed world-wide. Consequently, Christians need to take seriously the task of coming up with creative ways to mitigate the extraordinary level of wealth inequality that exists in the world.

ONE SUGGESTION FOR CHANGE: PULLING THE POLITICAL LEVER

Empirical studies corroborate the idea that the free market economy is effective in this regard: “poverty reduction can be achieved by means of closer economic integration and higher levels of globalization.”³ However, M.D. Litonjua is uncomfortable with positing further globalization as a viable cure for its own ailments. Instead, he leans on Gutierrez’s preferential option for the poor to advocate for what he calls “pro-poor economic growth,” a type of economic expansion “that is promoted by specific public policies geared towards

¹ The terms “innovation” and “invention” are used here in the same way the Joel Mokyr uses them in his book *The Lever of Riches*. Innovation is perfecting or creatively applying an invention (e.g. the steam engine is an invention, the locomotive is an innovation). Inventions benefit society significantly more than they benefit the inventor.

² An important assumption is made in the economic theory that is applied here: people are not altruistic. This assumption is active in the entire corpus of accepted economic theory, and is therefore accepted here without hesitation.

³ Andreas Bergh, Therese Nilsson. 2014. “Is Globalization Reducing Absolute Poverty?” *World Development*. 62: 56.

the common good, most especially toward the welfare of the vulnerable, the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized of society.”⁴ His proposal and others like it tend to be posited by liberation theologians and usually lack specificity about the policies which could stimulate this type of expansion, but it can be deduced that Litonjua is referring to some sort of global wealth redistribution for the benefit of the “bottom billion.”

Litonjua advocates for global wealth redistribution because he recognizes that the local solution of national wealth redistribution is not only crippling to the prospect of innovation and invention as discussed above, but it is repulsive to wealth generating corporations. Any single government which raises taxes and wage rates to engage in sovereign wealth distribution will lose a significant portion of its wealth generation corpus.⁵ This is due to the fact that corporations can circumvent the actions of a single political unit without skipping a beat by becoming multinational, leaving that sovereignty as a whole worse-off. Sovereign inequality may decrease in the original country as a result of these policies, but this would not be due to a rising lower-class; it would be due to the relocation of the more competitive, higher-earning industries, resulting in the fall of the upper- and middle-classes. Furthermore, the same inequality problems which were unacceptable in the original country would inevitably arise in the next country. So in this scenario, while it may be true that there is less inequality in the original country, there is also less human flourishing world-wide—this is not a viable option. If redistribution is to be a viable proposition, it must be done in the way that Litonjua insists, in unanimous global solidarity with the poor.

This type of global movement—which would insist that every sovereign nation should agree to enact policies of global wealth redistribution—would likely prevent the corporate circumvention

described above. However, it is economically and anthropologically naïve to suggest that the result would be a net increase in human flourishing. First, the global economy that this type of governance would produce perfectly resembles the second economic situation that Nancy faced above; it would be disastrous to the prospect of entrepreneurial innovation and invention. There would be a reduction in world inequality, but it would happen via a fall of the upper- and middle-classes rather than via a rise of the lower-class.

Second, it is a naïve view of human nature to suggest that solidarity with the poor will triumph over the pursuit of wealth in every democratic nation, let alone those nations with corrupt governances. Even the political processes in “non-corrupt” democratic nations are infused and controlled by special interests with money derived from the market economy, and in other countries corruption is both known and expected. Even if humanitarianism were to somehow win the day and all of these governments agreed to redistribute wealth, there would still be a sizeable problem in those countries which do not have enough wealth to contribute to the process in any kind of a meaningful way. Then, world leaders would be faced with a decision: they be forced to either transform the country into a state which produces enough wealth to support itself, or to simply provide aid indefinitely. Neither of these are good options. Hernando de Soto, in his book *The Mystery of Capital*, outlines what types of reforms it would take to transform a “dead” economy’s institutions into those which are conducive to sustained growth—the process would look more like a neo-colonial western takeover than economic empowerment.⁶ Furthermore, as Novak and Cooper point out, “handouts to improve economic conditions [would] have to be continued indefinitely if the beneficiaries are not to relapse into their original state of poverty.”⁷ This would create a state of dependency

⁴ M.D. Litonjua. 2013. “International Development Economics and the Ethics of the Preferential Option for the Poor”. *Journal of Third World Studies*. 30 (1): 99.

⁵ The United States could be used as a pseudo-natural experiment which corroborates this point. Corporate tax rates, as well as tax rates for the upper class, have risen in recent decades. The result of these policies is increased outsourcing by some of the biggest wealth generators (e.g. auto makers moving from Detroit).

⁶ The process would get even more difficult if one was dealing with a corrupt government system.

⁷ Michael Novak, John W. Cooper, *The Corporation: A Theological Inquiry* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1981), 88.

in the foreign country which is an unsustainable solution to poverty.⁸

It is important for me to make a brief comment here: some might argue that anything which brings people out of extreme poverty is a desirable result and that the only reason I refuse to accept it is because I live among the upper-middle class in one of the richest countries in the world. I stand to benefit the most from a booming American economy and from non-redistributive public policy, and some would argue that this subconsciously affects my conclusion. Therefore, it might be said that I am simply encouraging Christians to act in a way that keeps me on my comfortable pedestal while not empathizing with the millions who are suffering around the globe.

While it is true that everyone's experience factors into their opinions, I fundamentally refuse to concede that the best course of action to alleviate global poverty is to fund the poor out of the clutches of death and into what we might call "acceptable poverty" through redistribution policies. The only redeeming characteristic of this form of poverty alleviation is that it is more immediate than what I will propose (and only barely more immediate!). In this paper, I insist that if our goal as Christians is to sustainably maximize human flourishing for the impoverished and the oppressed, then we must be willing to think past the immediate and focus on the end goal. The end goal is to *eliminate* death-inducing poverty forever, not *manage* it indefinitely and hope that nothing goes wrong. There are those who are in the grips of extreme poverty who simply cannot accept this concept and I understand why, but I think theirs is an equally experience-based, relatively self-interested view of history. I truly believe that we can win the war on global poverty if we are willing to be creative and radically selfless, but an army general must regretfully acknowledge that there will be

casualties in any successful battle plan. That said, we must begin to act immediately so that this intolerable interim is as short as possible.

After considering all this, I arrive at the disheartening conclusion that political forces, no matter how unified and committed to humanitarian purposes, are powerless to create an acceptable and sustainable solution to the issue of wealth inequality presented by the current state of globalization. I contend, therefore, that political policies are not the primary medium through which Christians should attempt to fulfil their biblical call to care for the poor.⁹

THE BIBLICAL MODEL

Upon examination of the biblical witness, we find corroboration of this point. In both the Old and New Testaments the role of the government is described as protecting and promoting. Generosity, or poverty alleviation, falls exclusively under the responsibilities of the Church.

Romans 13:4 states that governments exist for our good, and Jim Wallis defines "our good" as "the common good." "So," Wallis argues, "the purpose of government, according to Paul, is to protect and promote."¹⁰ Similar arguments are made from Psalm 72 and Jeremiah 22. Both passages contribute to the theme that a king's role in the Old Testament, and therefore the contemporary government's role, is to "defend the cause of the poor and the needy" (Jeremiah 22:16) or "defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy" (Psalm 72:4). It should be noted that none of these passages even hint at the idea of poverty relief in the form of wealth or money. Instead, it seems that the government exists, as Wallis says, to protect the rights of the poor and to promote justice, not to combat wealth inequality.¹¹

⁸ One problem among many with this solution comes when the supporting countries go through something like the Great Depression or the Great Recession. While the supporting countries struggle to support themselves, the supported countries face a crisis that they are not prepared to deal with by themselves.

⁹ There is certainly a place for Christian politicians in the world and I do not mean to discourage Christian political participation. I merely mean to communicate that the battle against poverty is better fought on another front.

¹⁰ Jim Wallis. "Caring for the Poor is Government's Biblical Role." Sojourners. May 06, 2015. Accessed March 02, 2017. <https://sojo.net/articles/caring-poor-governments-biblical-role>.

¹¹ Promoting justice and peace is important part of alleviating the suffering of the poor. While it is not the topic of this paper, government is certainly an area where Christians need to ensure that justice is served for the marginalized. No amount of government intervention will sustainably lift the poor from their poverty (defined as a lack of wealth or a low standard of living), but this does not mean that Christian politicians have no role to play in the process.

So, is there anything in the Bible that assigns mitigation of wealth inequality to the government? Leviticus 25 outlines a national decree for Israelites that they are to observe something called the Jubilee Year once every 50 years. The essence of Jubilee was that it gave households a chance to redeem any land which had been lost over the preceding half century. Two things should be noted, the mechanics of the situation and the purpose of the situation. In regards to the mechanics of the situation, the Jubilee Year was not a giveaway program; Leviticus 25:14-16 and 25-28 explicitly discuss how families who desire to redeem their land ought to pay a fair price set by a non-exploitative seller. Furthermore, concerning the purpose of Jubilee, in verse 23 the Lord states that “the land must not be sold permanently, because the land is [his] and [the Israelites] reside in [his] land as foreigners and strangers.” It is apparent that Jubilee is not meant to be a land/wealth redistribution program at all. Instead, it meant as a reminder that possessions are on divine lease from God, and it is a reminder that is well taken. Jubilee was not as much about rectifying inequality as it was about reminding those who lived and worked on the land that material possessions are given to us for faithful stewardship; they ought never to be held tightly because everything belongs to the Lord.

The Church, understanding that their wealth comes from God, is called to care for the poor so many times that it is almost redundant. Christopher M. Hays, in a well-written piece about how the mission of the church overlaps with provision for the poor in the modern world, begins with what he calls the “*relatively simple*” task of showing that most New Testament authors understood care for the needy to be basic to the mission of the disciples of Jesus.¹² Hays continues to outline numerous points in Scripture before he ends with the following sentences in conclusion:

following Christ cannot be separated from caring for the poor... for those who see value in the

canonical shape of the New Testament, who want to allow the voices of the New Testament texts collectively to shape our thought, to define in fully-orbed terms what is our mission as the people of God, there can be no doubt that aiding the vulnerable ought to comprise a central element of our activity.¹³

But how ought the church accomplish this mission if not through political processes? The answer that I will propose in the next section requires one more biblical foundation to be laid, namely that Christians are not discouraged from gaining wealth. In fact, “the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were all affluent.”¹⁴ This does not mean that all good followers of Jesus must be wealthy (cf. Mark 10:17-27), but it does mean that a follower of Christ cannot be demonized merely for the fact that she has wealth or that she participates in wealth generating processes like the market economy. “Wealth is good; greed, on the other hand, is not,”¹⁵ and especially western Christians need to learn how to live faithfully in that balance if we ever want to see a sustainable solution to global inequality come to fruition.

MY PROPOSAL: WORK AND DISPOSSESSION FOR THE SAKE OF ANOTHER

Thus far, we have established that human flourishing is maximized under the market-driven globalizing model. We have also established that political systems are not capable of producing a viable solution to the problems we observe with globalization as it is, and that as Christians we are called to care deeply about those problems. As such, Christians must come up with a new strategy to effectively attack gross levels of poverty experienced by those who are excluded from the world economy’s benefits.

Max Weber wrote in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that the Protestant was the ideal type of person for a capitalistic framework.

¹² C.M. Hays, 2012, ‘Provision for the poor and the mission of the church: Ancient appeals and contemporary viability’, HTS Theological Studies/Theological Studies 68(1), Art. #1218, 7 pages.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hershey H. Friedman and William D. Adler. “Moral Capitalism: A Biblical Perspective.” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 70, no. 4 (2011): 1017-1018. Accessed March 01, 2017.

¹⁵ Ibid.

While some of what Weber writes in that book is questionable, I think this a good point:

the ideal type of the capitalistic entrepreneur... avoids ostentation and unnecessary expenditure, as well as conscious enjoyment of his own power, and is embarrassed by the outward signs of the social recognition which he receives. His manner of life is...distinguished by a certain ascetic tendency... He gets nothing out of his wealth for himself...¹⁶

Weber is attempting to explicate how and why western Europe was the first to industrialize, and he reasons that it is inextricably tied with the Protestant reformation. I am not interested in going down that rabbit trail, but rather in affirming Weber's view of what the ideal capitalist looks like—a Christian. Someone who acts in the way Weber describes will accumulate large amounts of capital for investment in future periods and investment is one of the keys to economic growth. Now, this investment-fueled growth is necessarily limited in its scope because once investment in the current period reaches 100%, you cannot increase investment to provide for further growth in the next period. However, in developing countries, continual investment would not be needed; statistics show that when modern countries finally achieve a certain level of initial economic growth, their growth rates drastically exceed historical growth rates of western European countries at the same stage of development. This poises them to become self-sufficient remedies to their own poverty far sooner than under any other system.

Christians need to find ways to invest in the impoverished, especially those in impoverished countries. This investment could take many different forms, most practically for most western Christians, it is to honestly answer the question “how much is enough?” For the average middle- to upper-class American Christian, finding the money to invest in the impoverished will likely mean radically assessing spending habits, living arrangements, and other things which suck up large amounts of money. Christians must learn the difference between a

luxury item and a necessity, and I can tell you that Americans for the most part are profoundly confused on this account. The American church has been caught up in its surrounding culture and has lost sight of how small the eye of a needle is compared to the girth of a camel. We are rich, and we must handle ourselves in that way; \$50,000 is more than the vast majority of families in this world will make in five years; middle class Americans make this in a year or less. There are people suffering horrible poverty and we have the ability to help.

I am not advocating for asceticism in any sort of a traditional sense and I do not wish to demonize those who make and use money to enrich their lives. I do, however, want to ask Christians to take these words to heart:

Jesus calls his disciples to follow him, to leave all they have... They are to make a radical break with security and possessions, with the customs and habits of everyday life... Discipleship is quite simply extended training in being dispossessed. To become followers of Jesus means that we must, like him, be dispossessed of all that we think gives us power over our own lives and the lives of others. Unless we learn to relinquish our presumption that we can ensure the significance of our lives, we are not capable of the peace of God's kingdom.¹⁷

Does a family of five *need* to consume and save more than \$100,000 of income every year, or could they manage to be generous with 20%? Do *they* need more than \$80,000? I would argue that if Christians took frugality and dispossession for the sake of another seriously, radical generosity would not only be possible but natural and the resulting lifestyle not horrifically uncomfortable or even drastically qualitatively different from the average middle-class American household. There is so much money in America that is being saved for a rainy day; we must realize that there is a continual hurricane going on for some of our Christian brothers and sisters and we are perfectly poised to help.

It is up to contemporary Christians to transcend

¹⁶ Max Weber. *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. Unwin University Books, London, 1930.

¹⁷ Stanley M Hauerwas. *The peaceable kingdom: a primer in Christian ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011. 71.

the assumptions of the market economy like Weber suggests that they did during the Industrial Revolution. We ought to be the hardest workers *and* the most selfless givers; we do not work for our own gain but for the gain of another, simply because that is what Christ has done for us. If this attitude became the norm, even just among the middle-class Christian population in America, it would have profound effects on wealth inequality in America and abroad (this could even take care of the immediacy problem that I address above, though the ultimate problem with private redistribution is that it is too similar public redistribution—it is not sustainable).

Our call to care for the poor carries with it an injunction to eradicate any consistent source of their suffering—to create a sustainable solution. To create a sustainable solution, we need to begin to create. Miroslav Volf points out that “the path from the design of the iPhone to its use leads through the valley of oppression, exploitation, and destruction,”¹⁸ but this does not have to be the case. What if the creator of the iPhone had been the type of person that I have described? How might a lifestyle of dispossession for the sake of another have affected that valley of oppression, exploitation, and destruction?

Volf argues that competition in the market makes oppression and destruction inevitable, that it is impossible to stop powerful corporations from exploiting the poor for a profit unless world religions create a unanimous moral guideline by which the “secular” world agrees to live. This strategy, however, is far too passive and far too easily ignored by the non-religious world. Instead, Christians need to take a more directive approach. How can a Christian stop powerful corporations from committing atrocities? By being the one that is making the decisions for said corporation. I believe that Christians with the desire and ability ought to pursue corporate leadership ardently, motivated by what I have called “dispossession for the sake of another.” This mindset thrives in a capitalistic framework because it motivates a person to work hard, to be creative, and to innovate, but it crucially

modifies the incentive structure of self-promotion by insisting on other-promotion. The resulting rise in dispossessed Christian innovators and leaders—Christians who insist that the poor would be the primary beneficiary of their hard work—would create a humanitarian anomaly which could be directive; even the non-religious observer who cares about the poor out of humanitarian sensibilities will take notice. Competitors would be pressured to follow suit by the increasingly humanitarian-minded American consumer.

Although it is naïve to suggest one practical solution which sweeps all industries and all situations, a few ideas would be helpful to substantiate my proposition. First, it is simply a fact that people with good ideas get paid in a market economy—this is a good thing! However, this monetary income (or stock allotment, etc.) does not have to land in the pocket of the innovator. What if a few influential executives started asking themselves “how much is enough?” and deposited the extra (which would be a massive deposit if these millionaire/billionaire executives were being honest with themselves) wherever there was need? We have seen this happen in the past with Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. When these two moguls agreed that “the man who dies rich, dies disgraced,”¹⁹ a new era was ushered into American business—the era of philanthropy. This legacy is alive and well today because of the altruism of two men which started a world-wide movement. But we have not taken it far enough—radical altruism must be revitalized and intensified. Altruism was contagious back then and it would catch on again today because it is not an exclusively Christian virtue, it is a human virtue: “Bereft of altruism, we aren’t merely incapable of rescuing globalization from its own dangerous shadows; more troublingly, we are betraying our very humanity.”²⁰

This refusal by executives to let profits land in their own pocket does not just have to take the form of philanthropy. It could also take the form of better compensation for marginalized or impoverished employees. For example, assuming that the company in question was a large corporation with a pre-

¹⁸ Miroslav Volf. *Flourishing: why we need religion in a globalized world*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017, 33.

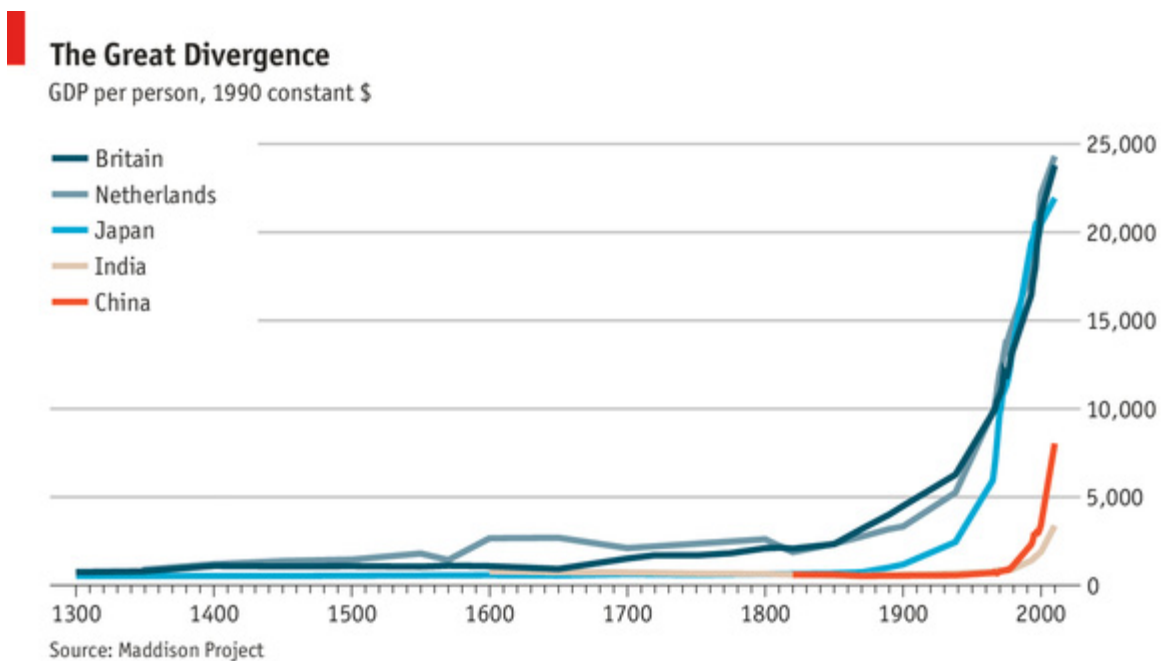
¹⁹ Andrew Carnegie.

²⁰ Miroslav Volf. *Flourishing: why we need religion in a globalized world*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017, 49.

existing competitive edge, it could refuse to pay its workers in Brazil less than it would pay factory workers in America and it could likely get away with a slight increase in prices as a result.²¹

Assuming that the person making decisions is both smart and committed to dispossession for the sake of another, there is no limit to the potential positive externalities of large corporations. However, someone has to dispossess themselves first in order to set the humanitarian precedent that responsible corporations ought to engage with the world in this way. As we have seen in history, this type of movement would be contagious. It is my opinion that Christians, especially middle- to upper- class American Christians, are perfectly poised to respond to this challenge and are the only ones likely to do so. The only question is: who will make the bold decision to go first?

Fig. 1



²¹ After all, consumers have shown that they are willing to pay \$0.80 more for a cup of coffee from a company they like. Starbucks is an example of a company who has done something like this by helping their coffee growers establish environmentally sustainable agricultural techniques.

How Natural is Natural Law? On Aquinas's Presuppositions

Darren Yau



In the recent decades, political and moral philosophy has seen a revival of interest in natural law, and oftentimes these projects are carried out under the banner of Aquinas. This essay seeks to illustrate how Aquinas' notion of the natural law is deeply enmeshed in his metaphysical and theological presuppositions. It suggests that any project to recover a properly Thomistic natural law in the 21st century has to account for these presuppositions, whether they are to be rejected and replaced or modified and defended.

INTRODUCTION

This essay attempts to articulate a basic attitude to approaching the question, “how natural is natural law?” In this essay, I will argue that Aquinas's theory of natural law depends overtly on theological and metaphysical presuppositions. My basic argument is that any natural law theory that claims to be Thomistic must take into account these key features of Aquinas's thought, which in broad strokes are (1) the relation between the eternal and natural law, and the participatory metaphysics and theology behind it (2) the notions of being, goodness, and desirability, and the metaphysical assumptions behind it. I argue that a rejection of these features will need to account for the losses, which suggests—though definitely not

conclusively—that outside the Christian tradition, natural law will seem quite unnatural to the 21st century agnostic.¹

I. ETERNAL AND NATURAL LAW: PARTICIPATIONIST METAPHYSICS AND THEOLOGICAL IMPORT

One key feature of Aquinas's natural law is his clear conceptual link between the eternal and natural law. His initial definition of natural law makes this clear: “Accordingly it is clear that natural law is nothing other than the sharing in the Eternal Law by intelligent creatures.”² Upon closer examination, this link depends on numerous theological and metaphysical presuppositions, such as participatory

¹ In this article I am indebted to the interpretive work of three excellent sources: Craig A. Boyd, “Participation Metaphysics in Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2005): 431–45; Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas, Arguments of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 2003); Michael Zuckert, “The Fullness of Being: Thomas Aquinas and the Modern Critique of Natural Law,” *The Review of Politics* 69, no. 1 (2007): 28–47.

² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Blackfriars, 60 vols. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966), IaIIae Q91a2. In the following footnotes I shorten the title to *ST*.

metaphysics, the Christological explanation of the eternal and natural laws, and the relation of human reason to the image of God.

W. Norris Clark identifies three key elements to any participation structure: “(1) a source which possesses the perfection in question in a total and unrestricted manner; (2) a participant subject which possesses the same perfection in some partial or restricted way; and (3) which has received this perfection in some way from or in dependence on the higher source.”³ Aquinas’s position thoroughly fits this description. Aquinas thinks that the eternal law is perfect, since the eternal law is a divine exemplar in the mind of God. Since God is omniscient and providentially governs the universe, like an artist who has the image of his or her painting in mind before painting, God’s mind contains all of creation: “the Eternal Law is nothing other than the exemplar of divine wisdom as directing the motions and acts of everything.”⁴ The eternal law is thus the perfect and coherent nature within God, which is reflected in his providential ordering of the universe. Humans, as part of this universe, bear the unique status of rational creatures. Creatures participate in the “radiance of the Eternal Law,” though Aquinas qualifies that humans are not God, and so cannot “know the things of God as they are in themselves.”⁵ Thus humans come to know the eternal law from its effects, just as humans cannot stare directly into the sun but can perceive it from daylight.

What about the third feature of participation: that the participating subject receives an analogous perfection from or dependent on the higher source? Here, we should consider the peculiar status of rationality within Aquinas’s conception of a human. For Aquinas, by its very definition, humans are rational animals. Rationality is the distinguishing feature of humans, and in this sense the primary differentiating component in determining the essence of humans. Thus it might be argued that Aquinas does not depend on any sort of participation to

ground the essential features of the participating subject. In other words, the claim is that we can conceive of human rationality quite apart from any participatory metaphysic.

There is some merit to this objection—Aquinas’s arguments for the unique status of human rationality do partly stand on a theory of kinds, in which a differentia determines the essential features of the species, rather than some emanation or sharing in God’s divine light. Some natural law theorists such as Anthony Lisska draw on this insight as a foundation for a natural law theory that is not predicated upon theological claims.⁶ But this is mistaken, since it does not take into account the way in which participatory metaphysics underlies a theory of kinds—or more properly put in medieval terms, the order of being—or the explicit theological characterizations of human rationality. I consider each in turn.

Firstly, Aquinas explicitly argues that the order of being comes about because being emanates from God, who is perfect being. This is most clear in *Prima Pars*. In answering whether Aquinas thinks that every being was necessarily created by God, he concludes, “Therefore all beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation. Therefore it must be that all things which are diversified by the diverse participation of being, so as to be more or less perfect, are caused by one First Being, Who possesses being most perfectly.”⁷ In other words, Aquinas’s metaphysical proposal of what creaturely being “consists of” relies upon a participation structure, in which God’s being—which is highest and most perfect sense of being, essence and existence in perfect harmony—provides the fount of all being.⁸ Aquinas’s dependence on this emanation structure underlies his theory of kinds: a human is not *just* a rational animal, but also belongs properly to the genus of substance, corporeal, sentient, animate, and so forth. Hence theories of natural law which seek to jettison Aquinas’s participationist metaphysics through appeal to a theory of kinds or human

³ Quoted in Boyd, “Participation Metaphysics,” 441. See also W. Norris Clarke, “The Meaning of Participation in St. Thomas,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 26 (1952): 145–57.

⁴ *ST IaIIae Q93a1*.

⁵ *ST IaIIae Q93a2*.

⁶ Boyd, “Participation Metaphysics,” 432–36.

⁷ *ST Ia Q44a1*.

⁸ *ST Ia Q44-45*.

rationality fail to consider how the very conception of rational animal is predicated upon a peculiar hierarchy, a hierarchy that depends on a particular ordering of the universe in which God is at the center, and where humans have a distinct placement in relation to this center. That Aquinas thinks the universe is ordered in such a manner is apparent throughout the *Summa Theologiae* (*ST*), most notably in Aquinas's claim that the first cause is also the final cause.⁹ Created order emanates from God and, like a ripple that has reached the edge of the pond, proceeds toward the center from which the ripple sprung forth. Thus the teleological drag that results from human nature is not derived simply from the common observation that humans are rational animals, but that the universe is ordered in a particular manner toward certain ends, the final end consisting of God who is the wholly simple culmination of the true and good.

Admittedly, one could argue for a version of Aquinas's theory of kinds based on empirical observation, and draw from other areas of the *ST*. For instance, when Aquinas defines a self-evident proposition, he uses the statement, "man is a rational animal," though he concedes that this is not a self-evident proposition for one who has not grasped the essence of humans, much in the same way that someone who does not know what a triangle is could agree to the proposition "all triangles have three sides."¹⁰ Thus we might think the rationalist approach that begins with God and proceeds down the order of being can be traded for an empiricist approach that emphasizes our observations of what differentiates humans from other things. I think this approach is plausible, though if a recognizably Thomistic account of natural law *claims* to eject Aquinas's participationist metaphysics and theological presuppositions and be coherent on its own grounds,

this account must answer the claim that humans are rational animals *without* appeal to these rejected features.¹¹

Second, Aquinas's exploration of the eternal law is not only buttressed by participation structures, but also explicitly depends on theological themes. The most obvious theological concepts are those he uses to explain the eternal law: God's providence, omniscience, wisdom and mind. In general, Aquinas uses these theological concepts to show that God's coherent and simple nature is reflected in the natural law in a partial and incomplete (though not antagonistic) manner. Equally important is how Aquinas blends in Christology. Craig Boyd notes how Aquinas uses terms such as "divine wisdom," "exemplar," "Word," and "Eternal Law," to refer to the activity of the pre-incarnate Christ.¹² Aquinas says, "The Son is not created but begotten naturally of God, therefore he is not subject to the Eternal Law, but rather...is himself the Eternal Law."¹³ In other words, Christ the Word of God is the eternal law. Thus if the second person of the Trinity is the divine *logos*, Boyd observes "it follows that the creation of humans and the moral laws that govern them are dependent upon Christ...Since the divine *logos* is the eternal law, it follows that every act of cognition of the eternal law is a participation in the creative power of God."¹⁴ In short, that all things are "created by him and for him" and the fact that "in him all things hold together," explain each other: "every knowing of truth catches some radiance from the Eternal Law," because human speech analogously imitates God's creative speech in Christ.¹⁵

Lastly, for Aquinas, the rational capacity itself is articulated theologically. The divine image of humanity is seen in the capacity to reason, so much so that Aquinas says in the prologue of *Prima Secundae* "that the human is made in the image of

⁹ *ST* Ia Q44a2-4.

¹⁰ *ST* IaIIae Q94a2.

¹¹ In particular, questions such as (1) why we should think human rationality is dependable and (2) what the distinguishing feature of humanity is in comparison with other things (3) whether this distinguishing feature warrants placing special emphasis on the status of humans as *persons* deserving dignity and respect.

¹² Boyd, "Participation Metaphysics," 440.

¹³ *ST* IaIIae Q93a4.

¹⁴ Boyd, "Participation Metaphysics," 443.

¹⁵ *ST* IaIIae Q93a2 and Colossians 1:15-19.

God... implies that the human agent is intelligent and free to choose and govern itself.”¹⁶ Aquinas also says elsewhere, “for the very light of natural reason is participation itself in the divine light.”¹⁷ Aquinas’s argument that a persons’ *imago dei* refers to his or her uniquely rational nature shows how both theological and participatory concepts animate his view of humans: the rational nature allows for participation in the divine.¹⁸

In sum, the above exploration shows how Aquinas’s theological and metaphysical ideas animate Aquinas’s initial definition of the natural law as a derivation from the eternal law. Aquinas’s emphasis on the similar features between the eternal and natural law work alongside his participatory metaphysics: insofar as we are rational animals, humans participate in the eternal law—the mind of God—and therefore the natural law will share some features of the eternal law such as goodness and coherence. This certainly explains why even though Aquinas concludes there are multiple precepts of the natural law he continues to speak of natural law in the singular, as opposed to the plural laws. It suggests that the coherence within the mind of God is reflected in some way in natural law: the eternal law is one, and so is unity of the natural law.

Most importantly, the above exploration suggests than any rendering of a purportedly Thomist natural law theory should take seriously Aquinas’s proposed definition of the natural law as an analogous image to the perfect eternal law. Natural law theorists who want to eject this definition and the participatory metaphysics and theological assumptions it makes and focus instead on Aquinas’s arguments for natural law through practical and theoretical rationality need to account for the ways in which the status of a human as a rational animal *itself* is sustained through metaphysical and theological argument. Any theory that claims to reject those foundations will need to adjust to these losses instead of presupposing them.

II. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL

RATIONALITY AND ITS DEPENDENCE ON BEING AND GOODNESS

So far I have merely considered Aquinas’s definition of natural law as a derivation from the eternal law. In this section I explore in depth Aquinas’s articulation of natural law and attempt to show that, even if one rejects my argument above and argues for a natural law theory predicated on human practical reason, to accept the full sense of Aquinas’s dictum “the good is to be sought, and evil to be avoided,” relies on metaphysical conceptions about the relation between good and being in a manner that goes beyond mere practical reason.¹⁹ I begin by examining how Aquinas articulates natural law in *Prima Secundae* question 94 article two, and then propose his argument is dependent on a particular metaphysics of being and goodness.

Aquinas begins his explication of the natural law by following Aristotle in distinguishing theoretical and practical reason. Theoretical reason is concerned with abstract truth for its own sake, while practical reason is concerned with truth for the end of action. Aquinas then draws similarities between theoretical and practical reason in order to identify the contours of natural law. Theoretical and practical reason is both concerned with truth in a similar manner: they begin with self-evident propositions—first principles—proceed upon an inquiry and draw conclusions from it. The pertinent difference is that practical reason terminates in action, while theoretical inquiry does not.

As an example of a theoretical self-evident proposition, Aquinas appeals to the law of non-contradiction, “there is no affirming and denying the same simultaneously,” which Aristotle identifies in the *Metaphysics* is the first principle of all sciences.²⁰ Analogously, Aquinas suggests that for practical reasoning there is also a first principle—the good is to be sought, and the evil to be avoided—which provides the grounding precept for all other precepts. Natural law consists of these fundamental precepts of

¹⁶ Boyd, “Participation Metaphysics,” 442.

¹⁷ *ST* Ia Q12a11.

¹⁸ I will return to Aquinas’s notion of human rationality in the second section, as it is key to how he conceives of natural law.

¹⁹ *ST* IaIIae Q94a2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

practical rationality.

Thus, the primary thesis of Aquinas's natural law argument turns on an analogy about theoretical and practical rationality (let (A) stand for this argument from analogy). In the same way that theoretical reason grasps at truths through beginning with self-evident first principles, so too does practical reason concern itself with self-evident first principles that are common to all. Importantly, Aquinas distinguishes this from two other notions, *synderesis*, which concerns the habit of following these practical first principles, and conscience, which concerns the application of judgment insofar as one follows these practical first principles.²¹ Natural law itself is neither of these two things, though it is certainly related. Rather, natural law is the basic precepts of practical rationality available to all humans. They are self-evident to every reasonable and mature human.

In what way does this exposition of natural law depend on metaphysics? We might think that the above conception of natural law is cogent enough on its own grounds: as long as (A) stands, some version of natural law follows. Metaphysics is not needed. However, I propose that this does not do justice to Aquinas's metaphysical assumptions about being and goodness.

Consider Aquinas's proposition that a self-evident precept of practical reason is to desire good and avoid evil. What does Aquinas mean by this statement? Eleonore Stump rightly argues that Aquinas's conception of the good is tied with his understanding of being.²² His central meta-ethical thesis, argued for earlier in *Prima Pars* questions five and six, can be articulated as such:

Meta-ethical Thesis (M): 'Being' and 'goodness' are the same in reference but differ only in sense.²³

Essentially, Stump is stating that for Aquinas,

being and goodness are inextricably linked. There are two senses in which Aquinas speaks of the relation between being and goodness. One sense emphasizes beings as an existing state—that something is the case. The second sense emphasizes being as an activity, a fulfillment, a movement from potentiality to actuality. When Aquinas speaks of goodness, he is often referring to this second sense. In the first sense, we can refer to a being that merely exists as “good,” though in a minimal manner. In the second sense, we can refer to a being as good *insofar as it moves from potentiality into actuality, that is, something is becoming more of what it ought to be*, given its nature.²⁴ Thus when Aquinas speaks of good activities or the good life for humans, Aquinas means that when humans participate in such activities, they become *more fully* human. In this sense being is a progressing activity.²⁵ Thus what we mean by human goods is things and activities that aid humans to become more of their being. That we desire goodness is part of our being becoming.

By the time Aquinas reaches the topic of natural law in *Summa Theologiae* he has already covered these topics and considered them settled, and they lurk beneath his proposition “good is to be sought and done, evil to be avoided.” A careful reading of the logic leading to this conclusion will notice the importance of (M): Aquinas argues that practical reason apprehends an end, and the end carries the meaning of good, and “consequently the first principle for the practical reason is based on the meaning of good, namely *that is what things seek after*.”²⁶ Here we see that practical reason's inclinations toward the good relies on (M), namely, that the meaning of good is tied to being, and hence there is an objective set of activities for humans *qua* human to find good and desirable.

The importance of these assumptions should not be understated. That Aquinas thinks goodness, desire, and being are linked in a metaphysically weighty

²¹ *ST* Ia Q79a12-13.

²² I am heavily indebted to Stump's crisp analysis of this difficult issue, and the following argument shows her influence. Stump, *Aquinas*, 61–91.

²³ *Ibid.*, 62. Or in Aquinas's words, “Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea,” or “Although goodness and being are the same really, nevertheless since they differ in thought, they are not predicated of a thing absolutely in the same way.” *ST* Ia Q5a1.

²⁴ *ST* Ia Q5a1.

²⁵ *ST* Ia Q5a3-5.

²⁶ *ST* IaIIae Q94a2, emphasis mine.

sense *clearly* differs from many other senses of good. Consider three: good signifies pleasure; good signifies an expression of desirability so that the statements “that is good” and “I like this” are equivocal; good signifies merely a comparative statement—it means “better than my previous experiences.” All three definitions could agree with the statement, “The good is to be sought,” but differ vastly from what Aquinas means by good.

This suggests that if a natural law theorist wants to keep (A) and reject (M), the practical rationality that she is speaking about will be different from Aquinas’s sense, because his claim that “the first principle of practical reason is based on the *meaning* of good,” will be a different meaning of good.²⁷ Consequently, the natural law theorist will need to answer to any criticisms left open in rejecting (M).

III. CONCLUSIONS

In the above two sections, I explored several metaphysical and theological themes embedded in Aquinas’s proposals for a natural law. In short, I have argued that any purportedly Thomistic theory of natural law will have to address the consequences of rejecting these themes.

Obviously my argument cannot categorically bar philosophers from appropriating portions of natural law theory in ways that go against the grain of how I think we should understand Aquinas’s system. But the evidence of the above suggests that *if* one desires to bring natural law theory into the 21st century while claiming to be free of Aristotelian and Platonic metaphysics and Christian theological presupposition—and many have attempted—there are serious architectural pillars that need to be constructed, such as the meaning of good and its relation to practical rationality. And perhaps the most important pillar would be how to avoid subjectivism (if one wishes to do so), since Aquinas’s objectivity came clearly from theses such as (M).

The above explorations have shown how deeply Aquinas’s metaphysics and theology are woven into his natural law theory. These conclusions suggest wariness towards any natural law that purports to be “natural” in the 21st century analytical sense: free of

medieval or Christian metaphysics and justifiable to a “common” rationality. Hence I think it is wise to check under the semantic rocks of any natural law that claims cogency regardless of its tradition. But perhaps there is such a theory out there, and I have simply not come across it yet.

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²⁷ Ibid., emphasis mine.

The City of the Lady: Sieneese Civic Identity and the Virgin in Early Renaissance Art

Clementine Kane



During the course of the Renaissance, Siena's artistic output remained visually and thematically rooted in the iconic Byzantine style, and for this it was long dismissed as stagnant in the light of developments in Florence and Rome. In this essay, I will draw on Diana Norman's seminal research, focusing not on the alleged "conservatism" of this artistic output but on the rich ways Marian imagery in Siena permeates both religion and politics and the way in which these spheres overlap to create a strong sense of Sieneese civic identity. An attitude of devotion in our own personal lives inspired by the Sieneese would undoubtedly, this author believes, begin to mitigate the impact of the current toxically divided political atmosphere in our own lives; this civic devotion is

the endeavor to live under the Virgin's admonition towards "good counsel" and Christ's words of care for the least of these, investing every area of our lives with acts of and promptings toward devotion.

That the Renaissance was born in Florence is a commonly accepted belief substantiated by the iconic art of Michelangelo and Brunelleschi's great Dome. Thus, it is Florence that we remember in the annals of art history. Yet on the outskirts of this Renaissance powerhouse lay an enclave all but consigned to obscurity: the Republic of Siena, hemmed in on all sides by the pressures of Florentine hegemony. During the course of the Renaissance, Siena's artistic output remained visually and thematically rooted in the iconic Byzantine style, and for this it was long dismissed as stagnant in the light of developments in Florence and Rome. However, in light of her research,

Diana Norman presents a compelling argument observing that the art of Siena shows itself to be compellingly unfocused on rapid development in the direction of the single-point perspective realism that dominated the artistic revolution known as the Renaissance.¹ Norman claims the masters at work in Siena wove the religious devotion and the political context of Siena into a strong fabric of civic identity rooted in one figure, the Virgin Mary. In this essay, I will draw on Norman's research, focusing not on the alleged "conservatism" of this artistic output but on the rich ways Marian imagery in Siena permeates both religion and politics and the way in which these

¹Diana Norman, *Siena and the Virgin: Art and Politics in a Late Medieval City State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 3.

spheres overlap to create a strong sense of Siennese civic identity.

The key to understanding this religio-political relationship is an appreciation of the Virgin Mary's primary role in the city's identity. She functioned not only as an object of devotion, but was also widely regarded to be the supreme advocate and protector of the city. A short story illustrates this point: in 1260, Siena was severely threatened by its powerful northern neighbor Florence, at that time fixated on expanding their jurisdiction and economic clout in the direction of Siena and the surrounding territories in southern Tuscany.² Contemporary annalist Paolo di Tommaso Montauri records the city's syndic, Buonaguida Lucari, urging the Siennese to give 'all the city and *contado* (subject territories)' to the 'queen and empress of life eternal', the Virgin Mary.³ Then, before the Battle of Montaperti, an incredibly important but brutal conflict between the Siennese and the Florentines in which the Florentines were routed:

They celebrated a solemn mass and made grand offerings to the Virgin Mary... And the bishop made a solemn procession, and placed the keys [of the city] in the hands of the Virgin and it was recorded in the documents and the city was given the title of the Virgin Mary.⁴

Fourteenth-century Siennese art reflects no subject more centrally or more frequently than that of the Virgin. Even the magnificent civic murals of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, located in the Council Room of the Palazzo Pubblico, confirm this theme. While providing "an erudite painted commentary on the virtues of good government,"⁵ the allegorical murals include images of the Virgin and Child on the shield of the principal personification of a good ruler. Depictions of the Virgin range far beyond the conventional subject matter of an annunciation or nativity scene. Artists like Paolo di Giovanni Fei and Pietro Lorenzetti portrayed scenes from her birth, purification, betrothal, dormition, assumption,

and enthronement. No aspect of the Virgin's life is overlooked in the city's devotion to her. Indeed this devotion develops throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries into a nuanced reality connected to the development of Siena's civic identity, culture, and politics.

Before we can fully grasp the connection of Siennese civics to the Virgin Mary, it is necessary to become familiar with the four patron saints of Siena, who play an important supporting role in this narrative of Marian devotion and civic identity. Ansanus and Crescentius, young Roman noblemen, were said to have baptized the Siennese and had relics in Siena, respectively. Savinus, a bishop of the early church, was also said to have been the first bishop of Siena. All three of these early Christian saints were martyred for their faith during early fourth-century persecution under the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian. The fourth, Bartholomew the Apostle, has ambiguous connections to the city yet by 1215 there are records of an altar dedicated to him in the main cathedral.⁶ Appearing in paintings alongside the Virgin and Child, they acted as another level of symbolic intercession between the city and its queen, the Queen of Heaven.

Many of these elements of Siennese political allegiance and religious devotion crystallize in Duccio's *Maestà*, which is where Diana Norman fittingly begins her examination of Marian imagery. A component of the central, double-sided altarpiece of the cathedral, this image is the embodiment of the Virgin's influence and significance within the sphere of the church. As Norman writes, "The very act of furnishing the high altar of the cathedral with a painting of this quality allowed the Siennese to hope for a reciprocal gift from the Virgin, namely, the continued expression and demonstration of her favour and protection."⁷ Such bargaining with God, the mother of God, or the gods had likely been going on since Etruscan times and found a new expression in early Renaissance Siena, where it was used to cement a unified identity in the ecclesiastical sphere.

² Ibid., 28.

³ Ibid., 3.

⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁵ Ibid., 14.

⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁷ Ibid., 42.

An unusual and groundbreaking characteristic of Duccio's *Maestà* is the way the four patron saints surround Mary in a standing position, rather than kneeling, as they would in the typical Byzantine style. In medieval art, the standing position was usually reserved for donors or benefactors, who would symbolically receive intercession because of the way their image was placed in relation to that of the Virgin. From the way Duccio positioned the four patron saints of Siena, we can discern his innovative conception their role. Instead of merely symbolizing religious reverence, the four patron saints represent the interests of the city, providing patronage of the altarpiece while supplicating the Virgin for intercessory favors.

The cathedral was not the only arena of religio-political influence; devotion to the Virgin also found its way into the sphere of politics, where she exerted influence towards civic virtue. Like many other patriarchal societies, an all-male panel governed the city of Siena. Yet the Siennese civic structure was atypical in that the final arbiter of the city's public affairs, even if only symbolically, was a woman: the Virgin. Since the Battle of Montaperti in 1260, specific references to the Virgin as "defender and governor" of the city are recorded in official documents, suggesting the "expression of a status newly accorded to the Virgin in a formal act of homage."⁸

Diana Norman takes the foremost example of this reverence to be in Simone Martini's *Maestà*, a mural housed in the Sala del Consiglio of the Palazzo Pubblico. The original audience would have been 200-500 men of the city and its surrounding provinces who constituted "the supreme legislative body of the Siennese state."⁹ The throne on which Mary is seated in the mural actually resembles the "throne" or ceremonial chair that would have been placed beneath it. Several features of Duccio's innovative *Maestà* are also strikingly present in Simone Martini's later painting. Angels and saints surround the Madonna, amplifying her status as the queen of Heaven, and at the feet of the Virgin kneel the four patron saints of Siena in supplication on behalf

of their city. Along the edge of the throne runs an inscription, a petition to the Virgin. The supplicatory half of the conversation has been lost, but the Virgin's response remains outlined.

My beloved bear it in mind
When your devotees make honest petitions
I will make them content as you desire
But if the powerful do harm to the weak
Weighing them down with shame or hurt
Your prayers are not for these
Nor for whoever deceives my land.

The angelic flowers, the rose and lily
With which the heavenly field is adorned
Do not delight me more than good counsel
But some I see who for their own estate
Despise me and deceive my land
And are most praised when they speak the worst
Whoever is condemned by this speech take heed.¹⁰

Although the inscription itself is presumably fictitious, it complements the ethos of the Virgin Mary, serving the purpose of reinforcing civic virtue in the same way that the Lorenzetti murals do. The legislative processes occurring beneath the mural of the Virgin enthroned as the Queen of Heaven also eventuate symbolically underneath her authority and inspiration. This symbolic presence may have been intended to generate a psychological effect on those below it, turning them towards the kind of virtue that the Virgin esteemed.

In keeping with Diana Norman's analysis, Hans Belting identifies the deeply nuanced devotional and political significance both Duccio's and Martini's *Maestàs*. However he deepens our understanding of their origin and significance by rooting them in images produced for the confraternities of Italian city-states, including Siena. The use of painted panels to convey status or power with a view to outdoing a "rival" confraternity heightens the political tension represented by these images, as well as the deep religio-political loyalty elicited by them. Belting

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰ Ibid., 54.

writes of the rivalries between the Dominican friars in Siena, who had commissioned a groundbreaking Madonna, now housed in the Palazzo Pubblico, and an even larger panel produced for Dominican friars in Florence.¹¹ Not only did the production of these paintings reinforce the rivalry between city-states (even within the bounds of the church), it also propelled the artistic development of the *Maestà* as artists sought to outdo each other in representing an old subject in a newer and grander way. Yet the Sieneese sought these innovations while remaining within the general framework of established Marian iconography, hence why Siena began to be designated as artistically stagnant by those who rushed forward into the domain of one-point-perspective humanism. This rivalry between the confraternities also anticipates the continued artistic rivalry that would eventually lead Florence to become the birthplace of the Renaissance, while Siena sunk into relative, although unmerited, obscurity.

This intense and intricate relationship between the Virgin Mary and the City of Siena was predicated mostly on cultural mythology and stories and ceremonies manipulated to convey a certain very specific message. Quite simply, Mary represented a powerful protective force close to or equal to God himself and by aligning themselves with that, the Sieneese benefited greatly, both in their own self-image and in the eyes of their greedy and belligerent neighbors. Just as the Venetians expressed their distinction from the Roman church through their Doge-centered political structure and unique style of sacred architecture, the Sieneese distinguished themselves from surrounding city-states by their affiliation with the Mother of God. Other cities participated in the cult of the Virgin, but in Siena the Virgin was elevated to the point where she was and is the nexus of the city, its primary object of devotion, and an important political figure simply by her imaged presence. As Norman reminds us, the special treatment and regard of the Virgin was

consistent with the widespread belief in late

medieval Christianity that the divine power attributed to a holy person could also reside in an image of that person and that this image might accordingly possess sensory attributes and be capable of responding to acts of petition and appeal. There was, in short, often a blurring between the identity of the holy person and the identity of her (or his) image.¹²

Despite the meteoric ascent of Florence after cataclysmic event of the Black Death, Siena held its own, politically and artistically. Bereft of proper acknowledgment in the canon of art history for too long, Sieneese art has undergone a reevaluation following Diana Norman's study of its nuances within the city itself and its surrounding regions. The cult of the Virgin, of which Siena was a leading member, preserved and revitalized the conventions of Marian iconography, using the artistic capabilities at their disposal to honor the Mother of God. Norman concludes, "Fourteenth century Sieneese art does indeed, therefore, exhibit a certain kind of 'conservatism'... intimately and primarily connected with the ongoing expression of deeply-rooted civic ideology."¹³ Images and themes from Siena's artistic heritage continued to be held in high esteem, providing a foundation from which later artists could gather inspiration and "the opportunity to develop alternative or more intricate versions of their early fourteenth-century forerunner,"¹⁴ as evinced by the relationship of Simone Martini's *Maestà* to Duccio's earlier version. Sieneese devotion, it must be acknowledged, often stemmed from a patristic rather than strictly biblical understanding of the Virgin's capabilities, yet sincere devotion mixed with political expediency to create a recipe for a civic identity whose strength would last until the present day. Queen of Heaven and Mother of God, Mary was a civic and religious symbol par excellence, and Siena did not hesitate to claim special protection because of this association.

There is perhaps no better contemporary manifestation of the unique Sieneese civic identity

¹¹ Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 393.

¹² Norman, *Siena and the Virgin*, 29.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

than the famous *Palio di Siena*, a race with its origins in medieval festivities surrounding the Feast of the Assumption, the greatest of the civic festivals in Siena.¹⁵ It typifies the character of a town still rooted in its medieval and Renaissance devotion to the Virgin Mary; although more subtly, the town is still woven together by her presence. The general consonance between Marian imagery and political identity has ingrained itself so deeply in Sieneese society that it remains relevant to the modern population of a medieval town.

Inevitably, the question arises of how sincere such Marian devotion can be in the context of political advantage and whether the two can coexist. Yet the tender supplication evinced by both Duccio's and Martini's *Maestàs* attests to authentic devotion; this is perhaps a unification of church and state that could be forgiven. Furthermore, this consonance between political and religious spheres, which would undoubtedly be scoffed at today, is a powerful unifying factor. Even as Siena's supposedly "conservative" art is reevaluated, perhaps the central bond of their society should be reevaluated as well. The sometimes injudicious patriotism of our own country had protected and unified it for so long; yet in the face of postmodern disillusionment it threatens to disintegrate, exemplified most painfully in the lack of a compelling presidential candidate.

The strength of Diana Norman's monograph lies in the thoroughness of her research. She weaves an exhaustively detailed examination of Siena and the surrounding *contado* into a cohesive and absorbing narrative. Her writing is delightful to read even as she focuses with microscopic vision on each and every aspect of society. Her study is nevertheless bereft of an deeper evaluation of the spiritual significance of the material. She correctly identifies the relevance of Marian imagery to this society and in doing so, restores its relevance to the art historical community. But Norman does not impart to the reader any of the lessons to be had from such complete immersion in this society and their emphatic devotion to the Virgin Mary. Although she is clearly invested in the topic, Norman seems reluctant to remove the protective gloves of art historical criticism in order to empathize

with the city's devotion to Mary, choosing rather to see it exclusively as a lightning rod for civic devotion.

Yet the pathetic truth is that as a society, we would learn little from this city's politics, even if immersed in them. Our culture is willing to engage no more profoundly with the richly symbolic spiritual nuance of Siena than Diana Norman; indeed, we have lost the ability to by virtue of the importance we ascribe to skepticism. If we would lay aside that cockroach shell of cynicism even for a moment we would have to reevaluate every aspect of our society: why we mistrust organized religion, why we lack a unified vision, why we are so deeply rifted along racial and socioeconomic lines. It is simplistic to say that Siena can answer these matters on a national scale, nor would a religiously homogenous society be most advantageous in the current cultural climate. Our toxic political climate has compelled us to face the fact that we are broken and fractured, as a society, as a community, and as individuals. Nonetheless an attitude of devotion in our own personal lives inspired by the Sieneese would undoubtedly, I believe, begin to mitigate the impact of these issues in our own lives. We too should strive to live under the Virgin's admonition towards "good counsel"¹⁶ and Christ's words of care for the least of these, investing every area of our lives with acts of and promptings toward devotion.

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¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., 54.

A Christian Interpretation of Picasso's 1930 *Crucifixion*

Sadie McCloud



"A Christian Interpretation of Picasso's 1930 *Crucifixion*" considers the background and meaning of Picasso's painting with an Art Historical approach. It claims that although the subject matter of the *Crucifixion* is drawn from Christian iconography, it contains imagery which is antithetical to Christian beliefs and thoughts. This claim motivates the reader to question how a Christian ought to think about the interpretation of works of art.

Picasso is famous for his innovations within the art world. As he always professed to be a staunch atheist and a revolutionary desirous of reevaluating traditional standards, we often ignore that he was nonetheless fascinated by Christian iconography throughout his life. He continued to turn to the theme of the crucifixion in particular. In *The Religious Art of Pablo Picasso*, Jane Daggett Dillenberger and John Handley discuss several aspects pertaining to Picasso's interest in religious imagery. In *The Religious Art of Pablo Picasso*, Dillenberger and Handley claim that "we need not be theologians to recognize that . . . the works are . . . profoundly Christian insofar as the Christian narrative resonates in the paintings and drawings when one encounters this art."¹ In order to evaluate the claim made by Dillenberger and Handley, I will be exploring Picasso's interest in the imagery and ideas associated with the crucifixion, particularly as this manifested itself in his *Crucifixion* painted in

1930. I claim that although, the subject matter of the *Crucifixion* is drawn from Christian iconography, it contains imagery which is antithetical to Christian beliefs and thought.

Picasso was fascinated with the iconography of the crucifixion throughout his life. Timothy Hilton says that this was a theme "which from the evidence of his drawings must have moved him deeply from early youth to old age . . . being both a violent unspeakable crime and the traditional act of renewal of life."² His particular interest in the crucifixion seems to have been a result of three experiences where he closely encountered death. He seems to have become fixated on the crucifixion as a way to understand and express the raw agony and desperation of human emotion resulting from intense experiences with death.

The first of these experiences was the death of his younger sister Conchita from diphtheria when he

¹ Jane Daggett Dillenberger and John Handley, *The Religious Art of Pablo Picasso* (California: University of California Press, 2014), 89.

² *Ibid.*, 1.

was fourteen. The young Picasso vowed to give up painting if God should choose to heal her. Her death was a memory he carried with him throughout his life. Dillenberger and Handley suggest that perhaps *Science and Charity*, painted in 1897 two years after his sister's death, was one way he coped with this event. In this painting, Picasso contrasts scientific prognosis and religious conviction both of which seem unable to heal the sick woman.

The second of these experiences was his close contact with the effects of war and defeat. When Picasso came to Barcelona in 1898, Spain was in a time of particularly great upheaval as it had recently been defeated in the Spanish-American war. As Dillenberger and Handley say, "Picasso found himself confronted everywhere with death: death in its aspect of decay and decadence of a dying century: death in the skull-like faces of repatriated soldiers: death in the pervading gloom."³ In his painting *The End of the Road*, Picasso paints two streams of refugees, wounded, and mothers with young children who file slowly down the path towards a city above which hovers a ghostly winged figure which is often seen as the angel of death.

The third of these experiences and the one which most clearly explains Picasso's interest in the imagery of the crucifixion was the suicide of his friend Carlos Casagemas in 1901. Casagemas committed suicide because of an unfortunate love affair. Picasso was greatly shocked by this event and it affected his art for many years and accounts for his continued interest in the crucifixion. In *The Death of Casagemas*, he depicts his dead friend as though he were mourning in person by his bedside. In the upper right corner of the painting, the flame of a candle, the symbol of hope and life, overshadows the face of Casagemas.

In *Evocation (Burial of Casagemas)*, Picasso again uses the imagery of the crucifixion in order to cope with the death of his friend. In the lower portion of the painting, mourners surround the shrouded body of Casagemas previous to his burial. In the upper portion, a female nude embraces a figure, presumably Casagemas, who is being carried away on a white horse. Significantly, this figure has outstretched arms as though crucified. Somehow through his mourning, Picasso came to understand the suicide death of

his friend as carrying the religious implication of a sacrifice over unrequited love. The image of the crucifixion shows up even more clearly in a drawing from 1904 entitled *Christ of Montmartre (Le Suicide)*. This crucifixion is undoubtedly tied to the suicide of Casagemas as the woman who drove him to suicide was a native of Montmartre. In fact, the features of Christ are considered to be those of Casagemas. In this untraditional portrayal of the crucifixion in which the Christ hangs lifelessly over the city, Picasso certainly succeeds in portraying the tragedy and anguish of the event.

This interest in the crucifixion is more clearly realized in his *Crucifixion* painted in 1930 which was heavily influenced by the *Isenheim Altarpiece* of Matthias Grunewald painted in 1512-1516. This influence can be clearly seen in the evolution of Picasso's iconography in his studies for the *Crucifixion*. In one of Picasso's drawings, Mary Magdalene is bent over backwards with her face pressed against her buttocks. Her interlaced fingers and carefully drawn fingernails are reminiscent of the Mary Magdalene in *The Isenheim Altarpiece* of Matthias Grunewald. On the right the figure pointing with such a strong declarative gesture is clearly inspired by Grunewald's John the Baptist. Both drawings include many architectural details such as the columns and arches which in conjunction with the presence of an audience are reminiscent of the imagery of the bullfight. This reference to the bullfight can again be seen in the similarity of the centurion to the picador with his lance. An interesting and important development in his iconography is Picasso's placement of Christ. Christ himself is no longer the center of attention—we are only shown the bottom of his legs. Picasso is choosing to concentrate instead on the reactions and behavior of the observers. Christ is no longer conveying a sense of suffering for the common good. He has become merely a focal point for the concentration or responses, attention, and actions of the audience in the painting and the viewers of the painting. This placement of Christ as well as the use of imagery reminiscent of the bullfight lends these drawings ritualistic and ceremonial connotations.

In the *Crucifixion* painting, Picasso references

³ Ibid., 26.

many of his previous paintings such as the trilogy of figures in *The Three Dancers* and the praying-mantis figure in *The Bather*. In the *Crucifixion*, Christ is the center figure with paddle-like hands. His figure is very similar to Cycladic and North African idols. This way of depicting Christ is certainly a visible departure from earlier crucifixions and places the painting in a tradition similar to that of surrealism. The small figure at the top of the ladder is driving the nail into Christ's hand. The inclusion of this figure was not common in crucifixions and so may indicate an excessive brutalism. To the left and right of Christ are figures which Dillenberger sees as representing the moon, the sun, and possibly the Virgin Mary. Ruth Kaufman, another art historian, thinks that these three figures may instead be a reference from *The Three Dancers*. In that painting the figure on the left is often identified as participating in some kind of magical rite. In the *Crucifixion*, she thinks that the figure to the right is likely a reference to cultic Mithraic imagery. This would align with Picasso's use of Mithraic imagery in later works. By placing Christ amidst such cultish figures of primitive religion, Picasso seems to be claiming that Christ is only one religious image among them. On the far left and right are the small Tau crosses of the two thieves. In the left foreground are two crumpled figures who both picture the two thieves and the revivification of Adam and Eve at the foot of the cross and in the right foreground are the soldiers gambling for Christ's garment. The most important thing to note about this painting is that although not so clearly depicted as in the study, Christ is again no longer meant to be the center of attention. This is a great departure from traditional crucifixion iconography.

The influence of Grunewald's Isenheim altarpiece on Picasso's *Crucifixion* can be seen in the emotive physicality which Picasso tries to depict and in the way Picasso chooses to depict Mary Magdalene. Picasso was particularly interested in extreme physical or haptic agony. He was very inspired by Grunewald's Magdalene, one of the most haptically agonized Magdelenes in Western art history. Elsen says that "the passionate sufferings of Mary Magdalene" are what particularly interested Picasso.

There is a long visual tradition of seeing Mary Magdalene as a figure of duality—sinner and saint, prostitute and virgin—but most significantly in Grunewald and Picasso as female and mediator. In Grunewald's altarpiece the Magdalene's role of mediation is represented by her placement on the border between the interior and exterior of the picture plane thereby mediating the action of the viewers and that of the painting. She is also shown as mediator by her placement between the virgin Mary, the representative of the Church, and Christ, the symbol of human salvation. Picasso follows Grunewald in his depiction of the Magdalene as mediator but further seeks to represent her duality by portraying her twice. In the *Crucifixion* she is represented both as the white figure with a claw-like mouth surrounding Christ's wound and as the tall distorted figure on the right. The imagery of the figure licking blood from Christ's wound has a long history in medieval Christian art traditionally representing the sexual and destructive aspects of the female and represents the female side of the conceived duality. The tall figure on the right convulsed in an agony of grief connects the heavens and the earth and creates a connection between humanity and divinity. The tension of the figure's hands, elbows, and drapery recalls the exaggerated posture of grief taken by the Magdalene in Grunewald's altarpiece and represents the side of the mediator in the duality.

In his *Crucifixion* and particularly in his depiction of Mary Magdalene, Picasso is primarily trying to portray the emotive physicality called into existence by the horror of the event rather than the event itself. He is attempting to capture the essence of spiritual emotion and sensual ardor. He sets out to "present his figures as vessels of his own feelings."⁴ In his attempt to achieve an emotional response he drastically changes the traditional iconography of the crucifixion primarily by the different use he makes of the figure of Christ.

The authors of *The Religious Art of Pablo Picasso* claim that when looking at Picasso's religious paintings, "we need not be theologians to recognize that . . . the works are . . . profoundly Christian insofar as the Christian narrative resonates in the paintings

⁴ Ruth Kaufmann, "Picasso's Crucifixion of 1930," *The Burlington Magazine* 111 (1969): 40.

and drawings when one encounters this art.”⁵ Ruth Kaufman comes to a much different interpretation of *The Crucifixion*.

In her article *Picasso's Crucifixion of 1930*, she explores the themes found in Picasso's *Crucifixion* from a different perspective than Dillenberger and Handley. Her article addresses the question of whether Picasso's *Crucifixion* is as “enigmatic as most authorities have claimed it to be.”⁶ She assumes from the beginning that this painting has already been clarified by other authorities as having very little meaning related to Christian sensibilities. She chooses to see the *Crucifixion* within the context of “Surrealist interest in primitive religious practices and art forms as manifestations of man's irrational nature.”⁷ Her interpretation of Picasso's painting is demonstrated through a critical analysis of his use of imagery. After comparing this painting to his later work *Guernica* she comes to the conclusion that in the *Crucifixion*, Picasso has chosen to look at “human irrationality in the form of hysteria, brutality and sadism—with the same approach derived from Surrealist interests—that of the anthropologist and psychiatrist.”⁸

While I do not think that Kauffmann has given a broad enough interpretation to Picasso's work, I think that what she claims about Picasso's intentions is more accurate than Dillenberger and Handley's claim. I disagree with their claim and think that Kaufmann's claim is more deserving of attention. Although Picasso is painting Christian or at least religious subject matter, he alters the traditional Christian iconography of the crucifixion drastically enough so that the Christian narrative does not truly resonate in his *Crucifixion*.

I think that Picasso's *Crucifixion* does not accurately depict the Christian narrative primarily because in it Picasso attempts to desecralize religious imagery. This is in contrast to what seems to be Van Gogh's attempt to sacralize the ordinary by seeking to depict transcendence in the natural world—expressing the agony of Gethsemane without explicitly depicting it. Picasso uses fragmentation

in an attempt to reconstruct a reality without transcendence and as he desires it to exist. Nicholas Wolterstorff said that because Picasso organizes and reorganizes what he takes to be the essential elements of reality to fit with his own understanding and ways of seeing, he deifies himself. In comparison with Grunewald he wants to express the raw human emotion intrinsic to religious experience but removed from it.

This desire to create reality as he desires is evidenced in the way Picasso reimagines the traditional iconography of the crucifixion and attempts to secularize the event. In the traditional iconography of the crucifixion, Christ is the center of the *Crucifixion* and gives it its purpose and meaning. The reality of the event is meant to exist apart from the viewer's imagination and exert a tangible influence on the viewer. However, Christ is no longer the center of Picasso's *Crucifixion*. Instead, he becomes a kind of repository for the emotions and reactions of the onlookers of the event. This changes the purpose of the onlookers in the painting from a supportive role to the central focus of the painting. We are no longer asked to join Mary Magdalene in her agony but to observe her suffering and even to manipulate it into an image of our own suffering. We are no longer asked to join in lamenting Christ's death but to use his death as an explanation and validation of our personal feelings. Christ no longer exists as an outside influence on our state of being but as an image onto which we can project our own emotions without testing their validity. This change in the role of the viewer invites us to shape the image of Christ into whatever we desire instead of allowing ourselves to be shaped into the image of Christ. This way of depicting the *Crucifixion* first deifies the artist and in a way deifies the viewer. Instead of depicting Christ as valuable in his true entity, Picasso asks us to view his Christ as a creation of our own emotional state.

Maritain, a twentieth century Thomistic scholar with important work in Aesthetics, writes “the religious quality of a work does not depend upon

⁵ Dillenberger and Handley, *The Religious Art of Pablo Picasso*, 89.

⁶ Kaufmann, “Picasso's Crucifixion of 1930,” 553.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 558.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 561.

its subject but its spirit.”⁹ I agree with Maritain that even though the subject matter of a work of art may outwardly appear to be depicting a certain theology, it can only hold value as a work of religious art if it is trying to express a true theological reality. While Picasso’s *Crucifixion* does depict religious subject matter, its spirit is not truly religious in any Christian sense. Because of this, I do not think that Picasso’s *Crucifixion* accurately depicts the Christian narrative.

These differing claims concerning where Picasso’s *Crucifixion* is to be placed in Christian iconography and tradition introduce important questions for Christians engaging in the art world. How should Christians view such secular depictions of events of important to Christianity? There are many questions which must be asked before an adequately careful approach to viewing works of art in a Christian context can be formulated. The majority of these questions are related to the nature of the relationship between the intention of the artist and the interpretation of the viewer. Must we understand the intention of the artist in order to best view the work of art? If so, can we even determine the artist’s intention? Is a work of art intrinsically tied to authorial intent or does it stand alone? Is the value of the work of the artist destroyed if the viewer interprets the work in a manner opposite from that intended by the artist? Can the uninformed viewer come to a certain level of correct understanding of the work? If the intention of the artist does not fit with a Christian world view, can the Christian choose to take what he or she desires from the painting?

I think that these difficulties are particularly manifest when we attempt to determine a Christian interpretation of Picasso’s *Crucifixion* as Picasso’s intentions are in contradiction to orthodox Christianity. As the subject matter is a *Crucifixion*, is it able to transcend any intention of the artist? How explicitly are Picasso’s intentions communicated to the unknowledgeable viewer? As the subject matter is a *Crucifixion* which may not explicitly communicate his intentions to the uninformed viewer, must we completely disregard his work?

These are difficult questions to ask and ones which involve many areas of thought. However, they are questions which Christians must ask and think

about in a serious manner. What is needed is serious Christian engagement with such art and careful consideration of methods of interpretation.

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⁹ Maritain, Jacques, *Art and Poetry* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), 28.

The Art of Corita Kent: Psalms of Lament and Praise

Rachel Coker



For years, Sister Corita Kent has been overlooked as a significant artist of the 20th Century because of the fine line her work treads between secularism and Christianity. This paper seeks to grapple with the social and religious themes of Kent's work and defend a new interpretation of her art as containing psalms of both lament and praise. In a period where pop artists sought to trivialize the consumeristic world around them, Kent's art stands alone in its ability to bring meaning to society and work as a catalyst for true change.

In 1962, the cost of a can of Campbell's soup was approximately 89 cents. However, that very same year, a canvas painting depicting a can of Campbell's soup by burgeoning artist Andy Warhol sold in a New York gallery for \$100. By 2006, Warhol's soup paintings were selling at auction for over \$11.7 million each. Many art historians and critics relate the growing demand for "pop art", or art impacted by and reflecting the demands of popular society, to Americans' growing self-absorption during the mid-20th Century following the wake of two devastating world wars. The Civil Rights Movement was well underway, feminists were demanding equal rights with men and protests were already growing against another international conflict in Vietnam. Sandwiched between polarizing opposites of tragedy and consumerism, many Americans desire to poke fun at seemingly serious aspects of their culture skyrocketed during the 1950's and 60's. Claudia Pagliari of The University of Edinburgh sums up the opinions of many scholars when she postulates: "Warhol's use of everyday objects and commercial

poster art aimed to blur the lines between high and low art, and the aesthetic and ordinary, while his representation of the rich and powerful through a medium hitherto regarded as cheap and disposable evokes the transitory nature of success and status and implies a many-facedness on the part of its subjects" (Pagliari).

Paradoxically, however, historians also have to admit that the commodification of material objects in high art only served to inflate the shallowness of popular culture even more. Warhol may have taken an initial jab at consumerism by depicting a Campbell's soup can, but the selling price of his work, along with his own growing celebrity status, worked against him. At the end of the day, his painting of a can proved even more popular than the can itself and did little to combat the materialism he first sought to expose.

In the increasingly trivial art culture of the 1960's, many artists chose to exploit the perceived evils of their present society as a means of coping with heaviness. Following the earlier examples of

Duchamp and other Dada artists from the First World War, many midcentury artists highlighted the nonsensical meaningless of life, whether through depicting absolute nothingness like Yves Klein in his 1958 exhibition *The Void* (in which three thousand viewers lined up outside the gallery in anticipation, only to be led into an empty white room) or the accumulation of too much, as demonstrated by French artist Arman's *Full Up* two year later (in which Arman filled the same gallery to the point of overflowing with garbage).

However, of all the artists creating work as a reaction to the tension and materialism of the 1960's, one in particular has long been passed over by art critics due to the content of her pieces. While Warhol was replicating photographs of Elizabeth Taylor and Arman was selling his own canned waste, Sister Corita Kent was creating vibrant silkscreen posters that blurred the lines between the spiritual and secular and challenged the lifestyles of Americans everywhere. However, due to the theologically nuanced nature of her work, Corita's accomplishments as an artist have been widely ignored by the art world at large. Her first solo exhibition was not put together until 2013, twenty seven years after her death in 1986. The exhibition, entitled "Someday is Now", was first displayed at the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery in Saratoga Springs, New York in the spring of 2013. Before the featured installation of her work and publication of an accompanying book to follow, many art scholars and critics failed to give proper credit to Corita on the grounds of being both a female and a nun. Articles may take careful note of her "edgy optimism" or "social engagement", but her work is broadly considered to be too rebellious for Christians and too religious for atheists to. Because of this, many art historians have not fully balanced the playfulness of her pop art images with the theological depth of her metaphors. Even the accompanying publication to the "Someday is Now" retrospective hinges on the assumption that Corita's earlier religious work must be analyzed with consideration of her later departure from the Catholic Church and the implications this may have on the validity of her spiritual ideas. By contrast to these popular critics of her work, I would like to argue that Corita's work stands above other

pop art pieces created during the same timeline. Art historian Thomas Crow once complained that "The debate over Warhol centers on whether his art fosters critical or subversive apprehension of mass culture and the power of the image as commodity [e.g., Ranier Crone], succumbs in an innocent but telling way to that numbing power [e.g., Carter Ratcliff], or exploits it cynically and meretriciously [e.g., Robert Hughes]" (Anderson and Dryness, 314). Drawing meaning from Corita's work is not so ambiguous. As opposed to constantly bouncing between the submissive and the exploitative, Corita managed to draw humorous and relevant images from popular culture, representing them in ways that exposed the hypocrisy of well-meaning Americans and served as a catalyst for change. The comments made toward the end of her life expressing remorse over the growing meaningless of Christian conversation in the Church at large in no way disrupt the validity of her own work, but rather create a psalm-like meaning to the varying tone of her silkscreen posters. In more ways than one, Corita was a psalmist of her own times—an artist unafraid of the balance between lament and praise. Her work makes space for meaning to be found within the Pop Art movement in ways that Warhol and other contemporary artists never achieved.

Sister Corita Kent in no way began her life as a controversial figure. She was actually born as Frances Elizabeth Kent in 1918, to an Irish Catholic family living in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Her family moved to Canada and then Hollywood, where she graduated from a Catholic high school in 1936 and joined the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Upon taking her vows as a nun, she changed her name to Sister Mary Corita Kent and began taking art lessons at the Immaculate Heart College in Hollywood. It is at the IHC where Corita first took a class in silkscreen printing to fulfill a studio requirement. Though she had dabbled in painting and drawing, it was quickly apparent that Corita's artistic gifts were well-suited for the speed and ingenuity that the silkscreen printers required. One of her first attempts at silkscreening was entered and won first place in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art print competition and the California State Fair—a 1951 serigraph entitled *the lord is with thee*. A second image completed in 1954

and entitled *benedictio* (Fig. 1.) marked another milestone in Corita's career—the first time she experimented with text in a silkscreen image.

It was about this time that she perfected her method of combining ripped slogans from magazine ads with handwritten letters applied directly to the screen with her own mixture of glue, water, and vinegar. She was offered a position teaching art at the Immaculate Heart College, largely based on her knowledge of silkscreen printing, but was quickly promoted to the position of the Art Department Chair in 1964. It was in the early 60's that Kent's work began to stretch and blossom as she drew constant inspiration from the students surrounding her and the way in which they saw and discussed the world in all its baldness.

The classroom environment that Corita and her fellow teacher Sister Maggie created was based on the principles of experimentation and wonder. Students were given incredibly enormous tasks on a daily basis, whether it was going home and finding five hundred verses on love or carrying a paper viewfinder around the streets of Hollywood and sketching compositions inspired by pedestrian life. Many of Corita's students described her as meticulous and organized, but also as possessing abundant love and a "largesse of spirit". During this time, she experimented with color-saturated text-based prints riffing off the praise lyrics of the Psalms, with lines like "you founded the earth and what fills it" and "tree you are moss, you are violets...and all this is folly to the world".

In 1961, Corita met with the fellow heads of the Immaculate Heart College about the college's annual Mary's Day celebration—a holiday that one student described had once been "a God-awful, dismal affair of girls processing past the statue of Our Lady" (Burlingham, 43). Under the direction of Corita, the art department created dozens of vibrant silkscreen posters heralding the beauty of life, salvation, and mankind. The posters touted short, quippy slogans like "God likes me", "Give us this day our daily bread" and "Peace, Peace, Peace"—sayings that were both reflective of the school's growing social consciousness and California's burgeoning hippie movement. The students also relied on the use of flowers, banners, music, and printed quotes to create an environment that reflected the changing direction of the school.

Following the success of the first Mary's Day Parade, Corita's attentions began to turn to other socially charged issues in contemporary society that she and her students could engage with. One issue that changed the direction of her art almost radically was the growing disparity between middle-class Americans and lower income workers struggling for food. The topic of food was not foreign to the art world during the 1960's by any means. As mentioned previously, Andy Warhol's 32 *Campbell Soup Cans* (Fig. 2.) were first displayed in 1962—an exhibit Corita saw on display in Los Angeles that July. Warhol's influence moved Corita into her first pop-art print one month later in her poster simply entitled *wonder bread* (Fig. 3.). However, unlike Warhol's print, which displays a solitary soup can devoid of comment or interpretation, Corita takes the liberty of morphing Wonder Bread's perfectly rounded circles into more abstract shapes. Some art critics have interpreted this abstraction as a means of riffing off the gradual shift from Communion bread to Communion wafers within the Catholic Church (Dackerman, 174). Her clear and directed attention on the discrepancy between the Church's teachings on spiritual food and the growing poverty and disorder in the country increased during this time, exemplified by her later, bolder works referencing poverty.

A 1964 article in TIME Magazine entitled "War on Poverty: Portraits from an Appalachian Battleground" showcased images by photographer John Dominis of children scavenging in the snow for frozen lumps of coal and a distressed mother attempting to nurse a child writhing from measles. Along with these photographs, the article stated: "In a lonely valley in eastern Kentucky, in the heart of the mountainous region called Appalachia, live an impoverished people whose plight has long been ignored by affluent America. Their homes are shacks without plumbing or sanitation. Their landscape is a man-made desolation of corrugated hills and hollows laced with polluted streams. The people, themselves—often disease-ridden and unschooled—are without jobs and even without hope" (Time Magazine). As a response to this article, Corita created a serigraph entitled *that they may have life* (Fig. 4.), in which she quotes both a Kentucky miner's wife words. "It's bad you don't know what to do," they say, "when

you've got five children standing around crying for something to eat and you don't know where to get it, and you don't know which way to start to get it. I just get nervous or something. Kentucky miner's wife." Directly following her words, scattered across dots a little to the right, a Ghandi quote: "There are so many hungry people that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread."

This quote is, of course, a play on words in more way than one. The idea of God appearing in the form of bread is reference to the concept of Eucharistic Communion, a rite observed by Catholics and Protestants in churches on a consistent basis. Corita's choice of words, however, also plays up the stark contrast between the Church's emphasis on spiritual food—taking in the body and blood of Christ—and its un-attentiveness to the lack of physical food in the world around it. In John 10:10 Jesus told his disciples "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." In a country where children's hands bled as they dug in the snow each morning searching for the means of providing their next meal, Corita's poster simply asked the question: How do we say we care for the soul while we watch the body suffer?

Her growing frustration over the Catholic Church's inattentiveness to poverty in America combined with a growing interest in using pop art as a means of social change impacted Corita's decision to host the 1964 Mary's Day Parade with the theme of "Food for Peace". Unlike previous years, the 1964 procession contained mostly collaged posters with advertisements and slogans for various food products, with songs, film, theater, flowers, and the delivery of food to poor families in the community. Surprisingly, however, the Catholic Church took immediate offense to Corita's actions, and Cardinal McIntyre dispatched a letter condemning the march as "inappropriate" and disruptive to the Church's prescribed liturgy. It was the first time Corita's position as a leader of the Immaculate Heart College was in limbo, a situation that only worsened throughout the rest of the decade as she continued to make politically aware posters that challenged the Church's actions and called attention to the lack of Christlike love poured out into the world during her lifetime.

As Corita grew older, many believed her to

gradually slip away from her Christian roots into a more humanistic faith, primarily as a result of the Catholic Church's pushback against her calls for justice. Critics define this as a "crisis of faith" (Burlingham, 21) and separate her interest in faith from her former expression of religion. At the beginning of her work as a teacher, she had expressed remorse that religious art was, at the time, of a very "sort of late nineteenth century, but a bad nineteenth-century quality" (Burlingham, 13) and that she was motivated to go back earlier and find something stronger, all the way back to the Byzantine era "where at least there was strength and beauty." However, by the end of her career, Corita demonstrated a very different ideology and stated that "we went, just as the prints go, from very definitely—narrowly, perhaps—religious matter from the point where it dawned on me that any subject matter was religious" (Burlingham, 15). This newfound connection between Christ and the secular world was controversial. In a time when the Church was emphasizing meaning in the spiritual and Yves Klein was emphasizing meaning in nothing, Corita was drawing a bridge between pop culture and everlasting life. She did not gloss over the injustices in modern society, but rather used her posters as a spotlight on the way Americans, and Christians in particular, had glanced away from the blood staining our country.

It was later in the year in 1964, however, that Corita finally took a step too far for the Catholic Church to allow. She produced a pop art serigraph entitled *the juiciest tomato of all* (Fig. 5.) in which she quoted fellow professor Sam Einsenstein's poem comparing the Virgin Mary to a juicy tomato. Corita defended her use of the metaphor, stating: "I did a lot of research into tomato, and Sam did some for me too, and found that it really had a marvelous history and was connected in fact, at one point... with the mystical rose" (Dackerman, 156). Despite her defense, however, Corita's work was deemed radical and irreligious by Cardinal McIntyre and other conservative Catholics, who submitted a list of grievances against Corita to the head of the Immaculate Heart College that resulted in Corita's sabbatical and then resignation a few years later.

Toward the end of her life, many art critics, including the authors of the *Someday is Now*

publication, will concur that Corita walked away from Christianity completely after breaking from the Catholic Church. In an interview with Newsweek Magazine in 1984, she admitted that she “gradually became aware of a lot of things in Christian terminology that just didn’t have meaning anymore” (Burlingham, 21). Her works did become less focused on spiritual matters and more involved with political and social justice movements. Critics admire her move from “religious rebellion” to a more humanist approach to art and love in the late 60’s and early 70’s, as evidenced by the art historical emphasis on Corita’s use of graphic design rather than strong analysis of the content of her work.

However, Corita’s body of work, when studied in its entirety, directly contradicts any idea that references to Christianity in her art could have completely lost their meaning. One of her most famous serigraphs, *song about the greatness* (Fig. 6.), was completed in 1964 and draws direct inspiration from a Del Monte advertisement for canned meatballs. In faded script, so light you can barely read it, Corita has scribbled these words: “MAKES MEATBAL SING / let the ocean thunder with all its waves / the world and all who dwell there / the rivers clap their hands / the mountains shout together with joy before the lord / for he comes”.

These words almost directly parallel Psalm 98, in which the psalmist urges the sea to resound, the rivers to clap their hands and the mountains to sing with joy before the day that the Lord will finally judge the world with righteousness and equality.

The most beautiful aspect of the Book of Psalms is perhaps its variety of tone. Suffering and anguish is as common a theme as joyfulness and thanksgiving. The writer is not afraid to question God’s mercy and love, just as he is not hesitant to declare God’s grace. In a moment, the psalmist may find all that he knows about his faith to seem void of meaning. But in the next breath his faith is renewed, and he finds love rich enough to make mountains and yes, perhaps meatballs sing. Corita wasn’t afraid to compare herself to the psalmist, stating in a 1967 article, “This sign language [of advertisements] is almost infinitely rich. ... Up and down the highways (good symbols too) we see words like ‘Cold, clear, well-water,’ ‘The best to you each morn ing,’ ‘Have a happy day,’ ‘Sunkist,’ ‘Del

Monte’s catsup makes meatballs sing,’ that read almost like contemporary translations of the psalms for us to be singing on our way. The game is endless, which makes it a good symbol of eternity which will be great endless game” (Kent, 11-12).

Unlike the majority of other pop artists, the backbone of Corita Kent’s prints are psalms of lament and of praise. They search inward, into our hearts and motives, but they also look up, into the beauty of a love that can with surety be a catalyst for change. This theologically verbose interpretation of her artwork sets it apart from other pop art of the same decade. Corita’s prints are different in kind than the work of Warhol, Lichtenstein, Klein or Armand because she reminds us that change is not only possible, but necessary in order to fully live out the Christian life. David sought God’s grace in the presence of great trials, but Corita’s work boldly declares that grace is a tool we already have, with the potential to redeem the society around us.

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