

Articles on Christian Faith and Other Things

**From the "Chamber of
Horrors" series**

CJS Hayward

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Questions and contact information:
cjshayward.com/contact

**The reader is invited to visit cjshayward.com
and amazon.com/author/cjshayward.**

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Preface

This collection includes articles of varying degrees of academic formality. Some of them are not academic at all, while others are enriched by the author's engagement with the university. They cover everything and nothing in faith and life. They include the author's first public speech ("Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Real Peace Through Real Strength"), the author's first dissertation in theology ("Dark Patterns / Anti-Patterns and Cultural Context in Study of Scriptural Texts: A Case Study in Craig Keener's *Paul, Women, and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*"), and one or two works intended for business ("Friendly, Win-Win Negotiations in Business: Interest-Based Negotiation and "Getting to Yes").

The articles here presented are guideposts along the way to works of mystical theology that would come later, perhaps years later, but they are interesting in themselves. They are taken from among the oldest and newest of works at Jonathan's Corner. And they provide a starting point for much else that was there: the author may not have written "Doxology" if he had not first written "AI as an Arena for Magical Thinking

Among Skeptics: Artificial Intelligence, Cognitive Science, and Orthodox Views on Personhood."

An Abstract Art of Memory

Abstract. Author briefly describes classic mnemotechnics, indicates a possible weakness in their ability to deal with abstractions, and suggests a parallel development of related principles designed to work well with abstractions.

Frances Yates opens *The Art of Memory* with a tale from ancient Greece[1]:

At a banquet given by a nobleman of Thessaly named Scopas, the poet Simonides of Ceos chanted a lyric poem in honor of his post but including a passage in praise of Castor and Pollux. Scopas meanly told the poet that he would only pay him half the sum agreed upon for the panegyric and that he must obtain the balance from the twin gods to whom he had devoted half the poem. A little later, a message was brought in to Simonides that two young men were waiting outside who wished to see him. He rose from the banquet and went out but could find no one. During his absence the roof of the banqueting hall fell in, crushing Scopas and all the guests beneath the ruins; the corpses were so mangled that the relatives who came to take them

away for burial were unable to identify them. But Simonides remembered the places at which they had been sitting at the table and was therefore able to indicate to the relatives which were their dead.

After his spatial memory in this event, Simonides is credited with having created an art of memory: start with a building full of distinct places. If you want to remember something, imagine a striking image with a token of what you wish to remember at the place. To recall something naval, you might imagine a giant nail driven into your front door, with an anchor hanging from it; if you visualize this intensely, then when in your mind's eye you go through your house and imagine your front door, then the anchor will come to mind and you will remember the boats. Imagining a striking image on a remembered place is called *pegging*: when you do this, you fasten a piece of information on a given peg, and can pick it up later. Yates uses the terms *art of memory* and *artificial memory* as essentially interchangeable with *mnemotechnics*, and I will follow a similar usage.

There is a little more than this to the technique, and it allows people to do things that seem staggering to someone not familiar with the phenomenon[2]. Being able to look at a list of twenty items and recite it forwards and backwards is more than a party trick. The technique is phenomenally well-adapted to language acquisition. It is possible for a person skilled in the technique to learn to read a language in weeks. It is the foundation to some people learning an amount of folklore so that today they would be considered walking encyclopedias. This art of memory was an important part of the ancient Greek rhetorical tradition[3], drawn by medieval Europe into the cardinal virtue of wisdom[4], and then transformed into an occult art by the Renaissance[5]. Medieval and renaissance variations put the technique to vastly different use, and understood it to signify greatly different things, but outside of Lullism[6]

and Ramism[7], the essential technique was the same.

In my own efforts to learn the classical form of the art of memory, I have noticed something curious. I'm better at remembering people's names, and I no longer need to write call numbers down when I go to the library. I was able, without difficulty, to deliver an hour-long speech from memory. Learning vocabulary for foreign languages has come much more quickly; it only took me about a month to learn to read the Latin Vulgate. My weaknesses in memory are not nearly so great as they were, and I know other people have been much better at the art than I am. At the same time, I've found one surprise, something different from the all-around better memory I suspected the art would give me. What is it? If there is a problem, it is most likely subtle: the system has obvious benefits. To tease it out, I'd like to recall a famous passage from Plato's *Phaedrus*[8]:

Socrates: At the Egyptian city of Naucratis, there was a famous old god, whose name was Theuth; the bird which is called the Ibis was sacred to him, and he was the inventor of many arts, such as arithmetic and calculation and geometry and astronomy and draughts and dice, but his great discovery was the use of letters. Now in those days Thamus was the king of the whole of Upper Egypt, which is in the district surrounding that great city which is called by the Hellenes Egyptian Thebes, and they call the god himself Ammon. To him came Theuth and showed his inventions, desiring that the other Egyptians might be allowed to have the benefit of them; he went through them, and Thamus inquired about their several uses, and praised some of them and censured others, as he approved or disapproved of them. There would be no use in repeating all that Thamus said to Theuth in praise or blame of the various arts. But when

they came to letters, This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories; for this is the cure of forgetfulness and folly. Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth, he who has the gift of invention is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. And in this instance a paternal love of your own child has led you to say what is not the fact: for this invention of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters. You have found a specific, not for memory but for reminiscence, and you give your disciples only the pretence of wisdom; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome, having the reputation of knowledge without the reality.

There is clear concern that writing is not what it appears, and it will endanger or destroy the knowledge people keep in memory; a case can be made that the phenomenon of Renaissance artificial memory as an occult practice occurred because only someone involved in the occult would have occasion to keep such memory after books were so easily available.

What kind of things might one wish to have in memory? Let me quote one classic example: the argument by which Cantor proved that there are more real numbers between 0 and 1 than there are counting numbers (1, 2, 3...). I paraphrase the basic argument here:

1. Two sets are said to have the same number of elements if you can always pair them up, with nothing left over on either side. If one set always has something left over after the matching up, it has

more elements.

2. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that there are at least as many counting numbers as real numbers between 0 and 1. Then you can make a list of the numbers between 0 and 1:

1: .012343289889...
 2: .328932198323...
 3: .438724328743...
 4: .988733287923...
 5: .324432003442...
 6: .213443765001...
 7: .321010320030...
 8: .323983213298...
 9: .982133982198...
 10: .321932198904...
 11: .000321321278...
 12: .032103217832...

3. Now, take the first decimal place of the first number, the second of the second number, and so on and so forth, and make them into a number:

1: .**0**12343289889...
 2: .3**2**8932198323...
 3: .43**8**724328743...
 4: .988**7**33287923...
 5: .3244**3**2003442...
 6: .21344**3**765001...
 7: .321010**3**20030...
 8: .3239832**1**3298...
 9: .98213398**2**198...
 10: .321932198**9**04...

11: .000321321278...

12: .032103217832...

Result:

.028733312972...

4. Now make another number between 0 and 1 that is different at every decimal place from the number just computed:

.139844423083...

5. Now, remember that we assumed that the list has all the numbers between 0 and 1: every single one, without exception. Therefore, if this assumption is true, then the latter number we constructed must be on the list. But where?

The number can't be the first number on the list, because it was constructed to be different at the first decimal place from the first number on the list. It can't be the second number on the list, because it was constructed to be different at the second decimal place from the second number on the list. Nor can it be the third, fourth, fifth... in fact, it can't be *anywhere* on the list because it was constructed to be different. So we have one number left over. (Can we put that number on the list? Certainly, but the argument shows that the new list will leave out another number.)

6. The list of numbers between 0 and 1 doesn't have all the numbers between 0 and 1.
7. We have a contradiction.
8. We started by assuming that you can make a list that contains all the numbers between 0 and 1, but there's

a contradiction: any list leaves numbers left over. Therefore, our assumption must be wrong. Therefore, there must be too many real numbers between 0 and 1 to assign a separate counting number to each of them.

Let's say we want to commit this argument to memory. A mathematician with artificial memory might say, "That's easy! You just imagine a chessboard with distorted mirrors along its diagonal." That is indeed a good image if you are a mathematician who already understands the concept. If you find the argument hard to follow, it is at best a difficult thing to store via the artificial memory. Even if it can be done, storing this argument in artificial memory is probably much more trouble than learning it as a mathematician would.

Let me repeat the quotation from the Phaedrus, while changing a few words:

Jefferson: At the Greek region of Thessaly, there was a famous old poet, whose name was Simonides; totems seen with the inner eye were devoted to him, and he was the inventor of a great art, greater than arithmetic and calculation and geometry and astronomy and draughts. Now in those days Rousseau was a sage revered throughout the West, and they called the god himself *Rationis*. To him came Simonides and showed his invention, desiring that the rest of the world might be allowed to have the benefit of it; he went through it, and Rousseau inquired about its several uses, and praised some of them and censured others, as he approved or disapproved of them. There would be no use in repeating all that Rousseau said to Simonides in praise or blame of various facets. But when they came to inner writing, This, said Simonides, will make the West wiser and give it

better memory; for this is the cure of forgetfulness and of folly. Rousseau replied: O most ingenious Simonides, he who has the gift of invention is not always the best judge of utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. And in this instance a paternal love of your own child has led you to say what is not the fact; for this invention will create forgetfulness in the learner's souls, because they will not remember abstract things; they will trust to mere mnemonic symbols and not remember things of depth. You have found a specific, not for memory but for reminiscence, and you give your disciples only the pretence of wisdom; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome, having the reputation and outer shell of knowledge without the reality of deep thought.

It is clear that if we follow Thomas Aquinas's instructions on memory to visualize a woman for wisdom, we may recall wisdom. *What is less clear is that this inner writing particularly helps an abstract recollection of wisdom.* It may be able to recall an understanding of wisdom acquired without the help of artificial memory, but this art which allows at times stunning performance in the memorization of concrete data is of more debatable merit in learning abstraction. It has been my own experience that abstractions can be forced through the gate of concreteness in artificial memory, but it is like forcing a sponge through a funnel. While I admittedly don't have a medieval practitioner's inner vocabulary to deal with abstractions, using the artificial memory to deal with abstractions seems awkward in much the same way that storing individual letters through artificial memory[9] is awkward. The standard artificial memory is a tool for being reminded of

abstractions, but not for remembering them. It offers the abstract thinker a seductive way to recall a great many concrete facts instead of learning deep thought.

The overall impression I receive of the artificial memory is not so much a failed attempt at a tool to store abstractions as a successful attempt at a concrete tool which was not intended to store abstractions. It is my belief that some of its principles, in modified form, suggest the beginnings of an art of memory well-fitted to dealing with abstractions. The mature form of such an endeavor will not simply be an abstract mirror image of a concrete artificial memory, but it is appropriate enough for the first steps I might hazard.

Consider the following four paragraphs:

1. Physics is like music. Both owe something of substance to the Pythagoreans. Both are aesthetic endeavors that in some way represent nature in highly abstracted form. Both are interested in mechanical waves. Many good physicists are closet musicians, and all musical instruments operate on physical principle.
2. Physics is like literature. Both are written in books that vary from moderately easy to very hard. Both deal with a distinction between action and what is acted on, be it plot and character or force and particle, and both allow complex entities to be built of simpler ones. Practitioners of both want to be thought of as insightful people who understand reality.
3. Physics is like an adventure. Both involve a venture into the unknown, where the protagonist tries to discover what is happening. Both have a mystique that exists despite most people's fear to experience such things themselves. To succeed in either, one is expected to have impressive strengths.

4. Physics is like magic. Both flourished in the West, at the same time, out of the same desire: a desire to understand nature so as to control it. Both attract abstract thinkers, are practiced in part through the manipulation of arcane symbols, and may be found in the same person, from Newton to Feynman[10]. Magical theory claims matter to be composed of earth, air, fire, and water, while physics finds matter to be composed of solid, liquid, gas, and plasma.

What is the merit of these comparisons? They recall a story in which a literature professor asked Feynman if he thought physics was like literature. Feynman led him on with an elaborate analogy of how physics was like literature, and then said, "But it seems to me you can make such an analogy between any two subjects, so I don't find such analogies helpful." He observed that one can make a reasonably compelling analogy even if there's no philosophically substantial connection.

The laws of logic and philosophy are not the laws of memory. What is a liability to Feynman's implicit philosophical method is a strength to memory. The philosophical merit of the above comparisons is debatable. The benefit to memory is different: it appears to me that this is an abstract analogue to pegging. A connection, real or spurious, aids the memory even if it doesn't aid a rigorous philosophical understanding. In pegging, it is considered an advantage to visualize a ludicrously illogical scene: it is much more memorable than something routine and sensible. Early psychological experiments in memory involved memorization of nonsense syllables. The experimenters intentionally chose meaningless material to memorize. Why? Well, if the subject perceived meaning, that would provide a spurious way for the subject to remember the data, and so proper Ebbinghausian memory study meant investigating how people investigate memory

material which was as meaningless as possible. Without pausing to develop an obvious critique, I'd suggest that this spurious route to memory is of great interest to us. Meaningful data is more memorable than meaningless, and this is true whether the meaning perceived is philosophically sound or obviously contrived. I might suggest that interesting meaning provides a direct abstract parallel to the striking, special-effect appearance of effective images in pegging.

I intentionally chose not to compare physics to astronomy, chemistry, computer science, engineering, mathematics, metaphysics, or statistics, because I wanted to show how a different concept can be used to establish connections to a new one. Or, more properly, different concepts. *Having a new concept connected to three very different ones will capture different facets than one anchor point, and possibly cancel out some of each other's biases.* A multiplicity of perspectives lends balance and depth. This isn't to say similar concepts can't be used, only that searching for a partial or full isomorphism to a known concept is easier than encoding from scratch. If memorable connections can be made between physics and adventure, music, English, and magic, what might be obtained from comparison with mathematics, chemistry, and engineering? A comparison between physics and these last three disciplines is left as an exercise to the reader, and one that may be quite fruitful.

Is this a desirable way to remember things? I would make two different comments on this score. First, when learning Latin words, I would first peg it to an English word with a vivid image, then later recall the image and reconstruct the English equivalent, then recall the image and remember the English, then the image would drop out so I would directly remember the English, and finally the English word would drop out too, leaving me with a Latin usage often different from the English equivalent used. Artificial memory does not circumvent natural memory;

instead it streamlines the process and short-circuits many observable of the disruptive trips to the dictionary. Pegs vanish with use; they are not an alternate final product but a more efficient route for concepts more frequently used, and a cache of reference material. Therefore, even if remembered comparisons between physics and adventure/music/English/magic fall short of how one would desire to understand the concept, a similar flattening of the learning curve is possible. Second, I would say that *even if you fail to peg something, you may succeed*. How? In trying to peg a person's name, I hold that name and face in an intense focus—quite the opposite how I once reacted: "I'll never remember that," a belief which chased other people's names out of my mind in seconds. That focus is relevant to memory, and it has happened more than once that I completely failed to create a peg, but my failure used enough mental energy that I still remembered. If you search through your memory and fail to make even forced connections between a new concept and existing concepts, the mental focus given to the concept will leave you much better off than if you had thrown up your hands and thought the self-fulfilling prophecy: "I will never remember that!"

Certain kinds of emotional intelligence are part of the discipline. Learning to cultivate *presence* has to do with an emotional side, and I have written elsewhere about activities that can help to cultivate such presence[11]. We learn material better if we are interested in it; therefore consciously cultivating an interest in the material and seeing how it can be fascinating is another edge. Cultivating and guarding your inner emotional state can have substantial impact on memory and learning abstractions. Much of it has to do with keeping a state of presence. Shutting out abstractions is one obvious way to do this; another, perhaps less obvious, is to avoid cramming and simply ploughing through material unless it's something you don't really need to learn. Why?

If there is a sprinkler that disperses a fine mist, it will slowly moisten the ground. What if there's a high-volume sprinkler that shoots big, heavy drops of water high up in the air? With all that water pounding on the ground, it looks like the ground is quickly saturated. The appearance is deceptive. What has happened is that the heavy drops have pounded the surface of the ground into a beaten shield, so there really is water rolling off of a very wet surface, but go an inch down and the soil is as parched as ever. This sort of thing happens in studying, when people think that the more force they use, the better the results. Up to a point, definitely, and perseverance counts—but I have found myself to learn much more when I paid attention to my mental and emotional state and backed off if I sensed that I was leaving that optimal zone. I learn something if I say "This is important, so I'll plough through as much as I can as quickly as I can," but it's not as much, and keeping on task needs to be balanced with getting off task when that is helpful.

Consider the following problem:[12]

In the inns of certain Himalayan villages is practiced a most civilized and refined tea ceremony. The ceremony involves a host and exactly two guests, neither more nor less. When his guests have arrived and have seated themselves at his table, the host performs five services for them. These services are listed in order of the nobility which the Himalayan attribute to them: (1) Stoking the Fire, (2) Fanning the Flames, (3) Passing the Rice Cakes, (4) Pouring the Tea, and (5) Reciting Poetry. During the ceremony, any of those present may ask another, "Honored Sir, may I perform this onerous task for you?" However, a person may request of another only the least noble of the tasks which the other is performing. Further, if a person is performing any tasks, then he may not request a task which is nobler than the least noble task

he is already performing. Custom requires that by the time the tea ceremony is over, all the tasks will have been transferred from the host to the most senior of the guests. How may this be accomplished?

Incomprehensible appearances notwithstanding, this is a very simple problem, the Towers of Hanoi. Someone who has learned the Towers of Hanoi may still solve the tea ceremony formulation as slowly as someone who's never seen any form of the problem[13]. A failure to recognize isomorphisms provides one of the more interesting passages in Feynman's memoirs[14]:

I often liked to play tricks on people when I was at MIT. One time, in a mechanical drawing class, some joker picked up a French curve (a piece of plastic for drawing smooth curves—a curly, funny-looking thing) and said, "I wonder if the curves on this thing have some special formula?"

I thought for a moment and said, "Sure they do. The curves are very special curves. Lemme show ya," and I picked up my French curve and began to turn it slowly. "The French curve is made so that at the lowest point on each curve, no matter how you turn it, the tangent is horizontal."

All the guys in the class were holding their French curve up at different angles, holding their pencil up to it at the lowest point and laying it along, and discovering that, sure enough, the tangent is horizontal. They were all excited by this "discovery"—even though they had already gone through a certain amount of calculus and had already "learned" that the derivative (tangent) of the minimum (lowest point) of *any* curve is zero (horizontal). They didn't put two and two together. They didn't even know what they "knew."

What is going on here is that Feynman perceives an isomorphism where the others do not. There may be a natural bent to or away from perceiving isomorphisms, and cognitive science suggests most people have a bent away. The finding, as best I can tell, is not so much that people *can't* look for isomorphisms, as that they *don't*. The practice of looking for and finding isomorphisms has something to give, because something can be treated as already known instead of learned from scratch. I might wonder in passing if the ultra-high-IQ rapid learning and interdisciplinary proclivities stem in part from the perception and application of isomorphisms, which may *reduce* the amount of material actually learned in picking up a new skill.

The classical art of memory derives strength from a mind that works visually; a background in abstract thought will help one learn abstractions. It has been thought[15] that people can more effectively encode and remember material in a given domain if it's one they have worked with; I would suggest that this abstract pegging also creates a way to encode material with background from other domains. An elaborate, intense, and distinct encoding is believed to help recall[16]. Heightening of memorable features, in what is striking or humorous[17], should help, and mimetics seems likely to contain jewels in its accounts of how a meme makes itself striking.

Someone familiar with artificial memory may ask, "What about places (*loci*)?" Part of the art of memory, be it ancient, medieval, or renaissance, involved having an inner building of sorts that one could imagine going through in order and recalling items. I have two basic comments here. First, a connection could use traditional artificial memory techniques as an index: imagine a muscular man with a tremendous physique running onto the scene, grabbing an adventurer's sword, shield, and pack, sitting down at a pipe organ which has a large illuminated manuscript on top, and clumsily playing music until a giant gold ring engraved with fiery letters falls on the scene and turns it to dust. You have

pegged physics to adventure, music, literature, and magic; if you wanted to reconstruct an understanding of physics, you could see what it was pegged to, and then try to recall the given similarities. Second and more deeply, *I believe that a person's entire edifice of previously acquired concepts may serve as an immense memory palace*. It is not spatial in the traditional sense, and I am not here concerned with the senses in which it might be considered a topological space, but it is a deeply qualitative place, and accessible if one uses traditional artificial memory for an index: these adaptations are intended to expand the repertoire of what disciplined artificial memory can do, not abolish the traditional discipline.

Symbols are the last unexplored facet. Earlier I suggested that a chessboard with mirrors along its diagonal may be a good token to represent Cantor's diagonal argument, but does not bring memory of the whole proof. Now I would like to give the other side: an abstraction may not be fully captured by a symbol, but a good symbol helps. A sign/symbol distinction has been made, where a sign represents while a symbol represents and embodies. In this sense I suggest that tokens be as symbolic as possible.

Why use a token? Aren't the deepest thoughts beyond words? Yes, but recall depends on being able to encode. I have found my deepest thoughts to not be worded and often difficult to translate to words, but I have also found that I lose them if I cannot put them in words. As such, thinking and choosing a good, mentally manipulable symbol for an abstraction is both difficult and desirable. My own discipline of formation, mathematics, chooses names for variables like 'x', 'y', and 'z' which software engineers are taught not to use because they impede comprehension: a computer program with variable names like 'x' and 'y' is harder to understand or even write to completion than one which with names like 'trucks_remaining' or 'customers_last_name'. The authors of *Design Patterns*[18] comment that naming a pattern is one of the hardest parts

of writing it down. The art of creating a manipulable symbol for an abstraction is hard, but worth the trouble. This, too, may also help you to probe an abstraction in a way that will aid recall.

To test these principles, I decided to spend a week[19] seeing what I could learn of a physics text[20] and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*[21]. I considered myself to have understood a portion of the physics text after being able to solve the last of the list of questions. I had originally decided to see how quickly I could absorb material. After working through 10% of the physics text in one day, I decided to shift emphasis and pursue depth more than speed. In reading Kant, the tendency to barely grasp a difficult concept forgotten in grasping the next difficult concept gave way, with artificial memory, to understanding the concepts better and grasping them in a way that had a more permanent effect. I read through page 108 of 607 in the physics text and 144 of 669 in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The first day's physics ventures saw two interesting ways of storing concepts, and one comment worth mentioning. There is a classic skit, in which two rescuers are performing two-person CPR on a patient. Then one of the rescuers says, "I'm getting tired. Let's switch," and the patient gets up, the tired rescuer lies down, and the other two perform CPR on him. This was used to store the interchangeability of point of effort, point of resistance, and fulcrum on a lever, based on an isomorphism to the skit's humor element.

The rule given later, that along any axis the sum of forces for a body in equilibrium is always zero, was symbolized by an image of a knife cutting a circle through the center: no matter what angle of cutting there was, the cut leaves two equal halves.

These both involved images, but the images differed from pegging images as a schematic diagram differs from a computer animated advertisement. They seemed a

combination of an isomorphism and a symbol, and in both cases the power stemmed not only from the resultant image but the process of creation. The images functioned in a sense related to pegging, but most of the images so far developed have been abstract images unlike anything I've read about in historical or how-to discussion of the art of memory.

The following was logged that night. The problem referred to is a somewhat complex lever problem given in three parts:

In reviewing the day's thoughts at night, I recognized that the problems seem to admit a shortcut solution that does not rigorously apply the principles but obtains the correct answer: problem 12 on page 31 gives two weights and other information, and all three subproblems can be answered by assuming that there are two parts in the same ratio [as] the weights, and applying a little horse sense as to which goes where. It's a bit like general relativity, which condenses to "Everything changes by a factor of the square root of $(1 - (v^2/c^2))$." I am not sure whether this is a property of physics itself or a socially emergent property of problems used in physics texts.

I believe this suggests that I was interacting with the material deeply and quite probably in a fashion not anticipated by the authors.

In reading Kant, I can't as easily say "I solved the last exercises in each section" and don't simply want to just say, "I read these pages." I would like to demonstrate interaction with the material with excerpts from my log:

...I am now in the introduction to the second edition, and there are two images in reference to Kant's treatment of subjective and objective. One is of a disc which has been cut in half, sliced again along a

perpendicular axis and brought together along the first axis so that the direction of the cut has been changed. The other is of a sphere being turned out by [topologically] compactifying \mathbb{R}^3 [Euclidean three-space] by the addition of a single point, and then shifting so the vast outside has become the cramped inside and the cramped inside has become the vast outside. Both images are inadequate to the text, indicating at best what sort of thing may be thought about in what sort of shift Kant tries to introduce, and I want to reread the last couple of pages. Closer to the mark is a story about three umpires who say, in turn, "I calls them as they are," "I calls them as I see them," and "They may be strikes, they may be balls, but they ain't nothing until I calls them!"

Having reread, I believe that the topological example is truer than I realized. I made it on almost superficial grounds, after reading a footnote which gave as example scientific progress after Copernicus proposed, rather than that the observer be fixed and the heavens rotate, the heavens are fixed and the observer rotate. The deeper significance is this: prior accounts had apparently not given sufficient account to subjective factors, treating subjective differences as practically unimportant—what mattered for investigation was the things in themselves. Thus the subjective was the unexamined inside of the sphere. Then, after the transformation, the objective was the unexaminable inside of the new sphere: we may investigate what is now outside, our subjective states and the appearances conformed to them, but things in themselves are more sealed than our filters before: before, we didn't look; after, we can't look. What is stated [in Kant] so far is a gross overextension of a profound observation.

The below passages refer to pp. 68-70:

Kant's arguments that space is an *a priori* concept can be framed as showing that there exists a chicken-and-egg or bootstrapping gap between them and sense data.

What is a chicken-and-egg/bootstrapping gap? In assisting with English as a Second Language instruction, I was faced with a difficulty in explanation. Assuming certain background, it is possible for a person not to know something while there is a straightforward way of explaining—perhaps a very long way of explaining, but it's obvious enough how to explain it in terms of communicable concepts. Then there is the case where there is no direct way to explain something: one example is how to explain to a small child what air is. One can point to water, wood, metal, stone, food, and a great many other things, but the same procedure may not yield understanding of air. It may be possible with a Zen-like cleverness to circumvent it—in saying, for example, that air is what presses on your skin on a windy day—but it is not as straightforward as even an involved and difficult explanation where you know how to use the other person's concepts to build the one you want.

In English as a Second Language instruction, this kind of gap is a significant phenomenon in dealing with students who have no beginning English knowledge, and in dealing with concepts that cannot obviously be demonstrated: 'sister' and 'woman', when both terms refer to an adult, differ in a way that is almost certainly understood in the student's native tongue but is nonetheless extremely difficult to explain. When I first made the musing, I envisioned a Zen-like solution. Koans immortalize incidents in which Zen masters bypassed chicken-and-egg gaps in

trying to convey enlightenment that cannot be straightforwardly explained, and therefore show a powerful kind of communication. That is what I envisioned, but it is not how English is taught to speakers of other languages. What happens in ESL classes, and with younger children, is a gradual emergence that is difficult to account for in the terms of analytic philosophy—a straightforward explanation sounds like hand-waving and sloppy thinking—but with enough repetition, material is picked up. It may have something to do with a mechanism of learning outlined in Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge*, which talks about how i.e. swimmers learn from coaches to inhale more air and exhale less completely so that their lungs act more as a flotation device than a non-swimmers, *even though neither swimmer nor coach is likely aware of what is going on on any conscious level*. People pick things up through at least one route besides grasping a concept consciously synthesized from sense data.

Kant's proof that a given concept is *a priori* essentially consists of argument that the concept that cannot be synthesized from sense data through the obvious means of central route processing. He is probably right in that the concepts he classifies as *a priori*, and presumably others as well, cannot just be synthesized from sense data through central route processing. It does not follow that a concept must be *a priori*: there are other possibilities besides the route Kant investigates that one can acquire a belief. I do believe, though, that we come with some kind of innate or *a priori* knowledge: the difficulties experienced in visualizing four dimensional objects suggest that our dealing with three-dimensional space is not simply the result of a completely amorphous central nervous system which we happen to condition to deal with three dimensions; there is something of

substance, comparable in character to a psychologist's broader understanding of memory, that we are born to. An investigation of that would take me too far afield.

P. 87. "Now a thing in itself cannot be known throu[g]h mere relations; and we may therefore conclude that since outer science gives us nothing but mere relations, this sense can contain in its representation only the relation of an object to the subject, and not the inner properties of the object in itself."

There is a near-compatibility between this and realist philosophy of science. How?

Recall my observation about chicken-and-egg gaps and how they may be surmounted (here I think of Zenlike short-circuiting of the gap rather than the vaguely indicated gradual emergence of concepts which haven't been subject to a detailed and understood explanation). What goes on in a physics experiment? The truly famous ones since 1900—I think of the Millikin oil-drop experiment—include a very clever hack that tricks nature into revealing herself. People, not even experimental physicists, can grab a handful of household items and prove that electric charge is quantized.[22] Perhaps that was possible in Galileo's day, but a groundbreaking experiment involves a brilliant, clever, unexpected trickery of nature that is isomorphic to a Zen short-circuiting in a chicken-and-egg gap, or a clever hack, and so on and so forth. Even a routine classroom experiment uses technology that is the fruit of this kind of resourcefulness. People do something they "shouldn't" be able to do. This is possibly how we might learn intuitions Kant classifies as *a priori*, and how experimental scientists cleverly circumvent the

roadblock Kant describes here. It might be said that understanding this basic problem is prerequisite to a good realist philosophy of science.

'Hack', in this context, refers to the programming cleverness described in *Programming Pearls*[24]. I analyzed that fundamental mode of problem solving and compared it with its counterpart in "Of Technology, Magic, and Channels"[25]. There are other observations and interactions with the text, but I believe these should adequately make the point.

I chose Kant because of his reputation as an impenetrable analytic philosopher. With the aid of a good translation and these principles, I was at times surprised at how easy it was to read. By the end of the week, I had another surprise when I decided to reread George MacDonald's *Phantastes*[25], a work which I have greatly enjoyed. This time, my experience was different. I felt my mind working differently despite a high degree of mental fatigue. The evocative metaphor fell dead, and I found myself reading the text as I would read Kant, thinking in a manner deeply influenced by reading Kant, and in the end setting it down because my mind had shifted deeply into a mode quite different from what allows me to enjoy *Phantastes*. I was surprised at how deeply using abstract memory to read Kant had affected not only conscious recall of ideas but also ways of thought itself.

I do not consider my recorded observations to be in any sense a rigorous experiment, but I believe the experience suggests it's interesting enough to be worth a good experiment.

Here are twelve proposed principles, or rules of thumb, of abstract memory:

1. Be wholly present. Want to know the material. Make it emotionally relevant and connected to something that concerns you. Don't take notes[26].

2. Encode material in multiple ways. Some different ways to encode are: analogies to different abstractions, list distinctions from similar abstractions, paraphrase, search for isomorphisms, use the concepts, and create visual symbols.[27]
3. At least in the beginning, mix a little bit of reading material with a lot of processing. Don't plough through anything you want to remember. Work on drawing a lot of mist in, not pounding with heavy drops that will create a beaten shield.
4. Don't read out of a desire to finish reading a text. Read to draw the materials through processed thought.
5. Process in a way that is striking, stunning, novel, and counter-intuitive: in a word, memorable.
6. Process material on as deep a level as you can.[28]
7. Search for subtle distinctions between a concept under study and its near neighbors.
8. Converse, interact with, and respond to the abstractions. What would you say if an acquaintance said that in a discussion? What questions would you ask? Write it down.
9. Know how much mental energy you have, and choose battles wisely. Given a limited amount of energy, it is better to fully remember a smaller number of critical abstractions than to have diffuse knowledge of many random ideas.
10. Guard your emotions. Be aware of what emotional

states you learn well in, and put being in those states before passing your eyes over such-and-such many pages of reading material.

11. Review material after study, seeking to find a different way of putting it.
12. Metacogitate. Be your own coach.

Committing these principles to memory is left as an exercise to the reader.

What can I say to conclude this monograph? I can think of one or two brief addenda, such as the programmer's virtue of laziness[29], but in a very real sense I can't conclude now. I can sketch out a couple of critiques that may be of interest. Jerry Mander[30] critiques the artificial unusuality of television and especially advertising, in a way that has direct bearing on traditional mnemotechnics. He suggests that giving otherwise uninteresting sensation a strained and artificial unusuality has undesirable impact on how people perceive life as seen outside of TV, and the angle of his critique is the main reason why I was hesitant to learn artificial memory. There may be room for similar critiques about why making ridiculous comparisons to remember ideas creates a bad habit for someone who wishes to think rigorously. There is also the cognitive critique that the search for isomorphisms will introduce unnoted distortion. One thinks of the person who says, "All the religions in the world say the same thing." There is a common and problematic tendency to be astute in perceiving substantial similarities among world religions and all but blind in perceiving even more substantial differences. That is why I suggest comparing with multiple and different familiar concepts, rather than one. I could give other thoughts about critiques, but I'm trying to explain an art of memory, not

especially to defend it. My intention here is not to settle all questions, but open the biggest one and suggest a direction of inquiry by which an emerging investigation may find a more powerful way to learn abstractions.[31]

Notes

1. Yates, Frances A., *The Art of Memory*, hereafter *AM*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, pp. 1-2. The text is a treasure trove on the development of mnemotechnics, also referred to here as artificial memory or the art of memory.
2. Trudeau, Kevin, *Kevin Trudeau's Mega Memory*, hereafter *KTMM*, New York: William Morrow & Co., 1995 is one of several practical manuals for someone who thinks the classical art of memory interesting and would like to be able to use it.
3. *AM*, pp. 27ff.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 50ff.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 129ff.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 173ff.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 231ff.
8. Jowett, B., *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. III, hereafter *DP*, New York: National Library Company, pp. 442-443.
9. *AM*, pp. 112ff describes one popularizer whose somewhat debased form advocated memorizing individual letters. This practice is awkward, much as it would be awkward to record the appearance of a

room by taking a notepad and writing one letter on each sheet of paper.

10. Feynman, Richard, *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman*, hereafter *SYJMF*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985, pp. 338ff and other places in the text. He began his famous "Cargo Cult Science" address by talking about his occult diversions from scientific endeavors, and it is arguable that Newton's groundbreaking work in physics and optics was a scientific diversion from his main occult endeavors. I find it revealing that, even with Feynman's occult forays left in the book, the index shows curious lacunae for "ESP", "Hallucination", "New Age", "Reflexology", "Sensory deprivation", etc. Back
11. *100 Ways of Kything*, hereafter *1WK*, by Jonathan Hayward, at cjshayward.com/kything describes a number of activities which can embody presence and focus.
12. Hayes, J.R., and Simon, H.A., "Understanding Written Problem Instructions", 1974, in Gregg, L.W. ed., *Knowledge and Cognition*, hereafter *KC*, Hillsdale: Erlbaum. Quoted in Posner, Michael I. ed., *Foundations of Cognitive Science*, hereafter *FCS*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989, pp. 534-535.
13. *FCS*, pp. 559-560.
14. *SYJMF*, pp. 36-37. A more scholarly, if more pedestrian, mention of the phenomenon is provided in *FCS*, pp. 559-560.
15. *FCS*, p. 690. The authors do not necessarily subscribe to this view, but acknowledge influence

among many in the field.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 691.

17. "A Picture of Evil," hereafter *APE*, by Jonathan Hayward, at cjshayward.com/evil provides an example of communication which is striking in this manner.

18. Gamma, Erich; Helm, Richard; Johnson, Ralph; Vlissides, John, *Design Patterns: Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software*, hereafter *DP*, Reading: Addison-Wesley, p. 3. The book describes recurring good practices that are known to many expert practitioners, but often only on a tacit level—and tries to explain how this tacit knowledge can be made explicit. The book is commonly called 'GoF' ("Gang of Four") by software developers. Thanks to Ron Miles for locating the page number.

19. February 9-15 2002. Testing abstract artificial and honing this article were juggled with other responsibilities.

20. Black, Newton Henry; Davis, Harvey Nathaniel, *New Practical Physics: Fundamental Principles and Applications to Daily Life*, hereafter *NPP*, New York: Macmillan, 1929. Given to me as a whimsical Christmas gift in 2001. At the time of beginning, I was significantly out of practice in both physics and mathematics.

21. Smith, Norman Kemp tr., *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, hereafter *IKCPR*, London: Macmillan, 1929. I had not previously read Kant.

22. I knew that science doesn't deal in proof; experiments may corroborate a theory, but not establish it as something to never again doubt. I was thinking at that point along another dimension, to convey a quality of physics experiments today.
23. Bentley, Jon Louis, *Programming Pearls*, hereafter *PP*, Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1986.
24. Hayward, Jonathan, "Of Technology, Magic, and Channels", in *Gift of Fire*, June 2001, number 126.
25. MacDonald, George, *Phantastes*, hereafter *P*, reprinted Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999.
26. Despite widespread endorsement of this practice, taking notes taxes limited mental energy that can better be used to understand the material, and acts to the mind as a signal of, "This can safely be forgotten." *KTMM*, very early on, makes a point of telling readers not to take notes (p. 5). The purpose of attending a lecture or reading a book is to make internal comprehension rather than external reference materials.
27. Tulving, Endel; Craik, Fergus I.M., *The Oxford Handbook of Memory*, hereafter *OHM*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, refers on p. 98 to the *picture superiority effect*, which states that pictures are better remembered because of a dual coding where they are encoded as image and words and therefore have two chances at being stored rather than the one chance when material is presented only as words.
28. *OHM* mentions on p. 94 the "levels of processing"

view, a significant perspective which states that material is retained better the more deeply it is processed.

29. Wall, Larry; Christiansen, Tom; Schwartz, Randal L., *Programming Perl*, Second Edition, hereafter *PP2*, Sebastopol: O'Reilly, pp. 217ff and other places throughout the book. Known by the affectionate nickname of "the camel book" among software developers. (This book is distinct from *PP*).
30. Mander, Jerry, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*, hereafter *FAET*, New York: Morrow Quill, 1978, pp. 299ff.
31. I would like to thank Robin Munn for giving me my first serious introduction to the art of memory, Linda Washington and Martin Harris for looking at my manuscript, William Struthers for valuable comments about source material, and Chris Tessone, Angela Zielinski, Kent and Theo Nebergall, and people from Wheaton College and International Christian Mensa for prayer. I would also like to thank those who read this article, apply it, perhaps extend it, and perhaps tell others about them.

The Administrator Who Cried, "Important!"

Once upon a time, there was a new employee, hired fresh out of college by a big company. The first day on the job, he attended a pep rally, filled out paperwork concerning taxes and insurance, and received a two page document that said at the top, "Sexual Harassment Policy: Important. Read Very Carefully!"

So our employee read the sexual harassment policy with utmost care, and signed at the bottom indicating that he had read it. The policy was a remedial course in common sense, although parts of it showed a decided lack of common sense. It was an insult to both his intelligence and his social maturity.

Our employee was slightly puzzled as to why he was expected to read such a document that carefully, but soon pushed doubts out of his mind. He trotted over to his new cubicle, sat down, and began to read the two inch thick manual on core essentials that every employee needs to know. He was still reading core essentials two hours later when his boss came by and said, "Could you take a break from that? I want to introduce you to your new co-workers, and show you around."

So our employee talked with his boss — a

knowledgeable, competent, and understanding woman — and enjoyed meeting his co-workers, trying to learn their names. He didn't have very much other work yet, so he dutifully read everything that the administrators sent him — even the ones that didn't say "Important — please read" at the top. He read about ISO 9001 certification, continual changes and updates to company policy, new technologies that the company was adopting, employee discounts, customer success stories, and other oddments totalling to at least a quarter inch of paper each day, not counting e-mails.

His boss saw that he worked well, and began to assign more difficult tasks appropriate to his talent. He took on this new workload while continuing to read everything the administration told him to read, and worked longer and longer days.

One day, a veteran came and put a hand on his shoulder, saying, "Kid, just between the two of us, you don't have to read every piece of paper that says 'Important' at the top. None of us read all that."

And so our friend began to glance at the first pages of long memos, to see if they said anything helpful for him to know, and found that most of them did not. Some time after that, he realized that his boss or one of his co-workers would explicitly tell him if there was a memo that said something he needed to know. The employee found his workload reduced to slightly less than fifty hours per week. He was productive and happy.

One day, a memo came. It said at the top, "Important: Please Read." A little more than halfway through, on page twenty-seven, there was a description of a new law that had been passed, and how it required several jobs (including his own) to be done in a slightly different manner. Unfortunately, our friend's boss was in bed with a bad stomach flu, and so she wasn't able to tell him he needed to read the memo. So he continued doing his job as usual.

A year later, the company found itself the defendant in a forty million dollar lawsuit, and traced the negligence to the

action of one single employee — our friend. He was fired, and made the central villain in the storm of bad publicity.

But he definitely was in the wrong, and deserved what was coming to him. The administration very clearly explained the liability and his responsibility, in a memo very clearly labelled "Important". And he didn't even *read* the memo. It's his fault, right?

No.

Every communication that is sent to a person constitutes an implicit claim of, "This concerns you and is worth your attention." If experience tells other people that we lie again and again when we say this, then what right do we have to be believed when we really do have something important to say?

I retold the story of the boy who cried wolf as the story of the administrator who cried important, because administrators are among the worst offenders, along with lawyers, spammers, and perhaps people who pass along e-mail forwards. Among the stack of paper I was expected to sign when I moved in to my apartment was a statement that I had tested my smoke detector. The apartment staff was surprised that I wanted to test my smoke detector before signing my name to that statement. When an authority figure is surprised when a person reads a statement carefully and doesn't want to sign a claim that all involved know to be false, it's a bad sign.

There is communication that concerns the person it's directed to, but says too much — for example, most of the legal contracts I've seen. The tiny print used to print many of those contracts constitutes an implicit acknowledgment that the signer is not expected to read it: they don't even use the additional sheets of paper necessary to print text at a size that a person who only has 20/20 vision can easily read. There is also communication that is broadcast to many people who have no interest in it. To that communication, I would propose the following rule: *Do not, without exceptionally good reason, broadcast a*

communication that concerns only a minority of its recipients. It's OK every now and then to announce that the blue Toyota with license plate ABC 123 has its lights on. It's not OK to have a regular announcement that broadcasts anything that is approved as having interest to some of the recipients.

My church, which I am in general very happy with, has succumbed to vice by adding a section to the worship liturgy called "Announcements", where someone reads a list of events and such just before the end of the service, and completely dispels the moment that has been filling the sanctuary up until the announcements start. They don't do this with other things — the offering is announced by music (usually good music) that contributes to the reverent atmosphere of the service. But when the service is drawing to a close, the worshipful atmosphere is disrupted by announcements which I at least almost never find useful. If the same list were printed on a sheet of paper, I could read it after the service, in less time, with greater comprehension, with zero disruption to the moment that every other part of the service tries so carefully to build — and I could skip over any announcements that begin "For Married Couples:" or "Attention Junior High and High Schoolers!" The only advantage I can see to the present practice, from the church leadership's perspective, is that many people will not read the announcements at all if they have a choice about it — and maybe, just *maybe*, there's a lesson in that.

As well as pointing out examples of a rampant problem in communication, where an administrator cries "Important!" over many things that are not worth reading, and then wonders why people don't believe him when he cries "Important!" about something which *is* important, I would like to suggest an alternative for communities that have access to the internet. A web server could use a form to let people select areas of concern and interest, and announcements submitted would be categorized, optionally

cleared with a moderator, and sent only to those people who are interested in them. Another desirable feature might let end receivers select how much announcement information they can receive in a day — providing a discernible incentive to the senders to minimize trivial communication. In a sense, this is what happens already — intercom litanies of announcements ignored by school students in a classroom, employees carrying memos straight from their mailboxes to the recycle bins — but in this case, administrators receive clear incentive and choice to conserve bandwidth and only send stuff that is genuinely important.

While I'm giving my Utopian dreams, I'd like to comment that at least some of this functionality is already supported by the infrastructure developed by UseNet. Probably there are refinements that can be implemented in a web interface — all announcements for one topic shown from a single web page, since they shouldn't be nearly as long as a normal UseNet post arguing some obscure detail in an ongoing discussion. Perhaps other and better can be done — I am suggesting "Here's something better than the status quo," not "Here's something so perfect that there's no room for improvement."

In one UseNet newsgroup, an exchange occurred that broadcasters of announcements would be well-advised to keep in mind. One person said, "I'm trying to decide whether to give the UseNet Bore of the Year Award to [name] or [name]. The winner will receive, as his prize, a copy of all of their postings, minutely inscribed, and rolled up inside a two foot poster tube."

Someone else posted a reply asking, "Length or diameter?"

To those of you who broadcast to people whom you are able to address because of your position and not because they have chosen to receive your broadcasts, I have the following to say: In each communication you send, you are deciding the basis by which people will decide if future communications are worth paying

attention to, or just unwanted noise. If your noise deafens their ears, you have no right to complain that the few truly important things you have to tell them fall on deaf ears.

Only you can prevent spam!

AI as an Arena for Magical Thinking Among Skeptics

AI as an Arena for Magical Thinking Among Skeptics
**Artificial Intelligence, Cognitive Science, and
Eastern Orthodox Views on Personhood**

M.Phil. Dissertation

Jonathan Hayward

christos.jonathan.hayward@gmail.com

cjshayward.com

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Abstract

I explore artificial intelligence as failing in a way that is characteristic of a faulty anthropology. Artificial intelligence has had excellent funding, brilliant minds, and exponentially faster computers, which suggests that any failures present may not be due to lack of resources, but arise from an error that is manifest in anthropology and may even be cosmological. Maximus Confessor provides a genuinely different background to criticise artificial intelligence, a background which shares far fewer assumptions with the artificial intelligence movement than figures like John Searle. Throughout this dissertation, I will be looking at topics which seem to offer something interesting, even if cultural factors today often obscure their relevance. I discuss Maximus's use of the patristic distinction between 'reason' and spiritual 'intellect' as providing an interesting alternative to 'cognitive faculties.' My approach is meant to be distinctive both by reference to Greek Fathers and by studying artificial intelligence in light of the occult foundations of modern science, an important datum omitted in the broader scientific movement's self-presentation. The occult serves as a bridge easing the transition between Maximus Confessor's worldview and that of artificial intelligence. The broader goal is to make three suggestions: first, that artificial intelligence provides an experimental test of scientific materialism's picture of the human mind; second, that the outcome of the experiment suggests we might reconsider scientific materialism's I-It relationship to the world; and third, that figures like Maximus Confessor, working within an I-Thou relationship, offer more wisdom to us today than is sometimes assumed. I do not attempt to compare Maximus Confessor's Orthodoxy with other religious traditions, however I do suggest that Orthodoxy has relevant insights into personhood which the artificial intelligence community still lacks.

Introduction

Some decades ago, one could imagine a science fiction writer asking, 'What would happen if billions of dollars, dedicated laboratories with some of the world's most advanced equipment, indeed an important academic discipline with decades of work from some of the world's most brilliant minds—what if all of these were poured into an attempt to make an artificial mind based on an understanding of personhood that came out of a framework of false assumptions?' We could wince at the waste, or wonder that after all the failures the researchers still had faith in their project. And yet exactly this philosophical experiment has been carried out, in full, and has been expanded. This philosophical experiment is the artificial intelligence movement.

What relevance does AI have to theology? Artificial intelligence assumes a particular anthropology, and failures by artificial intelligence may reflect something of interest to theological anthropology. It appears that the artificial intelligence project has failed in a substantial and characteristic way, and furthermore that it has failed as if its assumptions were false—in a way that makes sense given some form of Christian theological anthropology. I will therefore be using the failure of artificial intelligence as a point of departure for the study of theological anthropology. Beyond a negative critique, I will be exploring a positive alternative. The structure of this dissertation will open with critiques, then trace historical development from an interesting alternative to the present problematic state, and then explore that older alternative. I will thus move in the opposite of the usual direction.

For the purposes of this dissertation, *artificial intelligence* (AI) denotes the endeavour to create computer software that will be humanly intelligent, and *cognitive science* the interdisciplinary field which seeks to understand the mind on computational terms so it can be re-

implemented on a computer. Artificial intelligence is more focused on programming, whilst cognitive science includes other disciplines such as philosophy of mind, cognitive psychology, and linguistics. *Strong AI* is the classical approach which has generated chess players and theorem provers, and tries to create a disembodied mind. Other areas of artificial intelligence include the *connectionist* school, which works with neural nets,[1] and *embodied AI*, which tries to take our mind's embodiment seriously. The picture on the cover[2] is from an embodied AI website and is interesting for reasons which I will discuss below under the heading of 'Artificial Intelligence.'

Fraser Watts (2002) and John Pudgefoot (1996) offer similar and straightforward pictures of AI. I will depart from them in being less optimistic about the present state of AI, and more willing to find something lurking beneath appearances. I owe my brief remarks about AI and its eschatology, under the heading of 'Artificial Intelligence' below, to a line of Watts' argument.[3]

Other critics[4] argue that artificial intelligence neglects the body as mere packaging for the mind, pointing out ways in which our intelligence is embodied. They share many of the basic assumptions of artificial intelligence but understand our minds as biologically emergent and therefore tied to the body.

There are two basic points I accept in their critiques:

First, they argue that our intelligence is an embodied intelligence, often with specific arguments that are worth attention.

Second, they often capture a quality, or flavour, to thought that beautifully illustrates what sort of thing human thought might be besides digital symbol manipulation on biological hardware.

There are two basic points where I will be departing from their line of argument:

First, they think outside the box, but may not go far enough. They are playing on the opposite team to cognitive

science researchers, but they are playing the same game, by the same rules. The disagreement between proponents and critics is not whether mind may be explained in purely materialist terms, but only whether that assumption entails that minds can be re-implemented on computers.

Second, they see the mind's ties to the body, but not to the spirit, which means that they miss out on half of a spectrum of interesting critiques. I will seek to explore what, in particular, some of the other half of the spectrum might look like. As their critiques explore what it might mean to say that the mind is embodied, the discussion of reason and intellect under the heading 'Intellect and Reason' below may give some sense of what it might mean to say that the mind is spiritual. In particular, the conception of the intellects offers an interesting base characterisation of human thought that competes with cognitive faculties. Rather than saying that the critics offer false critiques, I suggest that they are too narrow and miss important arguments that are worth exploring.

I will explore failures of artificial intelligence in connection with the Greek Fathers. More specifically, I will look at the seventh century Maximus Confessor's *Mystagogia*. I will investigate the occult as a conduit between the (quasi-Patristic) medieval West and the West today. The use of Orthodox sources could be a particularly helpful light, and one that is not explored elsewhere. Artificial intelligence seems to fail along lines predictable to the patristic understanding of a spirit-soul-body unity, essentially connected with God and other creatures. The discussion becomes more interesting when one looks at the implications of the patristic distinction between 'reason' and the spiritual 'intellect.' I suggest that connections with the Orthodox doctrine of divinisation may make an interesting a direction for future enquiry. I will only make a two-way comparison between Orthodox theological anthropology and one particular quasi-theological anthropology. This dissertation is in particular not an

attempt to compare Orthodoxy with other religious traditions.

One wag said that the best book on computer programming for the layperson was *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, but that's just because the best book on anything for the layperson was *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. One lesson learned by a beginning scholar is that many things that 'everybody knows' are mistaken or half-truths, as 'everybody knows' the truth about Galileo, the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and other select historical topics which we learn about by rumour. There are some things we will have trouble understanding unless we can question what 'everybody knows.' This dissertation will be challenging certain things that 'everybody knows,' such as that we're making progress towards achieving artificial intelligence, that seventh century theology belongs in a separate mental compartment from AI, or that science is a different kind of thing from magic. The result is bound to resemble a tour of Wonderland, not because I am pursuing strangeness for its own sake, but because my attempt to understand artificial intelligence has taken me to strange places. Renaissance and early modern magic is a place artificial intelligence has been, and patristic theology represents what we had to leave to get to artificial intelligence.

The artificial intelligence project as we know it has existed for perhaps half a century, but its roots reach much further back. This picture attests to something that has been a human desire for much longer than we've had digital computers. In exploring the roots of artificial intelligence, there may be reason to look at a topic that may seem strange to mention in connection with science: the Renaissance and early modern occult enterprise.

Why bring the occult into a discussion of artificial intelligence? It doesn't make sense if you accept science's own self-portrayal and look at the past through its eyes. Yet this shows bias and insensitivity to another culture's inner

logic, almost a cultural imperialism—not between two cultures today but between the present and the past. A part of what I will be trying to do in this thesis is look at things that have genuine relevance to this question, but whose relevance is obscured by cultural factors today. Our sense of a deep divide between science and magic is more cultural prejudice than considered historical judgment. We judge by the concept of scientific progress, and treating prior cultures' endeavours as more or less successful attempts to establish a scientific enterprise properly measured by our terms.

We miss how the occult turn taken by some of Western culture in the Renaissance and early modern period established lines of development that remain foundational to science today. Many chasms exist between the mediaeval perspective and our own, and there is good reason to place the decisive break between the mediaeval way of life and the Renaissance/early modern occult development, not placing mediaeval times and magic together with an exceptionalism for our science. I suggest that our main differences with the occult project are disagreements as to means, not ends—and that distinguishes the post-mediaeval West from the mediaevals. If so, there is a kinship between the occult project and our own time: we provide a variant answer to the same question as the Renaissance magus, whilst patristic and mediaeval Christians were exploring another question altogether. The occult vision has fragmented, with its dominion over the natural world becoming scientific technology, its vision for a better world becoming political ideology, and its spiritual practices becoming a private fantasy.

One way to look at historical data in a way that shows the kind of sensitivity I'm interested in, is explored by Mary Midgley in *Science as Salvation* (1992); she doesn't dwell on the occult as such, but she perceptively argues that science is far more continuous with religion than its self-understanding would suggest. Her approach pays a certain

kind of attention to things which science leads us to ignore. She looks at ways science is doing far more than falsifying hypotheses, and in so doing observes some things which are important. I hope to develop a similar argument in a different direction, arguing that science is far more continuous with the occult than its self-understanding would suggest. This thesis is intended neither to be a correction nor a refinement of her position, but development of a parallel line of enquiry.

It is as if a great island, called Magic, began to drift away from the cultural mainland. It had plans for what the mainland should be converted into, but had no wish to be associated with the mainland. As time passed, the island fragmented into smaller islands, and on all of these new islands the features hardened and became more sharply defined. One of the islands is named Ideology. The one we are interested in is Science, which is not interchangeable with the original Magic, but is even less independent: in some ways Science differs from Magic by being more like Magic than Magic itself. Science is further from the mainland than Magic was, even if its influence on the mainland is if anything greater than what Magic once held. I am interested in a scientific endeavour, and in particular a basic relationship behind scientific enquiry, which are to a substantial degree continuous with a magical endeavour and a basic relationship behind magic. These are foundationally important, and even if it is not yet clear what they may mean, I will try to substantiate these as the thesis develops. I propose the idea of Magic breaking off from a societal mainland, and sharpening and hardening into Science, as more helpful than the idea of science and magic as opposites.

There is in fact historical precedent for such a phenomenon. I suggest that a parallel with Eucharistic doctrine might illuminate the interrelationship between Orthodoxy, Renaissance and early modern magic, and science (including artificial intelligence). When Aquinas

made the Christian-Aristotelian synthesis, he changed the doctrine of the Eucharist. The Eucharist had previously been understood on Orthodox terms that used a Platonic conception of bread and wine participating in the body and blood of Christ, so that bread remained bread whilst becoming the body of Christ. One substance had two natures. Aristotelian philosophy had little room for one substance which had two natures, so one thing cannot simultaneously be bread and the body of Christ. When Aquinas subsumed real presence doctrine under an Aristotelian framework, he managed a delicate balancing act, in which bread ceased to be bread when it became the body of Christ, and it was a miracle that the accidents of bread held together after the substance had changed. I suggest that when Zwingli expunged real presence doctrine completely, he was not abolishing the Aristotelian impulse, but carrying it to its proper end. In like fashion, the scientific movement is not a repudiation of the magical impulse, but a development of it according to its own inner logic. It expunges the supernatural as Zwingli expunged the real presence, because that is where one gravitates once the journey has begun. What Aquinas and the Renaissance magus had was composed of things that did not fit together. As I will explore below under the heading 'Renaissance and Early Modern Magic,' the Renaissance magus ceased relating to society as to one's mother and began treating it as raw material; this foundational change to a depersonalised relationship would later secularise the occult and transform it into science. The parallel between medieval Christianity/magic/science and Orthodoxy/Aquinas/Zwingli seems to be fertile: real presence doctrine can be placed under an Aristotelian framework, and a sense of the supernatural can be held by someone who is stepping out of a personal kind of relationship, but in both cases it doesn't sit well, and after two or so centuries people finished the job by subtracting the supernatural.

Without discussing the principles in Thomas Dixon's 1999 delineation of theology, anti-theology, and atheology that can be un-theological or quasi-theological, regarding when one is justified in claiming that theology is present, I adopt the following rule:

A claim is considered *quasi-theological* if it can conflict with theological claims.

Given this rule, patristic theology, Renaissance and early modern magic (hereafter 'magic' or 'the occult'), and artificial intelligence claims are all considered to be theological or quasi-theological.

I will not properly trace an historical development so much as show the distinctions between archetypal scientific, occult, and Orthodox worldviews as seen at different times, and briefly discuss their relationships with some historical remarks. Not only are there surprisingly persistent tendencies, but Lee repeats Weber's suggestion that there is real value to understand ideal types.[5]

I will be attempting to bring together pieces of a puzzle—pieces scattered across disciplines and across centuries, often hidden by today's cultural assumptions about what is and is not connected—to show their interconnections and the picture that emerges from their fit. I will be looking at features including intentionality,[6] teleology,[7] cognitive faculties,[8] the spiritual intellect,[9] cosmology, and a strange figure who wields a magic sword with which to slice through society's Gordian knots. Why? In a word, all of this connected. Cosmology is relevant if there is a cosmological error behind artificial intelligence. There are both an organic connection and a distinction between teleology and intentionality, and the shift from teleology to intentionality is an important shift; when one shifts from teleology to intentionality one becomes partly blind to what the artificial intelligence picture is missing. Someone brought up on cognitive faculties may have trouble answering, 'How else

could it be?'; the patristic understanding of the spiritual intellect gives a very interesting answer, and offers a completely different way to understand thought. And the figure with the magic sword? I'll let this figure remain mysterious for the moment, but I'll hint that without that metaphorical magic sword we would never have a literal artificial intelligence project. I do not believe I am forging new connections among these things, so much as uncovering something that was already there, overlooked but worth investigating.

This is an attempt to connect some very diverse sources, even if the different sections are meant primarily as philosophy of religion. This brings problems of coherence and disciplinary consistency, but the greater risk is tied to the possibility of greater reward. It will take more work to show connections than in a more externally focused enquiry, but if I can give a believable case for those interconnections, this will *ipso facto* be a more interesting enquiry.

All translations from French, German, Latin, and Greek are my own.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is not just one scientific project among others. It is a cultural manifestation of a timeless dream. It does not represent the repudiation of the occult impulse, but letting that impulse work out according to its own inner logic. Artificial intelligence is connected with a transhumanist vision for the future[10] which tries to create a science-fiction-like future of an engineered society of superior beings.[11] This artificial intelligence vision for the future is similar to the occult visions for the future we will see below. Very few members of the artificial intelligence movement embrace the full vision—but I may suggest that its spectre is rarely absent, and that that spectre shows itself by a perennial sense of, 'We're making real breakthroughs

today, and full AI is just around the corner.' Both those who embrace the fuller enthusiasm and those who are more modestly excited by current project have a hope that we are making progress towards creating something fundamentally new under the sun, of bequeathing humanity with something that has never before been available, machines that genuinely think. Indeed, this kind of hope is one of magic's most salient features. The exact content and features vary, but the sometimes heady excitement and the hope to bestow something powerful and new mark a significant point contact between the artificial intelligence and the magic that enshrouded science's birth.

There is something timeless and archetypal about the desire to create humans through artifice instead of procreation. Jewish legend tells of a rabbi who used the Kaballah to create a clay golem to defend a city against anti-semites in 1581.[12] *Frankenstein* has so marked the popular imagination that genetically modified foods are referred to as 'Frankenfoods,' and there are many (fictional) stories of scientists creating androids who rebel against and possibly destroy their creators. Robots who have artificial bodies but think and act enough like humans never to cause culture shock are a staple of science fiction. [13] There is a timeless and archetypal desire to create humans by artifice rather than procreation. Indeed, this desire has more than a little occult resonance.

We should draw a distinction between what may be called 'pretentious AI' and 'un-pretentious AI.' The artificial intelligence project has managed technical feats that are sometimes staggering, and from a computer scientist's perspective, the state of computer science is richer and more mature than if there had been no artificial intelligence project. Without making any general claim that artificial intelligence achieves nothing or achieves nothing significant, I will explore a more specific and weaker claim that artificial intelligence does not and cannot duplicate human intelligence.

A paradigm example of un-pretentious AI is the United States Postal Service handwriting recognition system. It succeeds in reading the addresses on 85% of postal items, and the USPS annual report is justifiably proud of this achievement.[14] However, there is nothing mythic claimed for it: the USPS does not claim a major breakthrough in emulating human thought, nor does it give people the impression that artificial mail carriers are just around the corner. The handwriting recognition system is a tool—admittedly, quite an impressive tool—but it is nothing more than a tool, and no one pretends it is anything more than a tool.

For a paradigm example of pretentious AI, I will look at something different. The robot Cog represents equally impressive feats in artificial hand-eye coordination and motor control, but its creators claim something deeper, something archetypal and mythic:

The scholar places his hand on the robots' shoulder as if they had a longstanding friendship. At almost every semiotic level, this picture constitutes an implicit claim that the researcher has a deep friendship with what must be a deep being. The unfortunately blurred caption reads, '©2000 Peter Menzel / Robo sapiens.' On the Cog main website area, every picture with Cog and a person theatrically shows the person treating the robot as quite lifelike—giving the impression that the robot must be essentially human.

But how close is Cog to being human? Watts writes,

The weakness of Cog at present seems to be that it cannot actually do very much. Even its insect-like computer forebears do not seem to have had the intelligence of insects, and Cog is clearly nowhere near having human intelligence.[16]

The somewhat light-hearted frequently-asked-questions list acknowledges that the robot 'has no idea what

it did two minutes ago,' answers 'Can Cog pass the Turing test?' by saying, 'No... but neither could an infant,' and interestingly answers 'Is Cog conscious?' by saying, 'We try to avoid using the c-word in our lab. For the record, no. Off the record, we have no idea what that question even means. And still, no.' The response to a very basic question is ambiguous, but it seems to joke that 'consciousness' is obscene language, and gives the impression that this is not an appropriate question to ask: a mature adult, when evaluating our AI, does not childishly frame the question in terms of consciousness. Apparently, we should accept the optimistic impression of Cog, whilst recognising that it's not fair to the robot to ask about features of human personhood that the robot can't exhibit. This smells of begging the question.

Un-pretentious AI makes an impressive technical achievement, but recognises and acknowledges that they've created a tool and not something virtually human. Pretentious AI can make equally impressive technical achievements, and it recognises that what it's created is not equivalent to human, but it does not acknowledge this. The answer to 'Is Cog conscious?' is a refusal to acknowledge something the researchers have to recognise: that Cog has no analogue to human consciousness. Is it a light-hearted way of making a serious claim of strong agnosticism about Cog's consciousness? It doesn't read much like a mature statement that 'We could never know if Cog were conscious.' The researcher in Figure 2 wrote an abstract on how to give robots a theory of other minds[17], which reads more like psychology than computer science.

There's something going on here that also goes on in the occult. In neo-paganism, practitioners find their magic to work, not exactly as an outsider would expect, by making incantations and hoping that something will happen that a skeptic would recognise as supernatural, but by doing what they can and then interpreting reality as if the magic had worked. They create an illusion and subconsciously

embrace it. This mechanism works well enough, in fact, that large segments of today's neo-paganism started as jokes and then became real, something their practitioners took quite seriously.[18] There's power in trying to place a magical incantation or a computer program (or, in programmer slang, 'incantation') to fill a transcendent hope: one finds ways that it appears to work, regardless of what an outsider's interpretation may be. This basic technique appears to be at work in magic as early as the Renaissance, and it appears to be exactly what's going on in pretentious AI. The basic factor of stepping into an illusion after you do what you can makes sense of the rhetoric quoted above and why Cog is portrayed not merely as a successful experiment in coordination but as Robo sapiens, the successful creation of a living golem. Of course we don't interpret it as magic because we assume that artificial and intelligence and magic are very different things, but the researchers' self-deception falls into a quite venerable magical tradition.

Computers seem quite logical. Are they really that far from human rationality? Computers are logical without being rational. Programming a computer is like explaining a task to someone who follows directions very well but has no judgment and no ability to recognise broader intentions in a request. It follows a list of instructions without any recognition or a sense of what is being attempted. The ability to understand a conversation, or recognise another person's intent—even with mistakes—or any of a number of things humans take for granted, belongs to rationality. A computer's behaviour is built up from logical rules that do certain precise manipulations of symbols without any sense of meaning whatsoever: it is logical without being rational. The discipline of usability is about how to write well-designed computer programs; these programs usually let the user forget that computers aren't rational. For instance, a user can undo something when the computer logically and literally follows an instruction, and the user rationally realises that that isn't really what was intended. But even

the best of this design doesn't let the computer understand what one meant to say. One frustration people have with computers stems from the fact that there is a gist to what humans say, and other people pick up that gist. Computers do not have even the most rudimentary sense of gist, only the ability to logically follow instructions. This means that the experience of bugs and debugging in programming is extremely frustrating to those learning how to program; the computer's response to what seems a correct program goes beyond nitpicking. This logicity without rationality is deceptive, for it presents something that looks very much like rationality at first glance, but produces unpleasant surprises when you treat it as rational. There's something interesting going on here. When we read rationality into a computer's logicity, we are in part creating the illusion of artificial intelligence. 'Don't anthropomorphise computers,' one tells novice programmers. 'They hate that.' A computer is logical enough that we tend to treat it as rational, and in fact if you want to believe that you've achieved artificial intelligence, you have an excellent basis to use in forming a magician's self-deception.

Artificial intelligence is a mythic attempt to create an artificial person, and it does so in a revealing way. Thought is assumed to be a private manipulation of mental representations, not something that works in terms of spirit. Embodied AI excluded, the body is assumed to be packaging, and the attempt is not just to duplicate the 'mind' in a complete sense, but our more computer-like rationality: this assumes a highly significant division of what is essential, what is packaging, and what comes along for free if you duplicate the essential bits. None of this is simply how humans have always thought, nor is it neutral. Maximus Confessor's assumptions are different enough from AI's that a comparison makes it easier to see some of AI's assumptions, and furthermore what sort of coherent picture could deny them. I will explore how exactly he does so below under the heading 'Orthodox Anthropology in

Maximus Confessor's *Mystagogia*,' More immediately, I wish to discuss a basic type of assumption shared by artificial intelligence and the occult.

The Optimality Assumption

One commonality that much of magic and science share is that broad visions often include the assumption that what they don't understand must be simple, and be easy to modify or improve. Midgley discusses Bernal's exceedingly optimistic hope for society to transform itself into a simplistically conceived scientific Utopia (if perhaps lacking most of what we value in human society);[19] I will discuss later, under various headings, how society simply works better in Thomas More's and B.F. Skinner's Utopias if only it is re-engineered according to their simple models.[20] Aren't Utopian visions satires, not prescriptions? I would argue that the satire itself has a strong prescriptive element, even if it's not literal. The connection between Utopia and AI is that the same sort of thinking feeds into what, exactly, is needed to duplicate a human mind. For instance, let us examine a sample of dialogue which Turing imagined going on in a Turing test:

Q: Please write me a sonnet on the subject of the Forth Bridge.

A: Count me out on this one. I never could write poetry.

Q: Add 34957 to 70764.

A: (Pause about 30 seconds and then give as answer) 105621.

Q: Do you play chess?

A: Yes.

Q: I have K at my K1, and no other pieces. You have only K at K6 and R at R1. It is your move. What do you play?

A: (After a pause of 15 seconds) R-R8 mate.[21]

Turing seems to assume that if you duplicate his favoured tasks of arithmetic and chess, the task of understanding natural language comes along, more or less for free. The subsequent history of artificial intelligence has not been kind to this assumption. Setting aside the fact that most people do not strike up a conversation by strangely requesting the other person to solve a chess problem and add five-digit numbers, Turing is showing an occult way of thinking by assuming there's nothing really obscure, or deep, about the human person, and that the range of cognitive tasks needed to do AI is the range of tasks that immediately present themselves to him. This optimism may be damped by subsequent setbacks which the artificial intelligence movement has experienced, but it's still present. It's hard to see an artificial intelligence researcher saying, 'The obvious problem looks hard to solve, but there are probably hidden problems which are much harder,' let alone consider whether human thought might be non-computational.

Given the difficulties they acknowledge, artificial intelligence researchers seem to assume that the problem is as easy as possible to solve. As I will discuss later, this kind of assumption has profound occult resonance. I will call this assumption the optimality assumption: with allowances and caveats, the optimality assumption states that artificial intelligence is an optimally easy problem to solve. This doesn't mean an optimally easy problem to solve given the easiest possible world, but rather, taking into the difficulties and nuances recognised by the practitioner, the problem is

then assumed to be optimally easy, and then it could be said that we live in the (believable) possible world where artificial intelligence would be easiest to implement. Anything that doesn't work like a computer is assumedly easy, or a matter of unnecessary packaging. There are variations on the theme of begging the question. One basic strategy of ensuring that computers can reach the bar of human intelligence is to lower the bar until it is already met. Another strategy is to try to duplicate human intelligence on computer-like tasks. Remember the Turing test which Turing imagined, which seemed to recognise only the cognitive tasks of writing a poem, doing arithmetic, and solving a chess problem: Turing apparently assumed that natural language understanding would come along for free by the time computers could do both arithmetic and chess. Now we have computer calculators and chess players that can beat humans, whilst natural language understanding tasks which are simple to humans represent an unscaled Everest to artificial intelligence.

We have a situation very much like the attempt to make a robot that can imitate human locomotion—if the attempt is tested by having a robot race a human athlete on a racetrack ergonomically designed for robots. Chess is about as computer-like a human skill as one could find.

Turing's script for an imagined Turing test is one manifestation of a tendency to assume that the problem is optimally easy: the optimality assumption. Furthermore, Turing sees only three tasks of composing a sonnet, adding two numbers, and making a move in chess. But in fact this leaves out a task of almost unassailable difficulty for AI: understanding and appropriately acting on natural language requests. This is part of human rationality that cannot simply be assumed to come with a computer's logicity.

Four decades after Turing imagined the above dialogue, Kurt VanLehn describes a study of problem solving that used a standard story problem.[22] The ensuing discussion

is telling. Two subjects' interpretations are treated as problems to be resolved, apparently chosen for their departure from how a human 'should' think about these things. One is a nine year old girl, Cathy: '...It is apparent from [her] protocol that Cathy solves this problem by imagining the physical situation and the actions taken in it, as opposed to, say, converting the puzzle to a directed graph then finding a traversal of the graph.' The purpose of the experiment was to understand how humans solve problems, but it was approached with a tunnel vision that gave a classic kind of computer science 'graph theory' problem, wrapped up in words, and treated any other interpretation of those words as an interesting abnormality. It seems that it is not the theory's duty to approach the subject matter, but the subject matter's duty to approach the theory—a signature trait of occult projects. Is this merely VanLehn's tunnel vision? He goes on to describe the state of cognitive science itself:

For instance, one can ask a subject to draw a pretty picture... [such] Problems whose understanding is not readily represented as a problem space are called *ill-defined*. Sketching pretty pictures is an example of an ill-defined problem... There have only been a few studies of ill-defined problem solving.[23]

Foerst summarises a tradition of feminist critique:[24] AI was started by men who chose a particular kind of abstract task as the hallmark of intelligence; women might value disembodied abstraction less and might choose something like social skills. The critique may be pushed one step further than that: beyond any claim that AI researchers, when looking for a basis for computer intelligence, tacitly crystallised intelligence out of men's activities rather than women's, it seems that their minds were so steeped in mathematics and computers that they crystallised intelligence out of human performance more in

computer-like activities than anything essentially human, even in a masculine way. Turing didn't talk about making artificial car mechanics or deer hunters any more than he had plans for artificial hostesses or childminders.

Harman's 1989 account of functionalism, for instance, provides a more polished-looking version of an optimality assumption: 'According to functionalism, it does not matter what mental states and processes are made of any more than it matters what a carburetor or heart or a chess king is made of.' (832). Another suggestion may be made, not as an axiom but as an answer to the question, 'How else could it be?' This other suggestion might be called *the tip of the iceberg conception*.

A 'tip of the iceberg' conception might reply, 'Suppose for the sake of argument that it doesn't matter what an iceberg is made of, so long as it sticks up above the surface and is hard enough to sink a ship. The task is then to make an artificial iceberg. One can hire engineers to construct a hard shell to function as a surrogate iceberg. What has been left out is that these properties of something observable from the surface rest on something that lies much, much deeper than the surface. (A mere scrape with an iceberg sunk the Titanic, not only because the iceberg was hard, but because it had an iceberg's monumental inertia behind that hardness.) One can't make a functional tip of the iceberg that way, because a functional tip of an iceberg requires a functional iceberg, and we have very little idea of how to duplicate those parts of an iceberg that aren't visible from a ship. You are merely assuming that one can try hard enough to duplicate what you can see from a ship, and if you duplicate those observables, everything else will follow.' This is not a fatal objection, but it is intended to suggest what the truth could be besides the repeated assumption that intelligence is as easy as possible to duplicate in a computer. Here again is the optimality assumption, and it is a specific example of a broader optimality assumption which will appear in occult sources discussed under the

'Renaissance and Early Modern Magic' heading below. The 'tip of the iceberg' conception is notoriously absent in occult and artificial intelligence sources alike. In occult sources, the endeavour is to create a magically sharp sword that will slice all of the Gordian knots of society's problems; in artificial intelligence the Gordian knots are not societal problems but obstacles to creating a thinking machine, and researchers may only be attempting to use razor blades to cut tangled shoelaces, but researchers are still trying to get as close to that magic sword as they believe possible.

Just Around the Corner Since 1950

The artificial intelligence movement has a number of reasonably stable features, including an abiding sense of 'Today's discoveries are a real breakthrough; artificial minds are just around the corner.' This mood may even be older than digital computers; Dreyfus writes,

In the period between the invention of the telephone relay and its apotheosis in the digital computer, the brain, always understood in terms of the latest technological inventions, was understood as a large telephone switchboard, or more recently, as an electronic computer.[25]

The discoveries and the details of the claim may change, and experience has battered some of strong AI's optimism, but in pioneers and today's embodied AI advocates alike there is a similar mood: 'What we've developed now is effacing the boundary between machine and human.' This mood is quite stable. There is a striking similarity between the statements,

These emotions [discomfort and shock at

something so human-like] might arise because in our interactions with Cog, little distinguishes us from the robot, and the differences between a machine and its human counterparts fade.[26]

and:

The reader must accept it as a fact that digital computers can be constructed, and indeed have been constructed, according to the principles we have described, and that they can in fact mimic the actions of a human computer very closely.[27]

What is interesting here is that the second was made by Turing in 1950, and the first by Foerst in 1998. As regards Turing, no one now believes 1950 computers could perform any but the most menial of mathematicians' tasks, and some of Cog's weaknesses have been discussed above ("Cog... cannot actually very much. Even its insect-like forebears do not seem to have had the intelligence of insects..."). The more artificial intelligence changes, the more it seems to stay the same. The overall impression one receives is that for all the surface progress of the artificial intelligence, the underlying philosophy and spirit remain the same—and part of this underlying spirit is the conviction, 'We're making real breakthroughs now, and full artificial intelligence is just around the corner.' This self-deception is sustained in classically magical fashion. Artificial intelligence's self-presentation exudes novelty, a sense that today's breakthroughs are decisive—whilst its actual rate of change is much slower. The 'It's just around the corner.' rhetoric is a longstanding feature. For all the changes in processor power and greater consistency in a materialist doctrine of mind, there are salient features which seem to repeat in 1950's and today's cognitive science. In both, the strategy to ensure that computers could jump the bar of human intelligence is by lowering the bar until it had already been jumped.

The Ghost in the Machine

It has been suggested in connection with Polanyi's understanding of tacit knowledge that behaviourists did not teach, 'There is no soul.' Rather, they draw students into a mode of enquiry where the possibility of a soul is never considered.

Modern psychology takes completely for granted that behavior and neural function are perfectly correlated, that one is completely caused by the other. There is no separate soul or lifeforce to stick a finger into the brain now and then and make neural cells do what they would not otherwise. Actually, of course, this is a working assumption only....It is quite conceivable that someday the assumption will have to be rejected. But it is important also to see that we have not reached that day yet: the working assumption is a necessary one and there is no real evidence opposed to it. Our failure to solve a problem so far does not make it insoluble. One cannot logically be a determinist in physics and biology, and a mystic in psychology.[28]

This is a balder and more provocative way of stating what writers like Turing lead the reader to never think of questioning. The assumption is that the soul, if there is one, is by nature external and separate from the body, so that any interaction between the two is a violation of the body's usual way of functioning. Thus what is denied is a 'separate soul or lifeforce to stick a finger into the brain now and then and make neural cells do what they would not do otherwise.' The Orthodox and others' doctrine of unified personhood is very different from an affirmation of a ghost in the machine. To affirm a ghost in the machine is to assume the soul's basic externality to the body: the basic inability of a soul to interact with a body creates the problem of the ghost in the machine. By the time one attempts to solve the problem of

the ghost in the machine, one is already outside of an Orthodox doctrine of personhood in which spirit, soul, and body are united and the whole unit is not an atom.

The objective here is not mainly to criticise AI, but to see what can be learned: AI seems to fail in a way that is characteristic. It does not fail because of insufficient funding or lack of technical progress, but on another plane: it is built on an erroneous quasi-theological anthropology, and its failures may suggest something about being human. The main goal is to answer the question, 'How else could it be?' in a way that is missed by critics working in materialist confines.

What can we say in summary?

First, artificial intelligence work may be divided into un-pretentious and pretentious AI. Un-pretentious AI makes tools that no one presents as anything more than tools. Pretentious AI is presented as more human than is properly warranted.

Second, there are stable features to the artificial intelligence movement, including a claim of, 'We have something essentially human. With today's discoveries, full artificial intelligence is just around the corner.' The exact form of this assertion may change, but the basic claim does not.

Third, artificial intelligence research posits a multifarious 'optimality assumption,' namely that, given the caveats recognised by the researcher, artificial intelligence is an optimally easy assumption to solve. The human mind is assumed to be the sort of thing that is optimally easy to re-create on a computer.

Fourth, artificial intelligence comes from the same kind of thinking as the ghost in the machine problem.

There is more going on in the artificial intelligence project than an attempt to produce scientific results. The persistent rhetoric of 'It's just around the corner.' is not because artificial intelligence scientists have held that sober judgment since the project began, but because there's

something else going on. For reasons that I hope will become clearer in the next section, this is beginning to look like an occult project—a secularised occult project, perhaps, but 'secularised occult' is not an empty term in that you take all of the occult away if you take away spellbooks. There is much more to the occult than crystal balls, and a good deal of this 'much more' is at play even if artificial intelligence doesn't do things the *Skeptical Enquirer* would frown on.

Occult Foundations of Modern Science

With acknowledgment of the relevance of the Reformation, the wake of Aristotelianism, and the *via moderna* of nominalism,[29] I will be looking at a surprising candidate for discussion on this topic: magic. Magic was a large part of what shaped modernity, a much larger factor than one would expect from modernity's own self-portrayal, and it has been neglected for reasons besides than the disinterested pursuit of truth. It is more attractive to our culture to say that our science exists in the wake of Renaissance learning or brave Reformers than to say that science has roots in it decries as superstition. For reasons that I will discuss below under the next heading, I suggest that what we now classify as the artificial intelligence movement is a further development of some of magic's major features.

There is a major qualitative shift between Newton's development of physics being considered by some to be a diversion from his alchemical and other occult endeavours, and 'spooky' topics today being taboo for scientific research. Yet it is still incomplete to enter a serious philosophical discussion of science without understanding the occult, as as it incomplete to enter a serious discussion of Christianity without understanding Judaism. Lewis points out that the popular understanding of modern science displacing the

magic of the middle ages is at least misleading; there was very little magic in the middle ages, and then science and magic flourished at the same time, for the same reason, often in the same people: the reason science became stronger than magic is purely Darwinian: it worked better. [30] One may say that medieval religion is the matrix from which Renaissance magic departed, and early modern magic is the matrix from which science departed.

What is the relationship between the mediaeval West and patristic Christianity? In this context, the practical difference is not yet a great one. The essential difference is that certain seeds have been sown—such as nominalism and the rediscovered Aristotelianism—which in the mediaeval West would grow into something significant, but had not in much of any practical sense affected the fabric of society. People still believed that the heavens told the glory of God; people lived a life oriented towards contemplation rather than consumption; monasteries and saints were assumed so strongly that they were present even—especially—as they retreated from society. Certain seeds had been sown in the mediaeval West, but they had not grown to any significant stature. For this discussion, I will treat mediaeval and patristic Christianity as more alike than different.

Renaissance and Early Modern Magic

Magic in this context is much more than a means of casting spells or otherwise manipulating supernatural powers to obtain results. That practice is the token of an entire worldview and enterprise, something that defines life's meaning and what one ought to seek. To illustrate this, I will look at some details of work by a characteristic figure, Leibniz. Then I will look at the distinctive way the Renaissance magus related to the world and the legacy this relationship has today. Alongside this I will look at a shift

from understanding this life as a contemplative apprenticeship to Heaven, to understanding this life as something for us to make more pleasurable.

Leibniz, a 17th century mathematician and scientist who co-discovered calculus, appears to have been more than conversant with the occult memory tradition,[31] and his understanding of calculus was not, as today, a tool used by engineers to calculate volumes. Rather, it was part of an entire Utopian vision, which could encompass all knowledge and all thoughts, an apparently transcendent tool that would obviate the need for philosophical disagreements:

If we had this [calculus], there would be no more reason for disputes between philosophers than between accountants. It would be enough for them to take their quills and say, 'Let us calculate!'

Leibniz's 1690 *Ars Combinatoria* contains some material that is immediately accessible to a modern mathematician. It also contains material that is less accessible. Much of the second chapter (9-48) discusses combinations of the letters U, P, J, S, A, and N; these letters are tied to concepts ranging from philosophy to theology, jurisprudence and mathematics: another table links philosophical concepts with numbers (42-3). The apparent goal was to validly manipulate concepts through mechanical manipulations of words, but I was unable to readily tell what (mathematico-logical?) principle was supposed to make this work. (The principle is apparently unfamiliar to me.) This may reflect the influence of Ramon Lull, thirteenth century magician and doctor of the Catholic Church who adapted a baptised Kaballah which involved manipulating combinations of (Latin) letters. Leibniz makes repeated reference to Lull (28, 31, 34, 46), and specifically mentions his occult *ars magna* (28). Like Lull, Leibniz is

interested in the occult, and seeks to pioneer some new tool that will obviate the need for this world's troubles. He was an important figure in the creation of science, and his notation is still used for calculus today. Leibniz is not trying to be just another member of society, or to contribute to society's good the way members have always contributed to society's good: he stands above it, and his intended contribution is to reorder the fabric of society according to his endowed vision. Leibniz provides a characteristic glimpse of how early modern magic has left a lasting imprint.

If the person one should be in Orthodoxy is the member of Church and society, the figure in magic is the magus, a singular character who stands outside of the fabric of society and seeks to transform it. What is the difference? The member of the faithful is an integrated part of society, and lives in submission and organic connection to it. The magus, by contrast, stands above society, superior to it, having a relation to society as one whose right and perhaps duty is to tear apart and reconstruct society along better lines. We have a difference between humility and pride, between relating to society as to one's mother and treating society as raw material for one to transform. The magus is cut off from the common herd by two closely related endowments: a magic sword to cut through society's Gordian knots, and a messianic fantasy.[32] In Leibniz's case the magic sword is an artificial language which will make philosophical disagreements simply obsolete. For the artificial intelligence movement, the magic sword is artificial intelligence itself. The exact character of the sword, knot, and fantasy may differ, but their presence does not.

The character of the Renaissance magus may be seen as as hinging on despair with the natural world. This mood seems to be woven into Hermetic texts that were held in such esteem in the Renaissance and were connected at the opening of pre-eminent Renaissance neo-Platonist Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. [33] If

there is good to be had, it is not met in the mundane world of the *hoi polloi*. It must be very different from their reality, something hidden that is only accessible to an elite. The sense in which this spells out an interest in the occult means far more than carrying around a rabbit's foot. The specific supernatural contact was valued because the occult was far hidden from appearances and the unwashed masses. (The Christian claim that one can simply pray to God and be heard is thus profoundly uninteresting. Supernatural as it may be, it is ordinary, humble, and accessible in a way that the magus is trying to push past.) This desire for what is hidden or very different from the ordinary means that the ideal future must be very different from the present.

Therefore Thomas More, Renaissance author, canonised saint, and strong devotee of Mirandola's writing, himself writes *Utopia*. In this work, the philosophic sailor Raphael establishes his own reason as judge over the appropriateness of executing thieves,[34] and describes a Utopia where society simply works better: there seem to be no unpleasant surprises or unintended consequences. [35] There is little sense of a complex inner logic to society that needs to be respected, or any kind of authority to submit to. Indeed, Raphael abhors authority and responds to the suggestion that he attach himself to a king's court by saying, 'Happier! Is that to follow a path that my soul abhors?' This Utopian vision, even if it is from a canonised Roman saint, captures something deep of the occult currents that would later feed into the development of political ideology. The content of an occult vision for constructing a better tomorrow may vary, but it is a vision that seeks to tear up the world as we now know it and reconstructs it along different lines.

Magic and science alike relate to what they are interested in via an I-It rather than an I-Thou relationship. Relating to society as to one's mother is an I-Thou relationship; treating society as raw material is an I-It relationship. An I-Thou relationship is receptive to quality.

It can gain wisdom and insight. It can connect out of the whole person. The particular kind of I-It relationship that undergirds science has a powerful and narrow tool that deals in what can be mathematically represented. The difference between those two is misunderstood if one stops after saying, 'I-It can make technology available much better than I-Thou.' That is how things look through I-It eyes. But I-Thou allows a quality of relationship that does not exist with I-It. 'The fundamental word I-Thou can only be spoken with one's whole being. The fundamental word I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being.' I-Thou allows a quality-rich relationship that always has another layer of meaning. In the Romance languages there are two different words for knowledge: in French, *connaissance* and *savoir*. They both mean 'knowledge,' but in different ways: *savoir* is knowledge of fact (or know-how); one can *sait que* ('know that') something is true. *Connaissance* is the kind of knowledge of a person, a 'knowledge of' rather than a 'knowledge that' or 'knowledge how.' It can never be a complete knowledge, and one cannot *connait que* ('know-of that') something is true. It is personal in character. An I-It relationship is not just true of magic; as I will discuss below under the heading of 'Science, Psychology, and Behaviourism,' psychology seeks a baseline *savoir* of people where it might seek a *connaissance*, and its theories are meant to be abstracted from relationships with specific people. Like magic, the powers that are based on science are epiphenomenal to the relationship science is based on. Relating in an I-Thou rather than I-It fashion is not simply less like magic and science; it is richer, fuller, and more human.

In the patristic and medieval eras, the goal of living had been contemplation and the goal of moral instruction was to conform people to reality. Now there was a shift from conforming people to reality, towards conforming reality to people.[36] This set the stage, centuries later, for a major and resource-intensive effort to create an artificial mind, a

goal that would not have fit well with a society oriented to contemplation. This is not to say that there is no faith today, nor that there was no technology in the middle ages, nor that there has been no shift between the early modern period and today. Rather, it is to say that a basic trajectory was established in magic that significantly shapes science today.

The difference between the Renaissance magus and the mediaeval member of the Church casts a significant shadow today. The scientist seems to live more in the shadow of the Renaissance magus than of the member of mediaeval society. This is not to say that scientists cannot be humble and moral, nor that they cannot hold wonder at what they study. But it is to say that there are a number of points of contact between the Renaissance magus's way of relating to the world and that of a scientist and those who live in science's shadow. Governments today consult social scientists before making policy decisions: the relationship seems to be how to best deal with material rather than a relationship as to one's mother. We have more than a hint of secularised magic in which substantial fragments of Renaissance and early modern magic have long outlived some magical practices.

Under the patristic and medieval conception, this life was an apprenticeship to the life in Heaven, the beginning of an eternal glory contemplating God. Magic retained a sense of supernatural reality and a larger world, but its goal was to improve this life, understood as largely self-contained and not as beginning of the next. That was the new chief end of humanity. That shift is a shift towards the secular, magical as its beginning may be. Magic contains the seeds of its own secularisation, in other words of its becoming scientific. The shift from contemplation of the next world to power in this world is why the occult was associated with all sorts of Utopian visions to transform the world, a legacy reflected in our political ideologies. One of the tools developed in that magical milieu was science: a

tool that, for Darwinian reasons, was to eclipse all the rest. The real magic that has emerged is science.

Science, Psychology, and Behaviourism

What is the niche science has carved out for itself? I'd like to look at an academic discipline that is working hard to be a science, psychology. I will more specifically look at behaviourism, as symptomatic within the history of psychology. Is it fair to look at behaviourism, which psychology itself rejected? It seems that behaviourism offers a valuable case study by demonstrating what is more subtly present elsewhere in psychology. Behaviourism makes some basic observations about reward and punishment and people repeating behaviours, and portrays this as a comprehensive psychological theory: behaviourism does not acknowledge beliefs, for instance. Nonetheless, I suggest that behaviourism is a conceivable development in modern psychology which would have been impossible in other settings. Behaviourism may be unusual in the extreme simplicity of its vision and its refusal to recognise internal states, but not in desiring a Newton who will make psychology a full-fledged science and let psychology know its material with the same kind of knowing as physics has for its material.

Newton and his kin provided a completely de-anthropomorphised account of natural phenomena, and behaviourism provided a de-anthropomorphised account of humans. In leading behaviourist B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* (1948), we have a Utopian vision where every part of society seems to work better: artists raised under Skinner's conditioning produce work which is 'extraordinarily good,' the women are more beautiful,[37] and Skinner's alter ego expresses the hope of controlling the weather,[38] and compares himself with God.[39] Skinner resemble seems to

resemble a Renaissance magus more than a mediaeval member: society is raw material for him to transform. Skinner is, in a real sense, a Renaissance magus whose magic has become secularised. Quite a lot of the magus survives the secularisation of Skinner's magic.

Even without these more grandiose aspirations, psychology is symptomatic of something that is difficult to discern by looking at the hard sciences. Psychological experiments try to find ways in which the human person responds in terms comparable to a physics experiment—and by nature do not relate to their subjects as human agents. These experiments study one aspect of human personhood, good literature another, and literature offers a different kind of knowing from a psychological experiment. If we assume that psychology is the best way to understand people—and that the mind is a mechanism-driven thing—then the assumed burden of proof falls on anyone saying, 'But a human mind isn't the sort of thing you can duplicate on a computer.' The cultural place of science constitutes a powerful influence on how people conceive the question of artificial intelligence.

Behaviourism offers a very simple and very sharp magic sword to cut the Gordian knot of unscientific teleology, a knot that will be discussed under the heading of 'Intentionality and Teleology' below. It removes suspicion of the reason being attached to a spiritual intellect by refusing to acknowledge reason. It removes the suspicion of emotions having a spiritual dimension by refusing to acknowledge emotions. He denies enough of the human person that even psychologists who share those goals would want to distance themselves from him. And yet Skinner does more than entertain messianic fantasies: *Walden Two* is a Utopia, and when Skinner's alter ego compares himself with God, God ends up second best.[40] I suggest that this is no a contradiction at all, or more properly it is a blatant contradiction as far as common sense is concerned, but as far as human human phenomena go, we have two sides of

the same coin. The magic sword and the messianic fantasy belong to one and the same magus.

There is in fact an intermediate step between the full-fledged magus and the mortal herd. One can be a magician's assistant, clearing away debris and performing menial tasks to support the real magi. [41] The proportion of the Western population who are scientists is enormous compared to science's founding, and the vast majority of the increase is in magician's assistants. If one meets a scientist at a social gathering, the science is in all probability not a full-fledged magus, but a magician's assistant, set midway between the magus and the commoner. The common scientist is below the magus in knowledge of science but well above most commoners. In place of a personal messianic fantasy is a more communal tendency to assume that the scientific enterprise is our best hope for the betterment of society. (Commoners may share this belief.) There is a significant difference between the magus and most assistants today. Nonetheless, the figure of the magus is alive today—secularised, in most cases, but alive and well. Paul Johnson's Augustinian account of *Intellectuals* includes such eminent twentieth century scientific figures as Bertrand Russell, Noam Chomsky, and Albert Einstein; [42] the figures one encounters in his pages are steeped in the relationship to society as to raw material instead as to one's mother, the magic sword, and the messianic fantasy.

I-Thou and Humanness

I suggest that the most interesting critiques of artificial intelligence are not obtained by looking through I-It eyes in another direction, but in using other eyes to begin with, looking through I-Thou eyes. Let us consider Turing's 'Arguments from Various Disabilities'. [43] Perhaps the people who furnished Turing with these objections were speaking out of something deeper than they could explain:

Be kind, resourceful, beautiful, friendly, have initiative, have a sense of humour, tell right from wrong, make mistakes, fall in love, enjoy strawberries and cream, make some one fall in love with it, learn from experience, use words properly, be the subject of its own thought, have as much diversity of behaviour as a man, do something really new.

Be kind:

Kindness is listed by Paul as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) in other words, an outflow of a person living in the Spirit. Disregarding the question of whether all kindness is the fruit of the Spirit, in humans kindness is not merely following rules, but the outflow of a concern for the other person. Even counterfeit kindness is a counterfeit from someone who knows the genuine article. It thus uses some faculty of humanity other than the reasoning ability, which classical AI tries to duplicate and which is assumed to be the one thing necessary to duplicate human cognition.

Be resourceful:

The artificial intelligence assumption is that if something is non-deterministic, it is random, because deterministic and pseudo-random are the only options one can use in programming a computer. This leaves out a third possibility, that by non-computational faculties someone may think, not merely 'outside the box,' in a random direction, but above it. The creative spark comes neither from continuing a systematic approach, nor simply picking something random ('because I can't get my computer to turn on, I'll pour coffee on it and see if that helps'), but something that we don't know how to give a computer.

Be beautiful:

Beauty is a spiritual quality that is not perceived by scientific enquiry and, given our time's interpretation of scientific enquiry, is in principle not recognised. Why not? If we push materialist assumptions to the extreme, it is

almost a category error to look at a woman and say, 'She is beautiful.' What is really being said—if one is not making a category error—is, 'I have certain emotions when I look at her.' Even if there is not a connection between physical beauty and intelligence, there seems to be some peasant shrewdness involved. It is a genuine, if misapplied, appeal to look at something that has been overlooked.

Be friendly:

True as opposed to counterfeit friendliness is a manifestation of love, which has its home in the will, especially if the will is not understood as a quasi-muscular power of domination, but part of the spirit which lets us turn towards another in love.

Remarks could easily be multiplied. What is meant to come through all this is that science is not magic, but science works in magic's wake. Among relevant features may be mentioned relating as a magus would (in many ways distilling an I-It relationship further), and seeking power over the world in this life rather living an apprenticeship to the next.

Orthodox Anthropology in Maximus Confessor's *Mystagogia*

I will begin detailed enquiry in the Greek Fathers by considering an author who is foundational to Eastern Orthodoxy, the seventh century Greek Father Maximus Confessor. Out of the existing body of literature, I will focus on one work, his *Mystagogia*,^[44] with some reference to the *Capita Gnosticae*. Maximus Confessor is a synthetic thinker, and the *Mystagogia* is an anthropological work; its discussion of Church mystagogy is dense in theological anthropology as the training for a medical doctor is dense in human biology.

Orthodox Christians have a different cosmology from

the Protestant division of nature, sin, and grace. Nature is never un-graced, and the grace that restores from sin is the same grace that provides continued existence and that created nature in the first place. That is to say, grace flows from God's generosity, and is never alien to nature. The one God inhabits the whole creation: granted, in a more special and concentrated way in a person than in a rock, but the same God is really present in both.

Already, without having seriously engaged theological *anthropology*, we have differences with how AI looks at things. Not only are the answers different, but the questions themselves are posed in a different way. 'Cold matter,' such as is assumed by scientific materialism, doesn't exist, not because matter is denied in Berkeleyan fashion but because it is part of a spiritual cosmology and affirmed to be something more. It is mistaken to think of cold matter, just as it is mistaken to think of tepid fire. Even matter has spiritual attributes and is graced. Everything that exists, from God and the spiritual creation to the material creation, from seraphim to stone, is the sort of thing one connects to in an I-Thou relationship. An I-It relationship is out of place, and from this perspective magic and science look almost the same, different signposts in the process of establishing a progressively purer I-It relationship.

Intellect and Reason

Maximus' anthropology is threefold: the person is divided into soul and body, and the soul itself is divided into a higher part, the intellect, and a lower part, the reason:[45]

[Pseudo-Dionysius] used to teach that the whole person is a synthesis of soul and body joined together, and furthermore the soul itself can be examined by reason. (The person is an image which reflects teaching about the Holy Church.) Thus he said that the soul had an intellectual and living faculty that were

essentially united, and described the moving, intellectual, authoritative power—with the living part described according its will-less nature. And again, the whole mind deals with intelligible things, with the intelligible power being called intellect, whilst the sensible power is called reason.

This passage shows a one-word translation difficulty which is symptomatic of a difference between his theology and the quasi-theological assumptions of the artificial intelligence project. The word in question, which I have rendered as 'authoritative power,' is '*exousiastikws*,' with root word '*exousia*.' The root and its associated forms could be misconstrued today as having a double meaning of 'power' and 'authority,' with 'authority' as the basic sense. In both classical and patristic usage, it seems debatable whether '*exousia*' is tied to any concept of power divorced from authority. In particular this passage's '*exousiastikws*' is most immediately translated as power rather than any kind of authority that is separate from power. Yet Maximus Confessor's whole sense of power here is one that arises from a divine authorisation to know the truth. This sense of power is teleologically oriented and has intrinsic meaning. This is not to say that Maximus could only conceive of power in terms of authority. He repeatedly uses '*dunamis*,' (*proem*.15-6, 26, 28, etc), a word for power without significant connotations of authority. However, he could conceive of power in terms of authority, and that is exactly what he does when describing the intellect's power.

What is the relationship between 'intellect'/'reason' and cognitive faculties? Which, if either, has cognitive faculties a computer can't duplicate? Here we run into another difficulty. It is hard to say that Maximus Confessor traded in cognitive faculties. For Maximus Confessor the core sense of 'cognitive faculties' is inadequate, as it is inadequate to define an eye as something that provides nerve impulses which the brain uses to generate other nerve impulses.

What is missing from this picture? This definition does not provide any sense that the eye interacts with the external world, so that under normal circumstances its nerve impulses are sent because photons strike photoreceptors in an organ resembling a camera. Even this description hides most teleology and evaluative judgment. It does not say that an eye is an organ for perceiving the external world through an image reconstructed in the brain, and may be called 'good' if it sees clearly and 'bad' if it doesn't. This may be used as a point of departure to comment on Maximus Confessor and the conception of cognitive faculties.

Maximus Confessor does not, in an amoral or self-contained fashion, see faculties that operate on mental representations. He sees an intellect that is where one meets God, and where one encounters a Truth that is no more private than the world one sees with the eye is private.

Intellect and reason compete with today's cognitive faculties, but Maximus Confessor understands the intellect in particular as something fundamentally moral, spiritual, and connected to spiritual realities. His conception of morality is itself different from today's private choice of ethical code; morality had more public and more encompassing boundaries, and included such things as Jesus' admonition not to take the place of highest honour so as not to receive public humiliation (Luke 14:7-10): it embraced practical advice for social conduct, because the moral and spiritual were not separated from the practical. It is difficult to Maximus Confessor conceiving of practicality as hampered by morality. In Maximus Confessor's day what we separate into cognitive, moral, spiritual, and practical domains were woven into a seamless tapestry.

Intellect, Principles, and Cosmology

Chapter twenty-three opens by emphasising that

contemplation is more than looking at appearances (23.1-10), and discusses the Principles of things. The concept of a *Principle* is important to his cosmology. There is a foundational difference between the assumed cosmologies of artificial intelligence and Maximus Confessor. Maximus Confessor's cosmology is not the artificial intelligence cosmology with a spiritual dimension added, as a living organism is not a machine modified to use foodstuffs as fuel.

Why do I speak of the 'artificial intelligence cosmology'? Surely one can have a long debate about artificial intelligence without adding cosmology to the discussion. This is true, but it is true because cosmology has become invisible, part of the assumed backdrop of discussion. In America, one cultural assumption is that 'culture' and 'customs' are for faroff and exotic people, not for 'us'—'we' are just being human. It doesn't occur to most Americans to think of eating Turkey on Thanksgiving Day or removing one's hat inside a building as customs, because 'custom' is a concept that only applies to exotic people. I suggest that Maximus Confessor has an interesting cosmology, not because he's exotic, but because he's human.

Artificial intelligence proponents and (most) critics do not differ on cosmology, but because that is because it is an important assumption which is not questioned even by most people who deny the possibility of artificial intelligence. Searle may disagree with Fodor about what is implied by a materialist cosmology, but not whether one should accept materialism. I suggest that some artificial intelligence critics miss the most interesting critiques of artificial intelligence because they share that project's cosmology. If AI is based on a cosmological error, then no amount of fine-tuning within the system will rectify the error. We need to consider cosmology if we are to have any hope of correcting an error that basic. (Bad metaphysics does not create good physics.) I will describe Maximus Confessor's cosmology in this section, not because he has

cosmology and AI doesn't, but because his cosmology seems to suggest a correction to the artificial intelligence cosmology.

At the base of Maximus's cosmology is God. God holds the Principles in his heart, and they share something of his reality. Concrete beings (including us) are created through the Principles, and we share something of their reality and of God. The Principles are a more concrete realisation of God, and we are a more concrete realisation of the Principles. Thought (*nohsis*) means beholding God and the Principles (*logoi*) through the eye of the intellect. Thinking of a tree means connecting with something that is more tree-like than the tree itself.

It may be easier to see what the important Principles in Maximus Confessor's cosmology if we see how they are being dismantled today. Without saying that Church Fathers simply grafted in Platonism, I believe it safe to say that Plato resembled some of Church doctrine, and at any rate Plato's one finger pointing up to God offers a closer approximation to Christianity than Aristotle's fingers pointing down. I would suggest further that looking at Plato can suggest how Christianity differs from Aristotelianism's materialistic tendencies, tendencies that are still unfolding today. Edelman describes the assumptions accompanying Darwin's evolution as the 'death blow' to the essentialism, the doctrine that there are fixed kinds of things, as taught by Plato and other idealists.[46] Edelman seems not to appreciate why so many biologists assent to punctuated equilibrium.[47] However, if we assume that there is solid evidence establishing that all life gradually evolved from a common ancestor, then this remark is both apropos and perceptive.

When we look around, we see organisms that fit neatly into different classes: human, housefly, oak. Beginning philosophy students may find it quaint to hear of Plato's Ideas, and the Ideal horse that is copied in all physical horses, but we tend to assume Platonism at least in that

horses are similar 'as if' there were an Ideal horse: we don't believe in the Ideal horse any more, but we still treat its shadow as if it were the Ideal horse's shadowy copy.

Darwin's theory of evolution suggests that all organisms are connected via slow, continuous change to a common ancestor and therefore to each other. If this is true, there are dire implications for Platonism. It is as if we had pictures of wet clay pottery, and posited a sharp divide between discrete classes of plates, cups, and bowls. Then someone showed a movie of a potter deforming one and the same clay from one shape to another, so that the divisions are now shown to be arbitrary. There are no discrete classes of vessels, just one lump of clay being shaped into different things. Here we are pushing a picture to the other end of a spectrum, further away from Platonism. It is a push from tacitly assuming there is a shadow, to expunging the remnant of belief in the horse and its shadow.

But this doesn't mean we're perfect Platonists, or can effortlessly appreciate the Platonic mindset. There are things we have to understand before we can travel in the other direction. If anything, there is more work involved. We act as if the Ideas' shadows are real things, but we don't genuinely believe in the shadows *qua* shadows, let alone the Ideas. We've simply inherited the habit of treating shadows as a convenient fiction. But Maximus Confessor believed the Principles (Ideas) represented something fuller and deeper than concrete things.

This is foundational to why Maximus Confessor would not have understood thought as manipulating mental representations in the inescapable privacy of one's mind. Contemplation is not a matter of closing one's eyes and fantasising, but of opening one's eyes and beholding something deeper and more real than reality itself. The sensible reason can perceive the external physical world through the senses, but this takes a very different light from Kant's view.

Maximus Confessor offers a genuinely interesting

suggestion that we know things not only because of our power-to-know, but because of their power-to-be-known, an approach that I will explore later under the heading 'Knowledge of the Immanent.' The world is not purely transcendent, but immanent. For Kant the mind is a box that is hermetically sealed on top but has a few frustratingly small holes on the bottom: the senses. Maximus Confessor doesn't view the senses very differently, but the top of the box is open.

This means that the intellect is most basically where one meets God. Its powerful ability to know truth is connected to this, and it connects with the Principles of things, as the senses connect with mere things. Is it fair to the senses to compare the intellect's connection with Principles with the senses' experience of physical things? The real question is not that, but whether it is fair to the intellect, and the answer is 'no.' The Principles are deeper, richer, and fuller than the mere visible things, as a horse is richer than its shadow. The knowledge we have through the intellect's connection with the Principles is of a deeper and richer sort than what is merely inferred from the senses.

The Intelligible and the Sensible

Maximus Confessor lists, and connects, several linked pairs, which I have incorporated into a schema below. The first column of this schema relates to the second column along lines just illustrated: the first member of each pair is transcendent and eminent to the second, but also immanent to it.

Head Body

Heaven earth (3.1-6)

Head Body

holy of holies	sanctuary (2.8-9)
intelligible	sensible (7.5-10)
contemplative	active (5.8-9)
intellect	reason (5.9-10)
spiritual wisdom	practical wisdom (5.13-15)
knowledge	virtue (5.58)
unforgettable knowledge	faith (5.58-60)
truth	goodness (5.58-9)
archetype	image (5.79-80)
New Testament	Old Testament (6.4-6)
spiritual meaning of a text	literal meaning of a text (6.14-5)
bishop's seating on throne	bishop's entrance into Church (8.5-6, 20-21)
Christ's return in glory	Christ's first coming, glory veiled (8.6-7, 18)

Maximus Confessor's cosmology sees neither a disparate collection of unconnected things, nor an undistinguished monism that denies differences. Instead, he sees a unity that sees natures (1.16-17) in which God not only limits differences, as a circle limits its radii (1.62-67), but transcends all differences. Things may be distinguished, but they are not divided. This is key to understanding both doctrine and method. He identifies the world with a person, and connects the Church with the image of God. Doctrine and method are alike synthetic, which suggests that passages about his cosmology and ecclesiology illuminate anthropology.

One recurring theme shows in his treatment of heaven and earth, the soul and the body, the intelligible (spiritual) and the sensible (material). The intelligible both transcends the sensible, and is immanent to it, present in it. The intelligible is what can be apprehended by the part of us that meets God; the sensible is what presents itself to the world of senses. (The senses are not our only connection with the world.) This is a different way of thinking about matter and spirit from the Cartesian model, which gives rise to the ghost in the machine problem. Maximus Confessor's understanding of spirit and matter does not make much room for this dilemma. Matter and spirit interpenetrate. This is true not just in us but in the cosmos, which is itself 'human': he considers '...the three people: the cosmos (let us say), the Holy Scriptures, and this is true with us' (7.40-1). The attempt to connect spirit and matter might have struck him like an attempt to forge a link between fire and heat, two things already linked.

Knowledge of the Immanent

The word which I here render 'thought' is '*nohsis*', cognate to 'intellect' ('*nous*') which has been discussed as

that which is inseparably the home of thought and of meeting God. We already have a hint of a conceptual cast in which thought will be understood in terms of connection and contemplation.

In contrast to understanding thought as a process within a mind, Maximus describes thought in terms of a relationship: a thought can exist because there is a power to think of in the one thinking, and a power to be thought of in what is thought of.[48] We could no more know an absolutely transcendent creature than we could know an absolutely transcendent Creator. Even imperfect thought exists because we are dealing with something that 'holds power to be apprehended by the intellect' (I.82). We say something is purple because its manifest purpleness meets our ability to perceive purple. What about the claim that purple is a mental experience arising from a certain wavelength of light striking our retinas? One answer that might be given is that those are the mechanisms by which purple is delivered, not the nature of what purple is.[49] The distinction is important.

We may ask, what about capacity for fantasy and errors? The first response I would suggest is cultural. The birth of modernity was a major shift, and its abstraction introduced new things into the Western mind, including much of what supports our concept of fantasy (in literature, etc.). The category of fantasy is a basic category to our mindset but not to the patristic or medieval mind. Therefore, instead of speculating how Maximus Confessor would have replied to these objections, we can point out that they aren't the sort of thing that he would ever think of, or perhaps even understand.

But in fact a more positive reply can be taken. It can be said of good and evil that good is the only real substance. Evil is not its own substance, but a blemish in good substance. This parallels error. Error is not something fundamentally new, but a blurred or distorted form of truth. Fantasy does not represent another fundamentally

independent, if hypothetical, reality; it is a funhouse mirror refracting this world. We do not have a representation that exists in one's mind alone, but a dual relationship that arises both from apprehending intellect and an immanent thing. The possibility of errors and speculation make for a longer explanation but need not make us discard this basic picture.

Intentionality and Teleology

One of the basic differences in cosmology between Maximus Confessor and our own day relates to *intentionality*. As it is described in cognitive science's philosophy of mind, 'intentionality' refers to an 'about-ness' of human mental states, such as beliefs and emotions. The word 'tree' is about an object outside the mind, and even the word 'pegasus' evokes something that one could imagine existing outside of the mind, even if it does not. Intentionality does not exist in computer programs: a computer chess program manipulates symbols in an entirely self-enclosed system, so 'queen' cannot refer to any external person or carry the web of associations we assume. Intentionality presents a philosophical problem for artificial intelligence. Human mental states and symbol manipulation are about something that reach out to the external world, whilst computer symbol manipulation is purely internal. A computer may manipulate symbols that are meaningful to humans using it, but the computer has no more sense of what a webpage means than a physical book has a sense that its pages contain good or bad writing. Intentionality is a special feature of living minds, and does not exist outside of them. Something significant will be achieved if ever a computer program first embodies intentionality outside of a living mind.

Maximus Confessor would likely have had difficulty understanding this perspective as he would have had difficulty understanding the problem of the ghost in the

machine: this perspective makes intentionality a special exception as the ghost in the machine made our minds' interaction with our bodies a special exception, and to him both 'exceptions' are in fact the crowning jewel of something which permeates the cosmos.

The theory of evolution is symptomatic of a difference between the post-Enlightenment West and the patristic era. This theory is on analytic grounds not a true answer to the question, 'Why is there life as we know it?' because it does not address the question, 'Why is there life as we know it?' At best it is a true answer to the question, 'How is there life as we know it?' which people often fail to distinguish from the very different question, 'Why is there life as we know it?' The Enlightenment contributed to an effort to expunge all trace of teleology from causality, all trace of 'Why?' from 'How?' Of Aristotle's four causes, only the efficient cause[50] is familiar; a beginning philosophy student is liable to misconstrue Aristotle's final cause[51] as being an efficient cause whose effect curiously precedes the cause. The heavy teleological scent to final causation is liable to be missed at first by a student in the wake of reducing 'why' to 'how'; in Maximus Confessor, causation is not simply mechanical, but tells what purpose something serves, what it embodies, what meaning and relationships define it, and why it exists.

Strictly speaking, one should speak of 'scientific mechanisms' rather than 'scientific explanations.' Why? 'Scientific proof' is an oxymoron: science does not deal in positive proof any more than mathematics deals in experiment, so talk of 'scientific proof' ordinarily signals a speaker who has more faith in science than understanding of what science really does. 'Scientific explanation' is a less blatant contradiction in terms, but it reflects a misunderstanding, perhaps one that is more widespread, as it often present among people who would never speak of 'scientific proof.' Talk of 'scientific explanation' is not simply careless speech; there needs to be a widespread category

error before there is any reason to write a book like Mary Midgley's *Science as Salvation* (1992). Science is an enterprise which provides mechanisms and has been given the cultural place of providing explanations. This discrepancy has the effect that people searching for explanations turn to scientific mechanisms, and may not be receptive when a genuine explanation is provided, because 'explanation' to them means 'something like what science gives.' This may not be the only factor, but it casts a long shadow. The burden of proof is born by anyone who would present a non-scientific explanation as being as real as a scientific explanation. An even heavier burden of proof falls on the person who would claim that a non-scientific explanation—not just as social construction, but a real claim about the external world—offers something that science does not.

The distinction between mechanism and explanation is also relevant because the ways in which artificial intelligence has failed may reflect mechanisms made to do the work of explanations. In other words, the question of 'What is the nature of a human?' is answered by, 'We are able to discern these mental mechanisms in a human.' If this is true, the failure to duplicate a human mind in computers may be connected to researchers answering the wrong question in the first place. These are different, as the question, 'What literary devices can you find in *The Merchant of Venice*[52]?' is different from 'Why is *The Merchant of Venice* powerful drama?' The devices aren't irrelevant, but neither are they the whole picture.

Of the once great and beautiful land of teleology, a land once brimming in explanations, all has been conquered, all has been levelled, all has been razed and transformed by the power of I-It. All except two stubborn, embattled holdouts. The first holdout is intentionality: if it is a category error to project things in the human mind onto the outer world, nonetheless we recognise that intentionality exists in the mind—but about-ness of intentionality is far less than the

about-ness once believed to fill the cosmos. The second and last holdout is evolution: if there is to be no mythic story of origins that gives shape and meaning to human existence, if there cannot be an answer to 'Why is there life as we know it?' because there is no reason at all for life, because housefly, horse, and human are alike the by-product of mindless forces that did not have us in mind, nonetheless there is still an emaciated spectre, an evolutionary mechanism that does just enough work to keep away a teleological approach to origins questions. The land of teleology has been razed, but there is a similarity between these two remnants, placeholders which are granted special permission to do what even the I-It approach recognises it cannot completely remove of teleology. That is the official picture, at least. Midgley is liable to pester us with counterexamples of a teleology that is far more persistent than the official picture gives credit for: she looks at evolution doing the work of a myth instead of a placeholder that keeps myths away, for instance.[53] Let's ignore her for the moment and stick with the official version. Then looking at both intentionality and evolution can be instructive in seeing what has happened to teleology, and appreciating what teleology was and could be. Now Midgley offers us reasons why it may not be productive to pretend we can excise teleology: the examples of teleology she discusses do not seem to be improved by being driven underground and presented as non-teleological.

Maximus's picture, as well as being teleological, is moral and spiritual. As well as having intentions, we are living manifestations of a teleological, moral and spiritual Intention in God's heart. Maximus Confessor held a cosmology, and therefore an anthropology, that did not see the world in terms of disconnected and meaningless things. He exhibited a number of traits that the Enlightenment stripped out: in particular, a pervasive teleology in both cosmology and anthropology. He believed in a threefold anthropology of intellect/spirit, reason/soul, and body, all

intimately tied together. What cognitive science accounts for through cognitive faculties, manipulating mental representations, were accounted for quite differently by an intellect that sees God and the Principles of beings, and a reason that works with the truths apprehended by intellect. The differences between the respective cosmologies and anthropologies are not the differences between two alternate answers to the same question, but answers to two different questions, differently conceived. They are alike in that they can collide because they are wrestling with the same thing: where they disagree, at least one of them must be wrong. They are different in that they are looking at the same aspect of personhood from two different cultures, and Maximus Confessor seems to have enough distance to provide a genuinely interesting critique.

Conclusion

Maximus Confessor was a synthetic thinker, and I suggest that his writings, which are synthetic both in method and in doctrine, are valuable not only because he was brilliant but because synthetic enquiry can be itself valuable. I have pursued a synthetic enquiry, not out of an attempt to be like Maximus Confessor, but because I think an approach that is sensitive to connections could be productive here. I'm not the only critic who has the resources to interpret AI as floundering in a way that may be symptomatic of a cosmological error. It's not hard to see that many religious cosmologies offer inhospitable climates to machines that think: Foerst's reinterpretation of the image of God[54] seems part of an effort to avoid seeing exactly this point. The interesting task is understanding and conveying an interconnected web. So I have connected science with magic, for instance, because although the official version is that they're completely unrelated, there is a strong historic link between them, and cultural factors today obscure the difference, and for that matter obscure

several other things that interest us.

This dissertation falls under the heading of boundary issues between religion and science, and some readers may perceive me to approach boundary issues in a slightly different fashion. That perception is correct. One of the main ways that boundary issues are framed seems to be for Christian theologians to show the compatibility of their timeless doctrines with that minority of scientific theories which have already been accepted by the scientific community and which have not yet been rejected by that same community. With the question of origins, there has been a lot of work done to show that Christianity is far more compatible with evolutionary theory than a literal reading of Genesis 1 would suggest. It seems to have only been recently that gadflies within the intelligent design movement have suggested both that the scientific case for evolution is weaker than it has been made out to be, and there seems to be good reason to believe that Christianity and evolution are incompatible at a deep enough level that the literal details of Genesis 1 are almost superfluous. Nobody conceives the boundary issues to mean that theologians should demonstrate the compatibility of Christianity with that silent majority of scientific theories which have either been both accepted and discredited (like spontaneous generation) or not yet accepted (like the cognitive-theoretic model of the universe). The minority is different, but not as different as people often assume.

One of the questions which is debated is whether it is best to understand subject-matter from within or without. I am an M.Phil. student in theology with a master's and an adjunct professorship in the sciences. I have worked to understand the sciences from within, and from that base look and understand science from without as well as within. Someone who only sees science from without may lack appreciation of certain things that come with experience of science, whilst someone who only sees science from within may not be able to question enough of science's self-

portrayal. This composite view may not be available to all, nor is it needed, but I believe it has helped me in another basic rôle from showing religion's compatibility with current science: namely, serving as a critical observer and raising important questions that science is itself unlikely to raise, sometimes turning a scientific assumption on its head. Theology may have other things to offer in its discussion with science than simply offering assent: instead of solely being the recipient of claims from science, it should be an agent which adds to the conversation.

Are there reasons why the position I propose is to be preferred? Science's interpretation of the matter is deeply entrenched, enough so that it seems strange to connect science with the occult. One response is that this perspective should at least be listened to, because it is challenging a now entrenched cultural force, and it may be a cue to how we could avoid some of our own blind spots. Even if it is wrong, it could be wrong in an interesting way. A more positive response would be to say that this is by my own admission far from a complete picture, but it makes sense of part of the historical record that is meaningless if one says that modern science just happened to be born whilst a magical movement waxed strong, and some of science's founders just happened to be magicians. A more robust picture would see the early modern era as an interlocking whole that encompassed a continuing Reformation, Descartes, magic, nascent science, and the wake of the Renaissance polymath. They all interconnect, even if none is fully determined. Lack of time and space preclude me from more than mentioning what that broader picture might be. There is also another reason to question the validity of science's basic picture:

Artificial intelligence doesn't work, at least not for a working copy of human intelligence.

Billions of dollars have been expended in the pursuit of artificial intelligence, so it is difficult to say the artificial intelligence project has failed through lack of funding. The

project has attracted many of the world's most brilliant minds, so it is difficult to say that the project has failed through lack of talent. Technology has improved a thousandfold or a millionfold since a giant like Turing thought computer technology was powerful enough for artificial intelligence, so it is difficult to say that today's computers are too underpowered for artificial intelligence. Computer science has matured considerably, so it's hard to say that artificial intelligence hasn't had a chance to mature. In 1950, one could have posited a number of reasons for the lack of success then, but subsequent experience has made many of these possibilities difficult to maintain. This leaves open the possibility that artificial intelligence has failed because the whole enterprise is based on a false assumption, perhaps an error so deep as to be cosmological.

The power of science-based technology is a side effect of learning something significant about the natural world, and both scientific knowledge and technology are impressive cultural achievements. Yet science is not a complete picture—and I do not mean simply that we can have our own private fantasies—and science does not capture the spiritual qualities of matter, let alone a human being. The question of whether science understands mechanical properties of physical things has been put to the test, and the outcome is a resounding yes. The question of whether science understands enough about humans to duplicate human thought is also being put to the test, and when the rubber meets the road, the answer to that question looks a lot like, 'No.' It's not definitive (it couldn't be), but the picture so far is that science is trying something that can't work. It can't work because of spiritual principles, as a perpetual motion machine can't work because of physical principles. It's not a matter of insufficient resources available so far, or still needing to find the right approach. It doesn't seem to be the sort of thing which could work.

We miss something about the artificial intelligence project if we frame it as something that began after

computer scientists saw that computers can manipulate symbols. People have been trying to make intelligent computers for half a century, but artificial intelligence is a phenomenon that has been centuries in the making. The fact that people saw the brain as a telephone switchboard, when that was the new technology, is more a symptom than a beginning. There's more than artificial intelligence's surface resemblance to alchemists' artificial person ('homunculus'). A repeated feature of the occult enterprise is that you do not have people giving to society in the ways that people have always given to society; you have exceptional figures trying to delve into unexplored recesses and forge some new creation, some new power—some new technology or method—to achieve something mythic that has simply not been achieved before. The magus is endowed with a magic sword to powerfully slice through his day's Gordian knots, and with a messianic fantasy. This is true of Leibniz's *Ars Combinatoria* and it is true of more than a little of artificial intelligence. To the reader who suggests, 'But magic doesn't really work!' I would point out that artificial intelligence also doesn't really work—although its researchers find it to work, like Renaissance magi and modern neo-pagans. The vast gap between magic and science that exists in our imagination is a cultural prejudice rather than a historical conclusion. Some puzzles which emerge from a non-historical picture of science—in particular, why a discipline with modest claims about falsifying hypotheses is held in such awe—seem to make a lot more sense if science is investigated as a historical phenomenon partly stemming from magic.

If there is one unexpected theme running through this enquiry, it is what has emerged about relationships. The question of whether one relates to society (or the natural world) as to one's mother or as to raw material, in I-Thou or I-It fashion, first crept in as a minor clarification. The more I have thought about it, the more significant it seems. The Renaissance magus distinguished himself from his medieval

predecessors by converting I-Thou relationships into I-It. How is modern science different? To start with, it is much more consistent in pursuing I-It relationships. The fact that science gives mechanisms instead of explanations is connected; an explanation is an I-Thou thing, whilst a bare mechanism is I-It: if you are going to relate to the world in I-It fashion, there is every reason to replace explanations with mechanisms. An I-Thou relationship understands in a holistic, teleological fashion: if you are going to push an I-It relationship far enough, the obvious approach is to try to expunge teleology as the Enlightenment tried. A great many things about magus and scientist alike hinge on the rejection of Orthodoxy's I-Thou relationship.

In Arthurian legend, the figure of Merlin is a figure who holds magical powers, not by spells and incantations, but by something deeper and fundamental. Merlin does not need spells and incantations because he relates to the natural world in a way that almost goes beyond I-Thou; he relates to nature as if it were human. I suggest that science provides a figure of an anti-Merlin who holds anti-magical powers, not by spells and incantations, but by something deeper and fundamental. Science does not need spells and incantations because it relates to the natural world and humans in a way that almost goes beyond I-It; it relates to even the human as if it were inanimate. In both cases, the power hinges on a relationship, and the power is epiphenomenal to that relationship.

If this is a problem, what all is to be done? Let me say what is not to be done. What is not to be done is to engineer a programme to enlist people in an I-Thou ideology. Why not? 'I-Thou ideology' is a contradiction in terms. The standard response of starting a political programme treats society as raw material to be transformed according to one's vision—and I am not just disputing the specific content of some visions, but saying that's the wrong way to start. Many of the obvious ways of 'making a difference' that present themselves to the modern mind work through an I-It

relationship, calculating how to obtain a response from people, and are therefore tainted from the start. Does that mean that nothing is to be done? No; there are many things, from a walk of faith as transforming communion with God, to learning to relate to God, people, and the entire cosmos in I-Thou fashion, to using forms of persuasion that appeal to a whole person acting in freedom. But that is another thesis to explore.

Epilogue, 2010

I look back at this piece six years later, and see both real strengths and things I wince at. This was one of my first major works after being chrismated Orthodox, and while I am enthusiastic for Orthodoxy there are misunderstandings. My focus on cosmology is just one step away from Western, and in particular scientific, roots, and such pressure to get cosmology right is not found in any good Orthodox theologian I know. That was one of several areas where I had a pretty Western way of trying to be Orthodox, and I do not blame people who raise eyebrows at my heavy use of existentialist distinction between I-Thou and I-It relationship. And the amount of time and energy spent discussing magic almost deterred me from posting it from my website; for that reason alone, I spent time debating whether the piece was fit for human consumption. And it is possibly theology in the academic sense, but not so much the Orthodox sense: lots of ideas, cleverly put together, with little invitation to worship.

But for all this, I am still posting it. The basic points it raises, and much of the terrain, are interesting. There may be fewer true believers among scientists who still chase an artificial intelligence pot o' gold, but it remain an element of the popular imagination and belief even as people's interests turn more and more to finding a magic sword that will slice through society's Gordian knots—which is to say that there may be something relevant in this thesis besides

the artificial intelligence critique.

I am posting it because I believe it is interesting and adds something to the conversation. I am also posting it in the hope that it might serve as a sort of gateway drug to some of my more recent works, and provide a contrast: this is how I approached theology just after being received into Holy Orthodoxy, and other works show what I would present as theology having had more time to steep in Orthodoxy, such as *The Arena*.

I pray that God will bless you.

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Footnotes

[1] These neural nets are modelled after biological neural nets but are organised differently and seem to take the concept of a neuron on something of a tangent from its organisation and function in a natural brain, be it insect or human.

[2] *Cog*, <http://www.ai.mit.edu/projects/humanoid-robotics-group/cog/images/cog-rod-slinky.gif>, as seen on 11 June 2004 (enlarged).

[3] 2002, 50-1.

[4] Searle 1998, Edelman 1992, etc., including some of Dreyfus 1992. Edelman lists Jerome Brunner, Alan Gauld, Claes von Hofsten, George Lakoff, Ronald Langaker, Ruth Garrett Millikan, Hilary Putnam, John Searle, and Benny Shannon as convergent members of a realist camp (1992, 220).

[5] Lee 1987, 6.

[6] 'Intentionality' is a philosophy of mind term for the 'about-ness' of mental states.

[7] By 'teleology' I understand in a somewhat inclusive sense that branch of theology and philosophy that deals with goals, ends, and ultimate meanings.

[8] 'Cognitive faculty' is a philosophy of mind conception of a feature of the human mind that operates on mental representations to perform a specific function.

[9] The spiritual 'intellect' is a patristic concept that embraces thought, conceived on different terms from 'cognitive science,' and is inseparably the place where a person meets God. Augustine locates the image of God in the intellect (*In Euangelium Ioannis Tractatus*, III.4), and compares the intellect to Christ as illuminating both itself and everything else (*In Euangelium Ioannis Tractatus*,

XLVII, 3).

[10] Watts 2002, 57-8. See the World Transhumanist Association website at <http://www.transhumanist.org> for further information on transhumanism.

[11] C.S. Lewis critiques this project in *The Abolition of Man* (1943) and *That Hideous Strength* (1965). He does not address the question of whether this is a possible goal, but argues that it is not a desirable goal: the glorious future it heralds is in fact a horror compared to the present it so disparages.

[12] *Encyclopedia Mythica*, 'Rabbi Loeb,' http://www.pantheon.org/articles/r/rabbi_loeb.html, as seen on 26 Mar 04.

[13] Foerst 1998, 109 also brings up this archetypal tendency in her conclusion.

[14] United States Postal Service 2003 annual report, <http://www.usps.com/history/anrpto3/html/realkind.htm>, as seen on 6 May 2004.

[15] *Cog*, as seen on <http://www.ai.mit.edu/projects/humanoid-robotics-group/cog/images/scaz-cog.gif>, on 6 May 2004 (enlarged).

[16] 2002, 57.

[17] *Cog*, 'Theory of Mind for a Humanoid Robots,' <http://www.ai.mit.edu/projects/humanoid-robotics/group/cog/Abstracts2000/scaz.pdf>, as seen on 6 May 2004.

[18] Adler 1986, 319-321.

[19] 1992, 161-4.

[20] Utopias are often a satire more than a prescription literally conceived, but they are also far more prescriptive than one would gather from a simple statement that they are satire.

[21] Turing 1950.

[22] VanLehn 1989, in Posner 1989, 532.

[23] *Ibid.* in Posner 1989, 534.

[24] 1998, 101.

[25] 1992, 159.

[26] Foerst 1998, 103.

[27] Turing 1950.

[28] Hebb 1949, as quoted in the Linux 'fortune' program.

[29] Nominalism said that general categories are something in the mind drawn from real things, and not something things themselves arise from. This has profoundly shaped the course of Western culture.

[30] Lewis 1943, 46.

[31] Yates 1966, 380-382.

[32] Without submitting to the Church in the usual way, the magus is equal to its highest members (Webster 1982, 57).

[33] George Mason University's *Modern & Classical Languages*, 'Pico della Mirandola: Oratio de hominis dignitate,'

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/fld/CLASSICS/mirandola.oratio.html>, as seen on 18 May 2004. See Poim 27-9, CH7 1-2 in Bentley 1987 for texts reflecting an understanding of the world as evil and associated contempt for the *hoi polloi*.

[34] *Thomas More: Utopia, Digitale Rekonstruktion*, <http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/cgi-bin/button.cgi?pfad=/diglib/more/utopia/jpeg/&seite=00000017.jpg&jump=1>, <http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/cgi-bin/button.cgi?pfad=/diglib/more/utopia/jpeg/&seite=00000018.jpg&jump=1>, etc. (pp. 35-6), as seen on 2 June 2004.

[35] *Thomas More: Utopia, Digitale Rekonstruktion*,

<http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/cgi-bin/button.cgi?pfad=/diglib/more/utopia/jpeg/&seite=00000039.jpg&jump=1>,
<http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/cgi-bin/button.cgi?pfad=/diglib/more/utopia/jpeg/&seite=00000040.jpg&jump=1>,
etc., (pp. 79-86), as seen on 2 June 2004. This runs through most of the book.

[36] Lewis 1943, 46.

[37] *Ibid.*, 33-35.

[38] *Ibid.*, 23-24.

[39] *Ibid.*, 295-299.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] See Midgley, 1992, 80.

[42] 1990, 195, 197-224, 337-41.

[43] 1950.

[44] References will be to the online Greek version at *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*,
http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/inst/wsearch?wtitle=2892+049&uid=&GreekFont=Unicode&mode=c_search, according to chapter and line. Unless otherwise specified, references in this section will be to the *Mystagogia*.

[45] 5.1-10. 'Intellect' in particular is used as a scholarly rendering of the Greek '*nous*,' and is not equivalent to the layman's use of 'intellect,' particularly not as cognate to 'intelligence.' The 'reason' ('*logos*') is closer to today's use of the term, but not as close as you might think. This basic conceptualisation is common to other patristic and medieval authors, such as Augustine.

[46] 1992, 239.

[47] 'Punctuated equilibrium' is a variant on Darwin's theory of (gradual) evolution. It tries to retain an essentially

Darwinian mechanism whilst acknowledging a fossil record and other evidence which indicate long periods of stability interrupted by the abrupt appearance and disappearance of life forms. It is called 'punk eek' by the irreverent.

[48] I.82. Material from the *Capita Gnosticae*, not available in *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, will be referenced by century and chapter number, i.e. I.82 abbreviates Century I, Chapter 82.

[49] See Lewis 2001, 522.

[50] What we usually mean by 'cause' today: something which mechanically brings about its effect, as time and favourable conditions cause an acorn to grow into an oak.

[51] The 'final cause' is the goal something is progressing towards: thus a mature oak is the final cause of the acorn that would one day grow into it.

[52] As seen on the Project Gutenberg archive at <http://www.gutenberg.net/etext97/1ws1810.txt> on 15 June 2004.

[53] 1992, 147-165.

[54] 1998, 104-7.

Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Real Peace Through Real Strength

In chapel, a speaker spoke of a person who was asked "Do you know how to play golf?" and answered "Yes, I learned yesterday." He then went on to speak of one of the simplest of Jesus's lessons, and how to truly learn that lesson is the work of a lifetime. If I were to be asked if I understand what I am talking about, the best and most honest answer I could give would be "No, but I am beginning to." For all of my life, I have been shown and have seen that there is something horrible that occurs when a human life without Christ is extinguished, and believed that, if destruction is something God wishes humans to avoid, then he would not place them in situations where it is unavoidable. It is not God's nature to say "this is to be avoided" and then be unfaithful and not provide a way out: sin is to be avoided and minimized. God always provides a way out. When I sin, it is not because God allowed me to come to a situation where there is no way to act without sin, or even because there was a way out that was beyond my strength, but because I choose to disregard what God in his love and wisdom has provided, and bring pain and

destruction to myself and to God. And so I have spent time questioning and studying, and in the past couple of years have stumbled across something that astounds me. At first I saw one means that can work when diplomacy fails, and does not say to any other human being "You are expendable. I will permit you to die." And then, looking deeper, I have seen that it is not only another way to avoid violence, but that it is the imitation of Christ, and a new understanding of what it means to imitate Christ, to suffer for him, to conquer in his name. From time to time, God has given me affirmations of what I am doing - showing me other Christians who before me have seen what I have discovered, bringing a new light to the darkness that is in causing suffering to another. I have no delusions of being a master of that of which I speak - while I learn, while I progress, I do not see how I will ever be other than a novice before I am in Heaven and no longer see darkly and through a glass - but, at the same time, God has shown me something that is awesome in the true meaning of the word, and it is something that I cannot keep to myself.

The most dangerous assumption is the one that is not realized as such. An assumption that is realized can be strengthened and improved in detail if it is true, and rejected if it is false. The one that is unstated offers the danger of not showing its full glory if it is true, and not offering itself for rejection if it is false. There is an often unrealized assumption that there are ultimately some situations where violence is the only way out (IE where God can't or won't use any other means), and furthermore that the choice is between violence and inaction (no other alternatives). Stating that it is an assumption neither proves nor disproves it, but does bring it to light - to consider and judge as an assumption.

The idea that the use of physical force is an evil is a presupposition that is carried throughout this work. All agree violence is preferably to be avoided, not a desirable state, and its means, deception and destruction, bear the

mark of darkness rather than the mark of light.

I know fully that the sixth commandment, translated as "Thou shalt not kill." in King James, used language that would better be translated "You shall not murder.", a command that left open the possibility of killing in many cases. This does not mean that that moral avenue is still open. The ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" was written in language that specifically spoke of lying in court. This does not mean that a court of law is the only place that a Christian is not permitted to lie. There are many things that were made complete when Christ came, one of which was shifting from inwardly attempting to maintain purity to outwardly evangelizing. In the Old Testament, the prophet had a role calling back the lost sheep of Israel, but to the Gentiles there was no real sense of the Great Commission. Christ's coming changed that, so that one of the primary responsibilities given to Christians is to win souls. It is with knowledge of this that Paul spoke of becoming a servant to all, ending with "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." (I Cor 9:22)

Each person in this world is either ready to die or not ready to die. A person who is ready to die will not be serving someone who needs to be stopped. I know that there are many soldiers who would rather not fight, who would rather die than kill, and who bear no hatred towards their enemies. At the same, if you would kill, I have this question for you: Can you consider it to be the best possible form of evangelism to look an enemy soldier in the eyes, say "Jesus loves you. He died so that you may be forgiven of your sins and go to Heaven. I love you." and then, pulling a trigger, send that soldier to Hell?

The early Christian church (before Constantine's vision) had a strong aversion to the shedding of blood, as reflected by people such as Athenagorus, who said in 180 AD "We [Christians] cannot endure even to see a man put to death, though justly." When the Emperor attempted to create a

Christian state, a part of the compromise that was introduced was the concept of just war theory: killing is undesirable and an evil under all circumstances, but there are some circumstances when it is not the greatest evil, and inaction and the damage it will cause is a greater evil. This thought is at the center of misunderstanding of pacifism: that a pacifist sits back and does nothing, that pacifism is passivism. I will attempt here to outline the difference between pacifism and passivism. If I succeed, it is only by God's grace.

If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had prescribed to the idea that it would be possible to know in advance what is the greater evil and what is the lesser evil, and to choose between, then certainly the lesser of the two evils would have been to bow down once and continue with their many other ministries. The story, however, glorifies their refusal to commit even the smallest evil, and reflects God's disregard for what is and isn't humanly possible. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit.", says the Lord. Zech. 4:6

The new law is to love your enemy as yourself, and to forgive the one who injures you seven times seventy, as per Matthew 18:22.

Oftentimes people ask me "Well, God commanded not only defensive wars and even conquest but genocide in the Old Testament; what about those?" Please be assured that, were I to be born before Christ came, I would believe that violence is sometimes allowed. If I were to be born before Christ came, I would probably be an active member of the military, because that is what God commanded of many people and something that my gifts would be suited for. Jesus, however, said "You have heard that it was said: 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect." (Matt. 5:43,44,48) Before this command, it would have been not

only acceptable but a moral duty to strike at some enemies, just as it was not only acceptable but a moral duty to repay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe (Ex. 21:23-25). With Christ, however, things were completely changed: "You have heard that it was said: 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. 5:38-39) Any action taken in a war must be reconcilable with complete and absolute love for the enemies attacked: loving ("Love does no harm to its neighbor", Rom 13:10), doing good towards, praying for, blessing.

If you wish to become a warrior, then you will study and try to learn tactics and strategy. An attack that is lacking in planning will fall to a defense that is strategic, even if the attackers have better soldiers and better weapons.

If you wish to use the means of peace (whether or not you believe that they are always sufficient), then just as a warrior must study, you must study the concepts and principles of the means of peacemaking. You must study the tactics and strategy of making peace before even considering to declare it an insufficient tool for a situation where violence is necessary.

Once the men of a village came, running, and told Gandhi that they had run away while the police were raping and pillaging. When they told him that this was because of his instruction to be nonviolent, he hung his head in shame. He would not have been angry with them if they had defended their families by the power of a sword. He would have approved had they stood in harm's way, calling all injury to themselves without seeking to strike or to harm, to the point of death. But to run away like that and passively leave those who could not run was an act of great and terrible cowardice, the darkest possible answer to the problem. Gandhi - because the Hindu religion sees grey and dark_er_ and light_er_ courses of action (every action

falling onto a spectrum) believed that violence was necessary in many situations, in any event infinitely superior to cowardice. I do not believe that God presents a situation that does not have some way out that is free of sin and evil, and so I believe that violence is completely unnecessary to the Christian. The point of this example still stands, however - that cowardice is diametrically opposed to peacemaking.

Random violence for its own sake is not farther from a just war than sitting back and doing nothing is from pacifism. Cowardice is the direct opposite of peacemaking, and a coward CANNOT learn to be a peacemaker without first learning bravery.

Long before one person ever strikes another in a corporeal manner, peace has been breached. The first principle of peace is something that lies much stronger and much deeper than the absence of physical conflict. The Hebrew word "shalom" has come to have the meaning that peace should have - if you have not encountered the word shalom, take "harmony" or "accord" to be a rough English equivalent. When there is truly peace between two people, they love each other to the point of being ready to forfeit wealth, honor, and life. Such peace leaves no room for prejudice and misunderstanding, which scatter as cockroaches scatter at the appearance of light. To establish peace, you do not merely ensure a lack of physical violence (particularly not through intimidation at your own superior capability for violence - "peace through strength" destroys what it wishes to establish), but rather work to remove all traces of hatred and injustice. Peace is not an absence, but the presence of love.

"The greatest of these is love." I Cor 13:13 Establish love and there will be peace.

Just as a warrior must be ready to sacrifice the life of another by killing, so also, to live by peace you must be ready to sacrifice yourself by dying. This is the heart of the difference between passivism and pacifism. A passivist sits

back and does nothing. A pacifist goes out on the battlefield, ready to die. To go out into a battle to kill, with the knowledge that you may die, requires great courage. To go out into a battle, not to kill, but to die, requires greater courage still.

It is obvious that there is a certain power which, in order to harness, it is necessary to take up arms and be ready to kill if need be. What is not so obvious is that there is another power for which it is necessary to put down arms and be ready to die if need be.

It is easy to return love to one who loves. It is not easy to give love to one who hates. And yet to do this impossible task is possible by the grace of God: "I can do everything in Christ who gives me strength." Phil. 4:13

Christ did not conquer us by threats of fire and brimstone. His message was not centered around "If you do not follow me, you will go to Hell." (although that is true) He did not torture us until we said "Ok, Ok, I believe." (although he has the power, the authority, and the right to do so) He rather said "Look how much I love you. Look at what I did for you. Look at what I want to do for you." He loved us who were his mortal enemies, and conquered us from the inside out: not by force, not by threat, but by love that knew no bounds. When we evangelize - conquering those who are God's mortal enemies - we do not threaten with Hell or use torture. We show our love, and by the power of the Holy Spirit conquer from the inside out, making an ally of an enemy and bringing blessing where God wills. This nature, this love, this manner of conquering is the heart of peacemaking.

In the midst of a world where darkness has its dominion, the powers of light are not overcome. This is not because the power of Satan is weak, but because the power of God is stronger. If you master an enemy by violence, your victory is temporary. If you master an enemy by love, your victory is eternal.

In the study of war and peace, look not only at troubled

individuals and nations in the time of war, but also when there is peace - and know, as much as what went wrong when there were battles, what went right when there was love. Formal elaboration of some principles of peacemaking are rare, but its practice is more common than you might think. When you use your body to shield another person from injury, when you place yourself in the path of harm - take the example of the king of Denmark shielding Jews from Hitler - that is peacemaking.

Brother Andrew, while speaking at a chapel here, recounted an excellent example of peacemaking. He was talking with the leader of a terrorist liberation front who was holding hostages. He reasoned with the leader for a while, talking about how he could not rest if a single brother or sister of his in Christ was in captivity, but did not succeed. Diplomacy failed, as it sometimes will. He did not break into a fistfight, or try to grab one of the guns in the room. What he did do was to ask, "Will you take me in his place? Will you let him go free, and chain me to the central radiator?" The leader was astonished, not believing at first that he actually realized (let alone meant) what he said, and then that Andrew's house was in order, and that he really was ready to be a hostage. That is acting in Christ's love.

Love is not weakened or limited by hostility of the ones loved. It would be hollow and worthless if it were only an effective means of dealing with people who love you and take you seriously. Christ came down and died, died not for perfect people who were worthy of salvation (such people would need no such thing), but for people who were walking in the darkness and hated the light. His manifest power is revealed in the ones who have been conquered and transformed by its strength, and so Billy Graham, Jeffrey Dahmer, and myself who were all repulsive in his sight and fully worthy of Hell have come to be forgiven and made anew. We were God's enemies, conquered not by a show of force on God's part (which would have been easy - God could kill me as easily as I lift a finger), but by costly love.

He came down in human form and, when he had shown his love in all other ways, showed his love by dying. And, as God conquered us who were his enemies by the power of his love, and made us to be his reconciled sons and daughters, so we must conquer those who are our enemies by the power of his love manifest in us, and make them to be our reconciled brothers and sisters.

Jesus said "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. 5:39) This is not a command to act as if you have no rights and passively let yourself be regarded as subhuman, but rather an insistence on the fact that you do have rights. In the society of that time, a slap on the cheek was not intended as a physical injury but rather as an insult, putting an inferior back in his or her place. The strength of that insult depended greatly upon which hand dealt it: as the left hand was seen as unclean, a slap with the left hand was the insult far greater than one dealt with the right hand. This was reflected in the legal penalties for an inappropriate slap: the penalty for slapping a peer with your left hand was a fine one hundred times the penalty for slapping a peer with your right hand; the penalty for slapping a better with your right hand was a fine while the penalty for slapping a better with your left hand was death. The people Jesus was speaking to most directly were, by and large, slaves and the downtrodden. A slap on the right cheek was dealt with the left hand. To turn the other cheek would leave the master with two options. The first would be to slap the slave again, but this time with the right hand (therefore declaring the slave a peer). The second would be not to slap the slave again (therefore effectively rescinding the first slap). Now, such impudence and sauciness would often tend to bring punishment, but it none the less says "Hey, I'm a human. I have rights. You can't treat me like this." It is not an action without suffering for oneself, nor does it inflict suffering on the "enemy": but it does say and do something in a powerful way.

If you are to be a peacemaker, you must act against any

evil - no matter how small it may appear (by human measure - there is no small evil by God's measure) - whenever you see it. Even if it is not a breach of peace in the military sense, it is a breach of shalom, and should be stopped as soon as possible, so that it does not grow and multiply. If this is done, it will be rare if ever that violent intervention is even a question.

The power of violence is in what it can compel of the body. The power of peacemaking is what it can compel of the soul. If someone commands you to do what is morally repugnant to you, and you use the force of arms to stop that person, then you will probably slay some, and you will certainly make enmity. If instead you use the force of peacemaking - by noncompliance, being disobedient and taking whatever the consequences must be, and by choosing your own suffering over the convenience of obedience - you will not see results as quickly, but your actions will command respect rather than enmity.

If you are to gain the power to successfully intervene with violence, then you must devote resources to equipment and time to training. Time and money thus spent are not spent on humanitarian ends. This is not to say that military technology and research does not have civilian spinoffs, or to say that the precision and discipline within military bodies is not something that can be very useful. Both of these benefits do exist, and are worth taking note (and advantage) of. At the same time, it is necessary to think: Is this really the most powerful and best way to spend this money? Love and active peacemaking are not limited to the well financed. Its power does not come from the investment of scarce monetary resources, but rather through the Holy Spirit, which is anything but a scarce resource. Money is freed to other ends.

Everyone in this discussion agrees that it is better to voluntarily suffer than to inflict suffering on others.

Diplomacy is a powerful thing. It becomes even more powerful if you study the positions of all parties involved,

study both their stated desires and what is unstated: their culture, their experience, the motivation behind stating the desires and intentions that they state. Oftentimes goals that appear diametrically opposed will, when examined at the root, reveal a mutually beneficial way of resolution. The power of diplomacy is not, however, absolute, and it depends to an extent on the goodwill of both parties. It is then that either one side must turn back, or that the desires be accomplished at the price of suffering. The usual method of waging wars uses physical force to conquer. The method of peacemaking - to stand in the way of the evil being done against you, and not dodge or resist the blows aimed at you - uses spiritual force which opens a hardened heart.

Love is not the exclusive domain or power of one group. Any individual can bring surprise by an act of love. The power of love, when applied to all ways so that there are no charges of incompleteness or hypocrisy, is overwhelming.

Love wishes nothing that it would not accord to another. Greed, the placement of self at the center of the universe, is diametrically opposed to love.

Christ's resistance and even revulsion at our evil did not cause him to force that evil from us. He rather showed us the better way, and left us to choose between the paths of light and those of darkness. So it is with love that makes peace: it is not forced upon those who believe violence to be the greatest interventive power.

Proclaim Christ at all times, and use words if need be.

Morally, there is not a difference between directly and indirectly causing an action. The one who commissions an assassination is no less guilty than the one who murders in person. Be sure that the actions you support are as pure as the actions you would take in person.

Just as Jesus said not to murder either in body (by breaking the sixth commandment) or in mind (by harboring hatred), peacemaking and love must penetrate both the actions of the body and the actions of the mind completely.

If you oppose someone with peacemaking, you will call

to yourself the love and respect of others. Your power is not dependent on the extent of your military might (which is dependent on the extent to which you sacrifice humanitarian ends), but only on the extent to which you love and to which the Holy Spirit has power. In other words, if it fails, it is because God sees more good in that momentary failure than its success.

Peacemaking is more the opposite of inaction than it is of violence. Violence consists of seeing an evil and trying to act to rectify it; the means are imperfect. Cowardice and inaction make no hint of an effort to rectify the situation, and in my view are more reproachable than well meant violence. I have no respect for cowards - including those who dodge military conscription because they are afraid to die or be maimed in battle - but do hold respect for soldiers who have the courage and the desire to rectify which is the heart of peacemaking.

The power of love to conquer a hostile person without harm is a mystery; I would be a great liar if I said that I have always treated others in love. I will say that, when I have acted in a manner that says "You are expendable", there is a seed of evil and poison, however small, that starts to grow. When I have acted in a manner that does not see the least (by the world's measure) as expendable, God's love acting in me has shown power that is beyond my comprehension.

At the heart of violent intervention is a presupposition that you know the hearts of your enemies and that you can predict what can happen, so that the slaughter you cause will be lesser than the slaughter you prevent, and that if you instead intervene with your own blood without physically incapacitating your enemy, God will not work through and bless your actions as much as if you had compromised. When this assumption comes to mind, I believe that God has answered it when he said "Satan is a liar and the father of all lies." John 8:44, and that that he can and will do "immeasurably more than we all ask or imagine." (Ephesians 3:20) I am personally offended by the idea that

it is necessary to take evil in order to prevent evil, because it carries the implication that God is either a hypocrite (by telling us never to do evil, and having the power to keep us from a choice between acts of evil, but choosing not to) or incompetent (telling us never to do evil, but lacking the power to make this possible). At the heart of peacemaking is faith, faith that without committing any undesirable evil it is possible to conquer the darkness. I have taken too many leaps of faith and landed on solid ground too many times to think that God is unable or even unwilling to grant power to those that will not compromise.

It is said that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Whether or not you agree with that - I find a great blessing in both - it is evident that one of the marks of love is that it benefits the one who loves and the one who is loved. Violence does not "do no harm to its neighbor" (I Cor 13:10), but very regretfully does what it hopes to be a minimum of harm to its neighbor. The power of love and peacemaking is such that it brings blessings upon the one who uses it to oppose evil, and the person whose evil is opposed.

Civil disobedience must be loving and sincere in all regards. To hatefully scream while restraining your fists is not enough: you must act in complete love and not harm in the least the person who you are resisting.

When you take an action, always look at why you act.

Love that is ready to die leaves no room to be cowardly.

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21

I hope that, if God offers me the honor of becoming a martyr, I would have the courage to accept the honor. As Paul said in Phillipians 1:21, "To live is Christ; to die is gain."

All Scriptural quotations (except for quotations from the ten commandments) NIV.

**Dark Patterns / Anti-
Patterns and Cultural
Context Study of
Scriptural Texts:**

**A Case Study in Craig Keener's
*Paul, Women, and Wives:
Marriage and Women's Ministry
in the Letters of Paul***

Jonathan Hayward
christos.jonathan.hayward@gmail.com
cjshayward.com

Diploma in Theology and Religious Studies, 2003
Faculty of Divinity
University of Cambridge
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Abstract

The author suggests how the concept of 'patterns' in architecture and computer science, or more specifically 'dark patterns' / 'anti-patterns', may provide a helpful vehicle to explicitly communicate tacit knowledge concerning problematic thought. The author also provides a pilot study which seeks to provide a sample analysis identifying indicators for the 'surprising cultural find' pattern in which cultural context is misused to explain away offending Bible passages.

Introduction to Patterns, Dark Patterns, and Anti-patterns

The technical concept of *pattern* is used in architecture and computer science, and the synonymous *dark patterns* and *anti-patterns* refer to patterns that are not recurring best practices so much as recurring pathologies; my encounter with them has been as a computer programmer in connection with the book nicknamed 'GoF'[1]. Patterns do not directly provide new knowledge about how to program; what they do provide is a way to take knowledge that expert practitioners share on a tacit level, and enable them both to discuss this knowledge amongst themselves and effectively communicate it to novice programmers. It is my belief that the concept is useful to Biblical studies in providing a way to discuss knowledge that is also held on a tacit level and is also beneficial to be able to discuss explicitly, and furthermore that dark patterns or anti-patterns bear direct relevance. I hope to give a brief summary of the concept of patterns, explaining their application to Biblical studies, then give a pilot study exploring one pattern, before some closing remarks.

Each pattern consists of a threefold rule, describing:

1. A context.
2. A set of forces within that context.
3. A resolution to those forces.

In the contexts of architecture and computer science, patterns are used to describe best practices which keep recurring and which embody a certain 'quality without a name'. I wish to make a different application, to identifying and describing certain recurring problematic ways of thought in Biblical or theological inquiry which may be understood as dark patterns, which often seem to be interlaced with sophistry and logical fallacy.

Two examples of what a dark pattern, or anti-pattern might be are the *consolation prize*, and the *surprising cultural find*. I would suggest that the following provide instances of the consolation prize: discussion of a spiritual resurrection, flowering words about the poetic truth of Genesis 1, and Calvin's eucharistic theology. If you speak of a spiritual resurrection that occurs instead of physical resurrection, you can draw Christians far more effectively than if you plainly say, 'I do not believe in Christ's physical resurrection.' The positive doctrine that is presented is a consolation prize meant to keep the audience from noticing what has been taken away. The context includes a text that (taken literally) a party wants to dismiss. The forces include the fact that Christians are normally hesitant to dismiss Scripture, and believe that insights can give them a changed and deepened understanding. The resolution is to dress up the dismissal of Scripture as a striking insight. Like other patterns, this need not be all reasoned out consciously; I suggest, via a quasi-Darwinian/meme propagation mechanism, that dismissals of Scripture that follow some such pattern are more likely to work (and therefore be encountered) than i.e. a dismissal of Scripture that is not

merely undisguised but offensive.

In the surprising cultural find, a meticulous study is made of a passage's cultural context to find some basis to neutralise the passage so that its apparent meaning does not apply to us. The context is similar to that of the consolation prize, if more specific to a contemporary Western cultural setting. The forces, beyond those mentioned for the consolation prize, include ramifications of period awareness and the Standard Social Science Model: there is a very strong sense of how culture and period can influence people, and they readily believe claims about long ago and far away that which would seem fishy if said about people of our time and place. The resolution is to use the passage's cultural setting to produce disinformation: the fruits of careful scholarly research have turned up a surprising cultural find and the passage's apparent meaning does not apply to us. The passage may be presented, for instance, to mean something quite different from what it appears to mean, or to address a specific historical situation in a way that clearly does not apply to us.

It is the dark pattern of the surprising cultural find that I wish to investigate as a pilot case study in this thesis.

Case Study

Opening Comments

The aim of this case study is to provide a pilot study of how the surprising cultural find may be identified as a dark pattern. In so doing, I analyse one sample text closely, with reference to comparison texts when helpful.

I use the terms *yielding* to refer to analysis from scholars who presumably have interests but allow the text to contradict them, and *unyielding* to refer to analysis that will not allow the text to contradict the scholar's interests. Yielding analysis does not embody the surprising cultural

find dark pattern, while unyielding analysis does. I consider the boundary to be encapsulated by the question, 'Is the text allowed to say "No!" to a proposed position?'

Ideally, one would compare two scholarly treatments that are alike in every fashion save that one is yielding and the other is unyielding. Finding a comparison text, I believe, is difficult because I was searching for a yielding text with the attributes of one that was unyielding. Lacking a perfect pair, I chose Peter T. O'Brien's *The Letter to the Ephesians*[2] and Bonnie Thurston's *Reading Colossians, Ephesians & 2 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary*[3] to represent yielding analysis and Craig Keener's *Paul, Women, Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* [4] to represent unyielding analysis. I was interested in treatment of Ephesians 5:21-33. When I use Biblical references without a book, I will always be referring to Ephesians. All three of secondary sources present themselves as making the fruits of scholarly research accessible to the layperson. O'Brien provides an in-depth, nonfeminist commentary. Thurston provides a concise, feminist commentary. Keener provides an in-depth, Biblical Egalitarian monograph. Unfortunately, the ordered copy of Thurston did not arrive before external circumstances precluded the incorporation of new materials (and may have been misidentified, meaning that my advisor and I both failed after extensive searching to find a yielding feminist or egalitarian treatment of the text). My study is focused on Keener with comparison to O'Brien where expedient.

There seems to be an interconnected web of distinguishing features to these dark patterns, laced with carefully woven sophistry, and there are several dimensions on which a text may be examined. The common-sense assumption that these features are all independent of each other seems to be debatable. One example of this lack of independence is the assumption that what an author believes is independent of whether the analysis is yielding:

the suboptimal comparison texts were selected partly because of the difficulty a leading Christians for Biblical Equality scholar and I experienced trying to locate yielding feminist analyses other than Thurston in Tyndale's library. I do not attempt to seriously investigate the interconnections, beyond commenting that features seem interconnected and less independent of each other than most scholars would assume by default.

The substance of my inquiry focuses on observable attributes of the text. I believe that before that point, observing a combination of factors may provide cues. I will mention these factors, but not develop them; there are probably others:

- Is the book a monograph organised around one of today's hot issues, or e.g. a commentary organised around the contents of a Biblical text?
- If you just open the book to its introduction, do you meet forceful persuasion? Are those first pages written purely to persuade, or do they attempt other endeavours (e.g. give factual or theoretical background that is not especially polemical)? What is the approach to persuasion?
- Does the book contain anything besides cultural arguments finding that Biblical texts which apparently contradict the author's camp need not be interpreted that way?
- How much does the author appear able to question our Zeitgeist (in a direction other than a more thorough development of assumptions in our Zeitgeist)?
- What, in general, does the publisher try to do? The

publisher is not the author, but publishers have specific aims and goals. It would seem to require explanation to say that a company indiscriminately publishes yielding and unyielding analysis because both resonate equally well with its editorial climate.

There will be a decided imbalance between attention paid to Keener and O'Brien. Part of this is due to external constraints, and part is due to a difference between O'Brien and Keener. With one major exception, described shortly, O'Brien's analysis doesn't run afoul of the concern I am exploring. If I were writing cultural commentary for my texts as Keener and O'Brien write cultural commentary for their texts, I would ideally spend as much time explaining the backgrounds to what Keener and O'Brien said. I believe they are both thinkers who were shaped by, draw on, and are critical of their cultures and subcultures. Explaining what they said, as illuminated by their context, would require parity in treatment. However, I do not elaborate their teachings set in context, but explore a problem that is far more present in Keener than in O'Brien or Thurston. I have more of substance to say about how Keener exhibits a problem than how O'Brien doesn't. As such, after describing a problem, I might give a footnote reference to a passage in O'Brien which shows *some* analogy without seeming to exhibit the problem under discussion, but I will not systematically attempt to make references to O'Brien's yielding analysis as wordy as explanations of Keener's unyielding analysis.

The one significant example of unyielding analysis noted in O'Brien is in the comment on 5:21: O'Brien notes that reciprocal submission is not enjoined elsewhere in the Bible, points out that 'allelous' occurs in some contexts that do not lend themselves to reciprocal reading ('so that men should slay one another'[5]), and concludes that 'Believers, submit to one another,' means only that lower-status Christians should submit to those placed above them. This

is as problematic as other instances of unyielding analysis, and arguably more disturbing as it lacks some of the common indicators alerting the careful reader to be suspicious. There is a point of contact between this treatment and Keener's: both assume that 5:21 and 5:22-6:9 are not merely connected but are saying the same thing, and it is one thing only. It is assumed that the text cannot enjoin of us both symmetrical and asymmetrical submission, so one must be the *real* commandment, and the other is explained away. Both Keener and O'Brien end up claiming that something is commanded in 5:21 with clarificatory examples following, without asserting that either 5:21 or 5:22-6:9 says something substantively different from the other about submission. I will not further analyse this passage beyond this mention: I consider it a clear example of unyielding analysis. This is the one part of O'Brien I have read of which I would not say, '...and this is an example of analogous concerns addressed by yielding scholarship.'

The introductions to O'Brien and Keener provided valuable cues as to the tone subsequently taken by the texts. Both are written to persuade a claim that some of their audience rejects, but the divergence in how they seek to persuade is significant. Keener's introduction is written to persuade the reader of Biblical Egalitarianism: in other words, of a position on one of today's current issues. The beginning of O'Brien's introduction tries to persuade the reader of Pauline authorship for Ephesians, which they acknowledge to be an unusual position among scholars today; the introduction is not in any direct sense about today's issues. O'Brien's introduction is written both to persuade and introduce the reader to scholarly perspectives on background; while nontechnical, it is factually dense and heavy with footnotes. Keener's introduction seems to be written purely to persuade: he give statistics[6] concerning recent treatment of women which are highly emotionally charged, no attempt being made to connect them to the text or setting of the Pauline letters. Keener's introduction uses

emotion to bypass rationality, using loaded language and various other forms of questionable persuasion explored below; a naive reader first encountering this debate in Keener's introduction could well wonder how any compassionate person could be in the other camp. O'Brien works to paint a balanced picture, and gives a fair account of the opposing view before explaining why he considers it inadequate. O'Brien seeks to persuade through logical argument, and his book's pages persuade (or fail to persuade) as the reader finds his arguments to be sufficient (or insufficient) reason to accept its conclusions.

Emotional Disinformation

Among the potential indicators found in Keener, the first broad heading I found could be described as *factual disinformation* and *emotional disinformation*. 'Disinformation', as used in military intelligence ordinarily denotes deception through careful presentation of true details; I distinguish 'factual disinformation' (close to 'disinformation' traditionally understood) from 'emotional disinformation', which is disinformation that acts on emotional and compassionate judgment as factual disinformation acts on factual judgment. While conceptually distinct, they seem tightly woven in the text, and I do not attempt to separate them.

An Emotional Plea

One distinguishing feature of Keener's introduction is that it closes off straightforward rebuttal. Unlike O'Brien, he tries to establish not only the content of debate but the terms of debate itself, and once Keener has established the terms of debate, it is difficult or impossible to argue the opposing view from within those terms. Rebuttal is possible, of course, but here it would seem to require pushing the discussion back one notch in the meta-level hierarchy and arguing at much greater length. O'Brien

seems more than fair in his style of argument; Keener loads the dice before his reader knows what is going on.

One passage is worth citing for close study [7]:

There are issues where most Biblically conservative Christians, including myself, disagree with prominent elements of the feminist movement... But there are other concerns which nearly all Christians, including myself, and nearly the whole women's movement plainly share....

[Approximately two pages of alarming claims and statistics, including:] ...Although "bride-burning" is now illegal in India, it still happens frequently; a bride whose dowry is insufficient may be burned to death so that her husband can find a new partner. There is no investigation, of course, because it is said that she simply poured cooking oil over herself and set herself on fire accidentally.... A Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center study of 1700 teenagers, cited in a 1990 InterVarsity magazine, reported that 65% of the boys and 47% of the girls in sixth through ninth grades say that a man may force a woman to have sex with him if they've been dating for more than six months.... Wife-beating seems to have been a well-established practice in many patriarchal families of the 1800's....

But while some Christians may once have been content to cite proof-texts about women's subordination to justify ignoring this sort of oppression, virtually all of us would today recognise that oppression and exploitation of any sort are sinful violations of Jesus's commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves and to love fellow-Christians as Christ loved us. [Keener goes on to later conclude that we must choose between a feminist conception of equality and an un-Christian version of subordination.]

The text starts by presenting Keener as Biblically conservative, moves to a heart-wrenching list of wrongs against women, implicitly conflates nonfeminist Christians with those who condone rape and murder, and presents a choice crystallising the fallacy of the excluded middle that had been lurking in prior words. It has more than one attribute of emotional disinformation.

Keener both identifies himself as Biblically conservative and says that, among some Christians, the egalitarian position is the conservative one (contrast chapter 4, where 'conservative' means a reactionary misogynist). Why? People are more likely to listen to someone who is perceivedly of the same camp, and falsely claiming membership in your target's camp is a tool of deceptive persuasion.

The recitation of statistics is interesting for several reasons.

On a strictly logical level, it is a non sequitur. It has no direct logical bearing on either camp; even its rhetorical position assumes that conservative, as well as liberal, members of his audience believe that rape and murder are atrocities. This is a logical non sequitur, chosen for its emotional force and what impact that emotional recoil will have on susceptibility. The trusting reader will recoil from the oppression listed and be less guarded when Keener provides his way to oppose such oppression. The natural response to such a revolting account is to say, 'I'm not that! I'm the opposite!' and embrace what is offered when the fallacy of the excluded middle is made explicit, in the choice Keener later presents.

Once a presentation of injustice has aroused compassion to indignation, most people do not use their full critical faculties: they want to right a wrong, not sit and analyse. This means that a powerful account of injustice (with your claims presented as a way to fight the injustice) is a powerful way to get people to accept claims that would be rejected if presented on their logical merits. Keener's 'of

course' is particularly significant; he builds the reader's sense of outrage by adding 'of course' with a (carefully studied but) seemingly casual manner. It is not obvious to a Western reader that a bride's murder would be left uninvestigated; adding 'of course' gives nothing to Keener's logical case but adds significantly to the emotional effect Keener seeks, more effectively and more manipulatively than were he to visibly write those words from outrage.

The sentence about proof-texts and loving one's neighbour is of particular interest. On a logical level, it is restrained and cannot really be attacked. The persuasive and emotional force—distinct from what is logically present—is closer to, 'Accepting those proof-texts is equivalent to supporting such oppression; following the Law of Love contradicts both.'

This is one instance of a broader phenomenon: a gap between what the author *entails* and *implicates*. Both 'entail' and 'implicate' are similar in meaning to 'imply', but illustrate opposite sides of a distinction. What a text *entails* is what is implied by the text in a strictly logical sense; what a text *implicates* is what is implied in the sense of what it leads the reader to believe. What is implicated includes what is entailed, and may often include other things. The entailed content of 'But while some Christians...' is modest and does not particularly advance a discussion of egalitarianism. The implicated content is much more significant; it takes a logically tight reading to recognise that the text does not entail a conflation claiming that nonfeminist Christians condone rape and murder. The text implicates much more than it entails, and I believe that this combination of restricted entailment with far-reaching implication is a valuable cue. *It can be highly informative to read a text with an eye to the gap between what is entailed and what is implicated.* The gap between entailment and implicature seemed noticeably more pronounced in Keener than in yielding materials I have read, including O'Brien. Another example of a gap between

entailment and implicature is found close[8], '...the secular generalization that Christians (both men and women) who respect the Bible oppose women's rights is an inaccurate caricature of these Christians' admits a similar analysis: the entailment is almost unassailable, while the implicature establishes in the reader's mind that the conservative position is excisable from respect for the Bible, and that the nonfeminist position denies something basic to women that they should have. The term 'women's rights' is by entailment the sort of thing one would not want to oppose, and by implicature a shorthand for 'women's rights as understood and interpreted along feminist lines'. As well as showing a significant difference between entailment and implicature, this provides an example of a text which closes off the most obvious means of rebuttal, another rhetorical trait which may be produced by the same mindset as produces unyielding analysis.

What is left out of the cited text is also significant. The statistics given are incomplete (they focus on profound ways in which women suffer so the reader will not think of profound ways in which men suffer) but as far as describing principles to discriminate yielding versus unyielding analysis, this seems to be privileged information. I don't see a way to let a reader compare the text as if there were a complementary account written in the margin. Also, a careful reading of the text may reveal a Biblical nonfeminist position as the middle fallaciously excluded earlier, in which sexual distinction exists on some basis *other* than violence. All texts we are interested in—yielding or unyielding—must stop somewhere, but it is possible to exclude data that should have been included and try to conceal its absence. Lacunae that seem to have been chosen for persuasion rather than limitation of scope may signal unyielding analysis.

Further Examples

In a discussion[9] of the *haustafel's* (Ephesians 5:21 and following[10] injunction that the husband love his wife based on Christ's love for the Church, Keener says, 'Indeed, Christ's love is explicitly defined in this passage in terms of self-sacrificial service, not in terms of his authority.' The passage does not mention that self-sacrificial service is a defining feature of Christ's model of authority, and in these pages the impression is created that the belief in servant love is a Biblical Egalitarian distinctive, so that the reader might be surprised to find the conservative *O'Brien* saying[11]:

...Paul does not here, or anywhere else for that matter, exhort husbands to rule over their wives. They are nowhere told, 'Exercise your headship!' Instead, they are urged repeatedly to love their wives (vv. 25, 28, and 33). This will involve each husband showing unceasing care and loving service for his wife's entire well-being...

O'Brien is emphatic that husbands must love their wives; examples could easily be multiplied. Keener argues for loving servanthood as if it were a claim which his opponents rejected. The trusting reader will believe that nonfeminists believe in submission and egalitarians alone recognise that Paul calls husbands to servant love. I believe that this selective fact-telling is one of the more foundational indicators: some factual claims will be out of a given reader's competence to evaluate, but so far as a reader can evaluate whether a fair picture is presented, the presence or absence of selective fact-telling may help.

Chapter 4 is interesting in that there are several thoughts that are very effectively conveyed without being explicitly stated. The account of 'conservatives' (i.e. misogynistic reactionaries) is never explicitly stated to apply

to Christians who disagree with Keener, but works in a similar fashion (and for similar reasons) to the 'Green Book' which introduces the first major argument in *The Abolition of Man*.^[12] By the same mechanism as the Green Book leads the reader to believe that claims about the outer world are in fact only claims about ourselves, not the slightest obstacle is placed to the reader believing that Keener exposes the true nature of 'conservatism', and that the picture of Graeco-Roman conservatism portrayed is a picture of *conservatism*, period, as true of conservatism today as ever.

A smaller signal may be found in that Keener investigates inconvenient verses in a way that never occurs for convenient ones. Keener explores the text, meaning, and setting to 5:22-33 in a way that never occurs for 5:21; a careless reader may get the impression that 5:21 doesn't *have* a cultural setting.

Drawing on Privileged Information

I would next like to outline a difference between men's and women's communication, state what Keener's Roman conservatives did with this, and state what Keener did with the Roman conservatives. One apparent gender difference in communication is that when a woman makes a claim, it is relatively likely to mean, 'I am in the process of thinking and here is where I am now,' while a man's claim is more likely to mean, 'I have thought. I have come to a conclusion. Here is my conclusion.' Without mentioning caveats, there is room for *considerable* friction when men assume that women are stating conclusions and women assume that men are giving the current state of a developing thought. The conservatives described by Keener seem frustrated by this friction; Keener quotes Josephus [13]:

Put not trust in a single witness, but let there be three or at least two, whose evidence shall be

accredited by their past lives. From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the levity and temerity of their sex; neither let slaves bear witness, because of the baseness of their soul.

This passage is introduced, "...regards the prohibition of women's testimony as part of God's law, based in the moral inferiority inherent in their gender." The reader is not likely to question whether it's *purely* misogyny for a man (frustrated by women apparently showing levity by changing their minds frequently) to find this perceived mutability a real reason why these people should not be relied on as witnesses when someone's life may be at stake. Keener has been working to portray conservatives as misogynistic. Two pages earlier[14], he tells us,

An early Jewish teacher whose work was undoubtedly known to Paul advised men not to sit among women, because evil comes from them like a moth emerging from clothes. A man's evil, this teacher went on to complain, is better than a woman's good, for she brings only shame and reproach.

This, and other examples which could be multiplied, deal with something crystallised on the previous page[15]. Keener writes,

Earlier philosophers were credited with a prayer of gratitude that they were not born women, and a century after Paul a Stoic emperor could differentiate a women's soul from that of a man.

The moral of this story is that believing in nonphysical differences between men and women is tantamount to misogyny. This is a highly significant claim, given that the questions of women's ordination and headship in marriage

are largely epiphenomenal to the question of whether we are created masculine and feminine at every level of our being, or ontologically neuter spirits in reproductively differentiated bodies. Keener produces a conclusion (i.e. that the human spirit is neuter) *without ever stating it or drawing the reader to consciously consider* whether this claim should be believed. In a text that is consistently polite, the opposing view is not merely negated but vilified: to hold this view (it is portrayed) is tantamount to taking a view of women which is extraordinarily reprehensible. Either of these traits may signal unyielding analysis; I believe the combination is particularly significant.

Tacit and Overt Communication

Although the full import of tacit versus overt communication is well beyond my competency to address, I would like to suggest something that merits further study. [16] Keener seemed, to a significant degree, to:

- *Tacitly convey most of his important points, without stating them explicitly.*
- *Present claims so the opposing view is never considered.*
- *Build up background assumptions which will produce the desired conclusions, more than give explicit arguments.*
- *Work by manipulating background assumptions, often provided by the reader's culture.*

As an example of this kind of tacit communication, I would indicate two myths worked with in the introduction and subsequently implied. By 'myth' I do not specifically mean 'widespread misconception', but am using a semiotic

term comparable in meaning to 'paradigm': '[M]yths act as scanning devices of a society's *'possibles'* and *'pensables'* [17]. The two myths are:

- *Men are powerful and violent aggressors, whilst women are powerless and innocent victims.* The alarming claims and statistics[18] mention aggression against men only in the most incidental fashion.
- *The accurate spokesperson for women's interests is the feminist movement.* Keener diminishes this myth's force by disclaiming support for abortion (and presenting a pro-choice stance as separable from other feminist claims), but (even when decrying prenatal discrimination in sex-selective abortion[19]) Keener refers to the feminist movement interchangeably as 'the feminist movement'[20] and 'the women's movement'[21], and does not lead the reader to consider that one could speak for women's interests by contradicting feminism, or question the *a priori* identification of women's interests with the content of feminist claims.

Argument Structure

As well as the emotional disinformation explored in many of the examples above, there are several points where the nature of the argument is of interest. Five argument-like features are explored:

- Verses which help our position are principles that apply across all time; verses which contradict our position were written to address specific issues in a specific historical context.

- X had beneficial effect Y; X was therefore purely instrumental to Y, and we may remove X if we no longer require X as an instrument to Y.
- The absolute position taken in this passage addresses a specific historical idiosyncrasy, but the relative difference between this passage and its surroundings is a timeless principle across all times.
- If X resonates with a passage's cultural context, then X need not be seen as part of the Bible's revelation.
- We draw the lines of equivalence in the following manner...

'Verses which help our position are principles that apply across all time; verses which contradict our position were written to address specific issues in a specific historical context' is less an argument than an emergent property. It's not argued; the text just turns out that way. Keener gives a diplomatically stated reason why Paul wrote the parts of 5:22-6:9 he focuses on: 'Paul was very smart.' [22] The subsequent argument states that Paul wrote in a context where Christians behaving conservatively would diminish he perceived threat to social conservatives. Keener writes [23], 'Paul is responding to a specific cultural issue for the sake of the Gospel, and his words should not be taken at face value in all cultures.' There is a fallacy which seems to be behind this argument in Keener: being timeless principles and being historically prompted are non-overlapping categories, so finding a historical prompt suffices to demonstrate that material in question does not display a timeless principle.

'X had beneficial effect Y; X was therefore purely instrumental to Y, and we may remove X if we no longer require X as an instrument to Y.' Keener argues [24] that the

haustafel mitigated prejudice against Christianity, which is presented as a reason why we need not observe the *haustafel* if we do not perceive need for that apologetic concern.

'The absolute position taken in this passage addresses a specific historical idiosyncrasy, but the relative difference between this passage and its surroundings is a timeless principle across all times.' A text embodies both an absolute position *in se*, and a relative difference by how it is similar to and different from its surrounding cultural mainstream. 5:22-33 requires submission of wives and love of husbands; that absolute position can be understood with little study of context, while the relative difference showed both a continuity with Aristotelian *haustafels* and a difference by according women a high place that was unusual in its setting. The direction of Keener's argument is to say explicitly[25] that the verses should not be taken at face value, and to implicitly clarify that the absolute position should not be taken at face value, but *part* of the relative position, namely the sense in which Paul was much more feminist-like than his setting ('[A quote from Plutarch] is one of the most "progressive" social models in Paul's day... It is most natural to read Paul as making a much more radical statement than Plutarch, both because of what Paul says and because of what he does not say,'[26]) is a timeless principle that should apply in our day as well as Paul's. Without proper explanation of why the relative difference should be seen as absolute, given that the absolute position is idiosyncratic, the impression is strongly conveyed that respecting Paul's spirit means transposing his absolute position so that a similar relative difference exists with relation to our setting.

'If X resonates with a passage's cultural context, then X need not be seen as part of the Bible's revelation.' This is often interwoven with the previous two arguments. Apart from showing a feminist-like relative difference, Keener works to establish that Paul used a *haustafel* in a way that

reduced Christianity's perceived threat to conservatives. This is presented as establishing that therefore wives are not divinely commanded to submit.

'We draw equivalences in the following manner...' This is not a single argument so much as an attribute of arguments; I believe that what is presented as equivalent can be significant. In the autobiographical comments in the introduction, Keener writes[27]:

"But it's part of the Bible!" I protested. "If you throw this part out, you have to throw everything else out, too." I cannot recall anyone having a good response to my objection, but even as a freshman I knew very well that if I were consistent in my stance against using culture to interpret the Bible, I would have to advocate women's head coverings in church, the practice of holy kisses, and parentally arranged marriages.

What Keener has been arguing is not just the relevance of culture but the implicit necessity of a piecemeal hermeneutic. The implication (beyond an excluded middle) is that using culture to argue a piecemeal, feminist modification to Paul is the same sort of thing as not literally practicing the holy kiss.[28] The sixth of seven chapters, after emotionally railing against slavery, argues that retaining the institution of marriage while excising one dimension is the same sort of thing as abolishing the institution of slavery; "The Obedience of Children: A Better Model?"[29] explicitly rejects the claim that marriage is more like parenthood than owning slaves. While no comparison is perfect, I believe that these are examples of comparisons where it is illuminating to see what the author portrays as equivalent.

In some cases, the argument types I have described are not things which must be wrong, but things which lack justification. The claim that an absolute position is

parochial but the relative difference is timeless is not a claim I consider to be unjustifiable, but it is a claim which I believe *requires* justification, a justification which is not necessarily provided.

In my own experience at least, this kind of argument is not purely the idiosyncrasy of one book. The idea this thesis is based on occurred to me after certain kinds of arguments recurred. Certain dark patterns, or anti-patterns, came up in different contexts like a broken record that kept on making its sound. I'm not sure how many times I had seen instances of 'X had beneficial effect Y; X was therefore purely instrumental to Y, and we may remove X if we no longer require X as an instrument to Y,' but I did *not* first meet that argument in Keener. These arguments represent fallacies of a more specialised nature than *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* ("after the fact, therefore because of the fact") or *argumentum ad ignorantiam* ("appeal to ignorance"). I believe that they allow a persuasive, rational-seeming argument of a conclusion not yet justified on logical terms. The experience that led to the formation of my thesis was partly from repeatedly encountering such fallacies in surprising cultural find arguments.

Conclusion

I have tried to provide a pilot study identifying indicators of unyielding analysis. These indicators are not logically tied in the sense of 'Here's something which, on logical terms, can only indicate unyielding analysis.' The unyielding analysis I have met, before and in Keener, has been constructed with enough care to logic that I don't start by looking at logic. There are other things which are not of logical necessity required by unyielding analysis, but which seem to be produced by the same mindset. I have encountered these things both in the chosen text and in repeated previous experiences which first set me thinking along these lines.

At a fairly basic level, the case study is a study of a cultural dimension of communication. I believe that portions of this pilot study may be deepened by the insights of scholars from humanities which study human culture and communication. I believe that some of my remarks would be improved by a serious attempt to connect them with high-context and low-context communication as studied in anthropology. If I am doing a pilot study that cannot provide much of any firm answers, I do hope to suggest fruitful lines of inquiry and identify deep questions which for which interdisciplinary study could be quite fruitful.

It is unfortunate that my control text made little use of emotion. I believe my case study would have been better rounded, had I been able to contrast emotion subverting logic in Keener with emotion complementing logic in the control text. As it is, the case study lends itself to an unfortunate reading of "logic is good and emotion is bad", and gives the impression that I consider the bounds of legitimate persuasion to simply be those of logic.

On a broader scale, it is my hope that this may serve not only as a pilot study regarding unyielding analysis but a tentative introduction of a modified concept of 'pattern', or rather 'dark pattern' or 'anti-pattern' in theology. The concept of pattern was introduced by the architect Christopher Alexander and is sufficiently flexible to be recognised as powerful in computer science. I believe there are other patterns that can be helpful, and I would suggest that books like Alexander's *The Timeless Way of Building*[30] are accessible to people in a number of disciplines.

Directions for Further Inquiry

There were other indicators which I believe could be documented from this text with greater inquiry, but which I have not investigated due to constraints. Among these may

be mentioned:

- *Misrepresentation of material.* Recognising this would seem to require privileged information, and work better for an area where the reader knows something rather than nothing, but I believe that a reader who knows part of the covered domain stands to benefit from seeing if it is covered fairly.
- *Doing more than a text presents itself as doing.* A certain kind of deceit, in which the speaker works hard to preserve literal truth, has a complex quality caused by more going on than is presented. I believe an exploration of this quality, and its tie to unyielding analysis, may be fruitful.
- *Shared attributes with a test case.* A small and distinctive minority of cases qualify to become test cases in American legal practice; they possess a distinct emotional signature, and portions of Keener's argument (i.e. 'Would [Paul] have ignored her personal needs in favour of the church's witness?'[31]) are reminiscent in both argument and emotional appeal of test cases.
- *An Amusement Park Ride with a Spellbinding Showman.* Especially in their introductions, O'Brien seems to go out of his way to let the reader know the full background to the debate; Keener seems more like a fascinating showman who directs the reader's attention to certain things *and away from others*; knowing the other side to statistics cited[32]—or even knowing that there *is* another side—destroys the effect. A careful description of this difference in rhetoric may be helpful, and I believe may be tied to

disinformation in that there is a difference in working style; yielding persuasion suffers far less from the reader knowing the other side than does unyielding persuasion.

More broadly, I believe there is room for inquiry into the relation between this use of patterns and that in other disciplines. The application I have made is not a straight transposition; in architecture and computer science patterns are a tool to help people communicate about best practices to follow, not identify questionable practice to criticise as I have done here. What becomes of the Quality Without a Name may be interesting. This thesis only suggests two patterns; GoF[33] describes twenty-three computer programming patterns broken into three groups, so that they provide a taxonomy of recurring solutions and not merely a list. A taxonomy of Biblical studies patterns could be a valuable achievement.

Lastly, I would suggest that a study of *sharpening* and *leveling* would be fruitful.[34] 'Sharpening' and 'leveling' refer to a phenomenon where people remembering a text tend to sharpen its main points while leveling out attenuating factors. For many texts, sharpening and leveling are an unintended effect of their publication, while Keener seems at times to write to produce a specific result after sharpening and leveling have taken effect. What he writes *in itself* is more carefully restrained than what a reader would walk away thinking, and the latter appears to be closer to what Keener wants to persuade the reader of. Combining narrow entailment with broad implicature is a way for an author to write a text that creates a strong impression (sharpening and leveling produce an impression from what is implicated more than what is entailed) while being relatively immune to direct criticism: when a critic rereads a text closely, it turns out that the author didn't really say the questionable things the critic remembers the author to have said.

Footnotes

- [1] I.e. the 'Gang of Four': Gamma, Erich; Helm, Richard; Johnson, Ralph; Vlissides, John, *Design Patterns: Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software*, Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1994.
- [2] Leicester: Apollos, 1999.
- [3] Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1999.
- [4] Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992.
- [5] Rev. 6:8, RSV.
- [6] Keener, pp. 7-9.
- [7] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9; compare almost any of O'Brien pp. 4-47.
- [8] Keener, p. 9.
- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- [10] A *haustafel* is a household code such as the one found in Ephesians; for my purposes, the Ephesians *haustafel* stretches from 5:21 to 6:9.
- [11] O'Brien, p. 419.
- [12] Lewis, C.S., chapter 1, pp. 1-26, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1943, 2001.
- [13] Keener, p. 163; O'Brien in pp. 405-438 does not cite a non-Biblical primary source likely to be similarly repellent, and portrays opposing secondary sources as mistaken without setting them in a disturbing light, i.e. in footnote 211, page 413.
- [14] Keener, p. 161.
- [15] *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- [16] My attempts to find material discussing how these things work, academic or popular, have had mixed success. If I were to write a thesis around this issue, I would initially

explore works such as Michael I. Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, and anthropological treatments of the high-context/low-context and direct/indirect axes of human communication (which suggest relevant lines of inquiry). C.S. Lewis's account of the Unman's dialogue with the Lady in *Perelandra* (chapters 8-11, pp. 274-311 in *Out of the Silent Planet / Perelandra*, Surrey: Voyager Classics, 1938 / 1943), seems to represent a very perceptive grappling with the issue of tacit communication in relation to deceit.

[17] Maranda, Pierre, 'Elusive Semiosis', *The Semiotic Review of Books*, Volume 3, Issue 1, seen in 2003 at <http://www.bdk.rug.nl/onderzoek/castor/srb/srb/elusive.html>.

[18] Keener, pp. 7-9.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 141. Contrast O'Brien's comments on 6:5-9 in 447-456, seemingly the most obvious place to portray at least *some* of the text as parochial; O'Brien disclaims that Paul was making any social comment on slavery (p. 448), but unpacks the verses without obviously approaching the text from the same mindset as Keener.

[23] Keener, p. 170.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 174-8. O'Brien covers some of the same basic facts without obviously presenting argument in this vein (pp. 405-409).

[25] Keener, p. 170.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 4; contrast the series preface before O'Brien: 'God stands over against us; we do not stand in judgment of

him. When God speaks to us through his Word, those who profess to know him must respond in an appropriate way...' (page viii).

[28] Remember that Keener is an American. The suggestion he makes is more significant in U.S. than English culture. U.S. culture has a place for giving kisses to one's romantic partner, to family, and to small children, but not ordinarily to friends. Because of this, culture shock affects almost any attempt to consider ecclesiastical usage. 'Greet one another with a holy kiss.' serves in U.S. Evangelical conversation as the standard example of a New Testament injunction which cannot be taken seriously as a commandment to follow. It seem to be often assumed as an example of cultural noise in the Bible.

[29] Keener, pp. 186-188; contrast O'Brien, pp. 409-438, where he elaborates the text's analogy with Christ and the Church as a model for understanding marriage, rather than comparing to slavery (which Keener not only does but works to give the reader a reservoir of anger at slavery which may transfer when he argues that marital submission is like slavery).

[30] Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

[31] Keener, p. 148.

[32] *Ibid.* pp. 7-8.

[33] I.e. the 'Gang of Four': Gamma, Erich; Helm, Richard; Johnson, Ralph; Vlissides, John, *Design Patterns: Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software*, Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1994.

[34] Comments from Asher Koriat, Morris Goldsmith, and Ainat Pansky in 'Toward a Psychology of Memory Accuracy (in the 2000 *Annual Review of Psychology* as seen in 2003 at http://www.findarticles.com/cf_o/m0961/2000_Annual/61855635/p7/article.jhtml?term=) provide a summary, with

footnotes, suggesting the basic psychological mechanism. An accessible treatment of a related, if not identical, application to what I suggest here is found on pp. 91-94 in Thomas Gilovich's *How We Know What Isn't So*, New York: The Free Press, 1993.

Does Augustine Return to the Interpersonal Image of Love as Representing the Trinity, or Does He Abandon This in Favour of the Psychological Image?

I. Mindset considerations

Does Augustine return to the interpersonal image of love as representing the Trinity, or does he abandon this in favour of the psychological image? Behind this question may lurk another question that is both connected and distinct from it: 'Does Augustine have a relational understanding of the image, or is his understanding ultimately solipsistic?' I take Rowan Williams^[1] as an example of a scholar writing from a mindset which fails to adequately distinguish the two questions. He opens with quotes that read Augustine as almost Sabellian, and ends his opening paragraph with a spectacular strawman:

Augustine stands accused of collaborating in the construction of the modern consciousness that has wrought such havoc in the North Atlantic cultural world, and is busy exporting its sickness to the rest of the globe, while occluding the vision of the whole planet's future in its delusions of technocratic mastery — a hugely inflated self-regard, fed by the history of introspection.[2]

Williams is building up to a rescue operation. He offers a careful study which either counterbalances Augustine's apparent meaning or replaces it. He brings up quotations like, 'In the West, especially since the time of Augustine, the unity of the divine being served as the starting point of Trinitarian theology'[3], as examples of the reading he doesn't like. Williams's presentation of Augustine's text does not bring up Augustine's claim that all three persons of the Trinity speak in Old Testament theophanies. This claim is significant because Augustine rejects the Patristic claim that Old Testament theophanies are specially made through the immanent Son.[4] Williams seems to be fighting an obvious reading so he can rescue relationality in Augustine. I would argue that the psychological image is relational from the beginning, and that Augustine's image is psychological.

We're looking for relationality in the wrong place if we look for it in where Augustine stood in the controversies of his day. The deepest relationality does not lie in i.e. his writing against Arianism, but something that was so deeply ingrained in the Church that he would never have thought it necessary to explain. The very individualism he is accused of helping construct had not come together. In the Reformation-era Anabaptist/Zwinglian controversy over infant baptism, the issue was *not* whether faith precedes baptism. Both sides believed that much. The issue was whether that faith was reckoned along proto-individualist lines, or whether the faith of a community could sanctify

members too young to embrace faith on terms an individualist would recognise. Augustine lived over a thousand years before that controversy. His tacit theory of boundaries was that of a community's bishop, *not* a counselor imparting the 'value-free' boundaries that flow from atomist individualism. I mention these examples to underscore that Augustine's understanding of where one person ends and another begins is much less articulate, much less thorough, much less basic, much less sealed, and in the end much less focal than ours. The difference is like the qualitative difference between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Bible, and what either Arian or a Trinitarian did with what is present in the Bible. One is tacitly present, something you can't explain ('That's just the way things are!'), and the other is articulate, the sort of thing you can at least begin to explain and give reason for. In the end Augustine's understanding of how one person can meet another arises from a very different mindset from a setting where scholars argue that communication is impossible. This means that combining passages with individualist assumptions gives a very different meaning from combining the same passages with Augustine's patristic assumptions. It is the latter which represents Augustine's thought. I believe that Augustine did plant proto-modernist seeds. These seeds became a vital ingredient of modernism with many thinkers' successive modifications. However, the fact that they have become modernism today with the influence of a millenium and a half of change does not make Augustine an early modernist. His beliefs were quite different from atomist individualist modernism.

What is most important in Augustine's thought, and what he believed most deeply, includes some of what would never occur to him to think *needed* saying. These things that leave less obvious traces than his explicit claims. With that in mind, I would like to look more closely at Augustine's interiority:

But it [the mind] is also in the things that it thinks about with love, and it has got used to loving sensible, that is bodily things; so it is unable to be in itself without their images. Hence arises its shameful mistake [*errus dedecus*], that it cannot make itself out among the images of things it has perceived with the senses, and see itself alone...[5]

What is interesting is what Augustine *doesn't* say here. A materialist would see bodily things as including other people, but Augustine did not think from that starting point. Would he have included people? That's a little less clear-cut. People are equal to oneself, and purely sensible objects are inferior. One is trying to go upwards, and Augustine does not seem to include equal people with inferior objects. Perhaps he does not raise this question. Augustine does go on to give a primacy to 'Know thyself,' but this is a matter of means, *not* of final end. Augustine is telling us to start with what is near at hand[6]. The distinction between what Augustine called 'interior' and what we would call 'private' is significant. It contains not only phantasms (sense impressions) but the *res ipsa* (the realities themselves) of intelligible things, and is where the soul meets intelligible truth. God is in the interior, and is shared between people. Furthermore, when we unite with God, we are united with others united with God. Where there is privacy, this is darkness caused by the Fall.[7]

II. Is the psychological image relational?

I would suggest that the psychological image is relational. Furthermore, I would suggest that the deepest relationality comes *before* making God the object of the *vestigia* (divine shadows or traces in Creation) of memory, understanding, and will. Augustine comments:

Even in this case [I Cor. 8:2], you notice, he [Paul] did not say "knows him", which would be a dangerous piece of presumption, but "is known by him." It is like another place where as soon as he said, *But now knowing God*, he corrected himself and said, *Or rather being known by God...*[8]

Before we worry if God is the object of our love, he must be the Subject behind it. And that does not mean we need to worry about orienting the *vestigia* (traces of God imprinted in Creation) so we add relationality as something external; relationality is there in the beginning, as God knowing us.

Is remembering, understanding, and willing oneself a relational activity? If it's sought on the right terms, it is. That means that it is not the pre-eminent *goal*, but a *means*, the bridge that must be crossed to gain access to other places.[9] That means that remembering, understanding, and willing have God as their *goal* even before he is their *object*. Augustine comments in another draft of the psychological image:

This word is conceived in love of either the creature or the creator, that is of changeable nature or unchangeable truth; which means either in covetousness or in charity. Not that the creature is not to be loved, but if that love is related to the creator it will no longer be covetousness but charity. It is only covetousness when the creature is loved on its own account.[10]

Augustine's discussion of use and enjoyment forbids the psyche to enjoy itself: regardless of immediate object, God is the goal or *goal* of 'Know thyself.'

In regard to the rest of Creation, it is much easier to read a psychological image as non-relational. His enjoyment/use distinction is not utilitarian but helped

make utilitarianism[11]. Whilst he chose Christianity over Manicheanism and Platonism, these other beliefs left a lasting imprint[12]; Augustine rejected their claims that matter was evil, but his conversion to believing in the goodness of created matter was less thorough than one could desire. At one point Augustine considered sex a major *to reject* marriage; later he acknowledged sex an instrumental good when it propagates the people of God[13]. Augustine's much-criticised views on sex were in continuity with his understanding of creation, especially material creation. The created order that is neither called evil nor fully embraced as good, even fallen good: 'Cleansed from all infection of corruption, they are established in tranquil abodes until they get their bodies back—but incorruptible bodies now, which will be their guerdon [beneficial help], not their burden.' [14] This negative view of our (current) bodies is not a view of something one would want to be in relation with, and that is part of who we are created to be. From these, one could argue a continuity, if perhaps not parity, with a mindset that would support an individualistic psychological image. The argument has some plausibility, but I believe it is not ultimately true.

The biggest difference between a person and mere matter is that a person has spirit. Augustine can say, 'Now let us remove from our consideration of this matter all the many other things of which man consists, and to find what we are looking for with as much clarity as possible in these matters, let us only discuss the mind,' and abstract away a person's body to see the mind. I did not find a parallel passage abstracting away a person's mind to see body alone. Even if we assume he remained fully Manichean or fully Platonist, both Manicheanism and Platonism find some people to be above the level of matter. Augustine was free enough of Platonism to forcefully defend the resurrection of the body in *De Civitate Dei*[15] (The City of God). His belief in community is strong enough to make the interpersonal image important in his discussion. As argued in 'Mindset

Considerations', he was quite far from individualism to begin with.

If community is important, why have a psychological image? Let me give one line of speculation. Augustine may be trying to put community on a proper ground. The Trinity turns outwards, not in an attempt to remedy any kind of defect, to try to get the creation to fill some need that it can't fill itself. The Trinity turns outwards out of abundance and fulness. Augustine may not want half persons seeking other half persons to try and create fulness. I believe he wants whole persons turning outwards out of the fulness within. In other words, a psychological image lays the ground for robust interpersonal relationship. Leaving this speculation aside, community was deeply ingrained in the patristic mindset, so that it didn't need saying. A psychological image could be explored without Augustine needing to add constant footnotes saying, 'But I still believe in community.'

III. What understanding does Augustine hold in the end?

Augustine explores a number of possible images of the Trinity before settling on one. He starts with an interpersonal image of lover, beloved, and love representing Father, Son, and Spirit respectively. Then he explores a 'psychological' image of mind, mental word, and will, which he revises into memory, understanding, and will. [16] Besides these images there are others not explored in this essay, such as thing seen, sense impression formed, and will. I would like to show which image Augustine chooses.

I would also like to make a distinction which makes sense of his choosing one image from several candidates. The distinction is the distinction between images that are 'built in' and 'after the fact'. [17] The difference between an image that is 'after the fact' and one that is 'built in' is the difference between a portrait which resembles a person, and

a cloud in which a resemblance is found. Is the image something prior to anything observable, something around which other things are shaped, or is the image what we can find when we find things that look like a trinity?

This is arguably latent in Augustine's discussion of enigmas[18], and in remarks like 'It is true of all of his creatures, both spiritual and corporeal, that he does not know them because they are, but that they are because he knows them.'[19] The discussion of enigmas discusses things mysteriously hidden and then brought forth: Augustine mentions the story of Hagar and Sarah and then Paul drawing out their hidden symbolism. He wrote, 'As far as I can see then, by the word "mirror" he wanted us to understand an image, and by the word "enigma" he was indicating that although it is a likeness, it is an obscure one and difficult to penetrate.'[20] Augustine has looked through any number of images 'after the fact.' Now Augustine is trying to find out which of these plausible 'after the fact' candidates holds its plausibility precisely because it is the image 'built in'. He wants to know which of the resemblances to the Trinity is there precisely because the Trinity created it to be 'after our likeness'.[21]

What, at heart, is the distance between an image 'built in' and 'after the fact'? An 'after the fact' image is an 'after the fact image' because the behaviour and properties it shows, whilst a 'built in' image is such by its internal logic. An early draft of the psychological image compares the mind to the Father, its word to the Son, and the will joining them together to the Holy Spirit. Augustine, conscious of Arianism, says that a human mental word is equal to the mind that begot it. Even if he did not say this, and the word was described as inferior to the mind, there would be reason to see the mind/word/will psychological image as a 'built in' image. A person looking for an 'after the fact' image would look for the property that word and mind are equal because Father and Son are equal; if we look at 'built in' logic it is possible that uncreated God can beget a Word equal to

himself, but a creaturely mind lacks the stature to beget a word that is its equal. Then the image would lack the property of equality, but it would have the internal logic of begetting what word one can beget, and reflect the Trinity at a deeper level. [22] This is like the difference between a literal translation and a dynamic equivalent. A literal translation tries to faithfully represent the text word for word; a dynamic equivalent tries to faithfully represent the text's impact, and it may give the text much more breathing room than a literal translator feels is respectful. A literal translation preserves details, but only a dynamic equivalent can render a poem into something that breathes as poetry. This may be part of why Williams writes, 'Growing into the image of God, then, is not a matter of perfecting our possession of certain qualities held in common with God... It is for us to be at home with our created selves...'[23] Growing into the image of God is not to look as if we had not been created, a literal rendering of God's attributes, but a creaturely dynamic equivalent in which a glimpse of the Trinity is rendered in creaturely idiom. This is inadequate; the creaturely idiom isn't powerful enough to capture the divine original, regardless of how it is rendered. Yet Augustine does settle on one image, one translation, not just as bearing 'after the fact' resemblance, but as having been constructed to have a 'built in' resemblance.

At the end of XV.3, Augustine quotes Wisdom 13:1-5 on recognising creation as the work of the Creator, and comments:

I quote this passage from the book of Wisdom in case any of the faithful should reckon I have been wasting time for nothing in first searching creation for signs of that supreme trinity we are looking for when we are looking for God, going step by step through various trinities of different sorts until we arrive at the mind of man.

This sets the programme for much of book XV. This program has subtleties of various sorts, and Augustine says far more than merely settling on the psychological image. The mind is the genuine image of the Trinity in that God has projected his own likeness downwards, but if we try to project anything in creation upwards—even the image God himself has fashioned—it must fall immeasurably short. The most faithful photograph captures at best a glimpse of the living person it portrays. So while Augustine settles with the psychological image, he is careful to portray its fundamental incompleteness. The psychological image may hold a unique privilege. Of all the 'after the fact' images surveyed, it alone bears apparent 'after the fact' resemblance because it was built to be image. In the end, this privilege of place underscores the book's apophasis all the more powerfully. Not only do the various apparent 'after the fact' images which we see fail to accurately convey the Trinity, but the image which the Trinity itself has built into us, itself falls fundamentally short of God's transcendence. This is a far greater testimony to the divine transcendence: if an 'after the fact' image breaks down on closer observation, that only says that one specific 'after the fact' image breaks down on closer inspection. When the one 'built in' image, created by the Trinity itself, *also* breaks down, this says that the Trinity utterly transcends anything the creation can contain. The bigger it is, the immeasurably harder it falls, and the more we can learn from its failure.

But is this a failure of the created image?

Let's look more specifically at Augustine settling on the psychological image. In book X, Augustine writes:

These three, then, memory, understanding, and will, are not three lives but one life, not three minds but one mind.... Are we already then in a position to rise with all our powers of concentration to that supreme and most high being of which *the human mind is the unequal image, but image nonetheless?*

[24] [emphasis added]

This is an important distinction. Augustine is not looking for a perfect and uncreated image of the Trinity, as the Son is the perfect and uncreated image of the Father. This is stated here, but I am not sure that this is a basic insight which informed his thought. He writes,

Again, there is this enormous difference, that whether we talk about mind in man and its knowledge and love, or whether about memory, understanding, and will, we remember nothing of the mind except through memory, and understand nothing except through understanding, and love nothing except through will. But who would presume to say that the Father does not understand either himself or the Son or the Holy Spirit except through the Son...[25]

This is an observation that the 'built in' image he has chosen does not have what one would seek in a 'after the fact' image. In the surrounding text[26], Augustine doesn't explicitly state that the differences are failings. However the long discussion of how much of the Trinity is not captured in this image does not seem a verbose way of saying that this image functions along 'built in' rather than 'after the fact' lines. It seems to be criticising the 'built in' image for failing to demonstrate 'after the fact' properties. If so, Augustine made something like a category error. This would suggest that the meticulous Augustine, so careful in accounting for the details of Bible verses, didn't conceive this as something to be meticulous about. The impression I receive from reading Augustine is that Augustine probably had thoughts like the 'built in'/'after the fact' distinction I drew, but they were probably tacit, much less developed and much less prominent, and in particular not an organising principle or winnowing tool Augustine used in deciding which of many trinities he would rest with.

And there are other texts which show a psychological image:

So the trinity as a thing in itself is quite different from the image of the trinity in another thing. It is on account of this image that the thing in which these three [memory, understanding, and love] are found is simultaneously called image...[27]

IV. Directions for further enquiry

The distinction between 'built in' and 'after the fact' appears to be significant. It would be interesting to study more specifically what is the relation between Augustine and this concept. There are quotations one could piece together to argue that Augustine thought in these terms, but other passages make this somewhat less clear. I have raised a question, but I believe more work needs to be done. My comments about that distinction in regard to Augustine's choice of image may be treated more as a question than an answer.

People who read Augustine as overly unitarian seem to find a psychological image, and people who read him as a balanced Trinitarian seem to find an interpersonal image. Reading the psychological image as relational may suggest an alternative placement with regard to these basic positions.

V. Conclusion

The earliest Church Fathers, writing more or less systematic theological treatises, generally didn't write about the Church. Was this because it was not important or not believed? To the contrary, it was air they breathed so deeply that they would never have thought of that as needing saying. Augustine was a Church Father and had the mindset of a Church Father. He chose a psychological image and did

not try too hard to make it relational because he never thought it was the sort of thing that needed to have relationship added.

I have chosen an obvious reading which people may give people pause because it appears individualistic and not relational; this reading is that Augustine chose memory, understanding, and will as the 'built in' image of the Trinity. Of things raised in this essay that could merit further study, the most interesting is probably the concept of 'built in' images as contrasted with 'after the fact' images.

The Evolution of a Perspective on Creation and Origins

Adapted from a mailing list post. I've still left it as clunky as when it was first written.

In the interests of providing a fuller picture, and perhaps letting other list members understand *why* I hold a perspective that seems hard to explain in someone who has given thought to the question, I have decided to give an account of how I came to my present position. A serious attempt at representing the cases for and against different perspectives — even the case for my own perspective — is beyond the scope of this letter; I intend to state, without tracing out in detail, my present perspective, but not to give arguments beyond a scant number without which the plot would be diminished. That stated, I *am* attempting, to the best of my ability, to write with the kind of honesty Feynman describes in "Cargo Cult Science" [in his memoirs *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman*]— not a selective account of facts designed to optimize persuasive effect, but (after combing through my memory) as comprehensive an explanation as I can provide without reproducing arguments, one that includes details that will hurt my

persuasive impact every bit as much as those that would advance whatever facade I might expect to hold the most compelling influence. I am attempting to place chronological events in chronological order, explicitly noting the exceptions. If there are relevant details ('relevant' from the perspective of any side of the debate, not just my own) that are not reproduced here, it's because I couldn't find them after looking for them.

My earliest remembered belief, from childhood, was of a six day young-earth creationist view. I read from the Bible, and I think I read some conservative Christian children's material, although I can't remember what; I don't remember it explicitly arguing for a young-earth view so much as assuming it, and warning readers about hostile science teachers when it came to evolution. My father (who holds a doctorate in physics and teaches computer science at Wheaton College) believes in an old earth, but has not (so far as I know) committed to details of theories of the origin of life in a sense that would interest a biologist; in a discussion a year or two ago, I remember him responding to Wheaton's President's perspective that some origins questions are purely exegetical by saying, "Science is a *human* discipline; theology is a *human* discipline." (I would not put things that way exactly, but I am providing it as an example of the situation I grew up in.) I don't specifically remember my mother saying anything about origins questions. The only time during my childhood I can recall a Christian adult trying to influence my thought about origins-related questions was when I looked at my Bible, which had a timeline of different figures and events in the Jewish lineage, with estimated years for different people, and then at the far left had the Creation, the Fall, and some other event (I think the Flood or the Tower of Babel), for which no estimated date was given. Assuming a linear relationship between position on the timeline and time, I extrapolated a date for Creation, and my Sunday School teacher tried to explain to me that I couldn't do that, that

that wasn't using the figure properly. I don't know what she believed about origins questions, just that she tried to dissuade me from misreading a timeline. At any rate, my beliefs congealed after I had enough mental maturity to understand the details of the Genesis 1 account, and before I had serious contact with scientific findings or with the Biblical-theological case that the natural order is subject to legitimate exploration and discovery.

Sometime in middle to late childhood — I think before eighth grade, but I'm not positively sure — I read a long *Christianity Today* article about origins questions, following a "four views" format. I remember that theistic evolution was included, and that one of the respondents was Pattle Pun, a biologist at Wheaton; I have vague, inconclusive rememberances that one perspective was progressive creation, and that one of them might have been six day, young-earth creationism, but I'm not sure on either of the last two accounts. After reading it, my beliefs began to shift. I don't remember exactly what I believed when the process of shifting was going on; to fast forward a bit, I do remember the resting point they came to and stayed for quite a while. It was a theistic evolution account, drawing on quantum uncertainty and chaos theory, and intermittently including a belief in distinctly supernatural punctuations to equilibrium. Ok, end of fast-forward; back to chronological order.

In eighth grade (I was attending Avery Coonley School, a private magnet school for the gifted), the yearlong biology course was taught by Dr. John A. Rhodes, a biologist and the school headmaster, a man for whom I hold fond memories. Early in the course, Dr. Rhodes made a very emphatic point that we should tell people at prospective high schools that we were taught from BSCS Blue, which was widely recognized as *the* best biology text to be taught from (I believe it to have probably been a high school text; math, at least, was broken into one year advanced and two years advanced). I don't have independent confirmation on

this claim, and perhaps a teacher who wanted to de-emphasize molecular biology in favor of other branches of biology might have preferred another text, but he was very emphatic that the text was what I would call the biological equivalent of an O'Reilly technical book.

When it came to the beginning of the chapter on evolution, Dr. Rhodes commented that he was always interested in hearing new theories on questions of origins, and I wrote him a letter stating what I believed at the time. He thanked me, and a couple of class periods later told me that he'd enjoyed reading it. I was preparing for a battle of wills, and found nothing of the sort; I doubt if he believed anything similar to what I believed (before or after), but he provided an open atmosphere and encouraged inquiry.

Some time (I have difficulty dating this as well, but it appears to have been after I was first exposed to serious arguments for believing in something besides young-earth creationism, probably after eighth grade biology, and before my beliefs came to a theistic evolution attractor in high school) I was browsing at the library — not looking for anything specific, just trying to find something interesting and stimulating to read. I found a book from the Creation Research Institute, and read with interest the back cover, which stated that it explained powerful scientific evidence that showed that the world was created in six days, a few thousand years ago. This was *exactly* what I was looking for. I checked it out and started reading it.

I didn't get a quarter of the way through.

I was disgusted by what the book presented as arguments and evidence; however much I might have liked to have something I could claim scientific evidence for my young-earth beliefs, I didn't want it *that* badly. (Reading that book was part of why I had no reservations in putting Creation Science in front of my "If it has 'science' in its name, it probably isn't" list.)

I skipped freshman year, and entered the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy as a sophomore. (For

those of you not familiar with IMSA, it's a high-powered magnet school; a master's degree is required to teach, and several times the senior class has gotten the highest average ACT score in the nation. When I went to Wheaton, I was able without difficulty to start off in 300-400 level courses, and I was puzzled as to why so many people had warned me about college being tougher than high school.) There was a lecture by Dr. Pine (staff scientist; didn't teach any classes) on science and pseudo-science, one that was abrasively naturalistic, and began by saying "It's OK not to be a scientist; George Washington wasn't a scientist," but later parts of which would only make sense under an assumption that science has a monopoly on legitimate inquiry into those questions it concerns itself with (or something equivalent for discussion purposes). His name was a symbol of arrogant scientism even among those who weren't familiar with the scientism/science distinction, and I remember (when talking about the lecture with an acquaintance) my friend commenting that there were a lot of people offended by that lecture. The lecture wasn't focally concerned with origins questions, Dr. Pine having focused more of his attack on things like ESP, but I wanted to include this in the record.

Senior year, we had university biology; it wasn't an AP course in that it wasn't geared towards the AP tests, but it was a college-level course. I don't remember the text for this one, but (under the circumstances) I think it was about as competently taught, by people who knew what they were talking about, as one could reasonably guess. (This was after my belief had settled.)

At Wheaton, my Old Testament class covered a few exegetical theories on interpreting the beginning of Genesis (i.e. the gap theory, which says that the Genesis chronologies are accounts with significant gaps), albeit not in a manner that would be interesting to a biologist; they would be equally compatible (or incompatible) with Darwinian and Lamarckian evolution. I remember in

particular the time given to the Ten Plagues in Israel's deliverance from Egypt; massive energy was given to a forced interpretation that would reconcile the Biblical account with an explanation that a materialist could easily swallow (i.e. the water turned to blood was an explosive bloom of some sort of reddish colored micro-organism in the waterways), and I would rather that the teacher have said, "The ten miraculous plagues are too much for me to swallow," than "I will rescue the ten miraculous plagues by explaining how they were ten ordinary disasters that weren't miraculous at all." (Readers may perceive a degree of intellectual dishonesty in my own version of theistic evolution; such an accusation probably has some degree of truth to it, but I will not try to address it here.) This, and the other two classes mentioned below for completeness, did not alter my perspective so far as I remember.

I took an environmental science elective, and the course material made sporadic reference to evolution (for that matter, one video began with a beautiful quotation from a Biblical psalm about the wonder of the natural order), but neither the teacher nor the texts made a serious attempt to address origins questions, being much more concerned with explaining (part of) how the environment works, and how to be a responsible citizen minimizing unnecessary environmental degradation.

The last class I am mentioning for the sake of completeness of record is my philosophy of science class. Evolution was discussed in so far as the history of scientists accepting the theory is interesting to a philosopher of science; there were no arguments made for or against it, apart from a brief comment in a discussion where one student used the acceptance of Darwinian evolution as an example of a good decision on the part of the scientific community.

To wrap up this part of the discussion, I transferred out of Wheaton for reasons of conscience, and finished up my bachelor's at Calvin, and did a master's in applied

mathematics at the University of Illinois. I did not have occasion to revise my beliefs concerning origins questions until some time later, and to properly explain exactly what opened up the question again, I need to give a little more background.

There was one Saturday Night Live where the news announcer said, "Michael Bolton just came out with his new Christmas album. [Pause] Happy birthday, baby Jesus! I hope you like *crap!*"

Being somewhat aloof from pop culture, it took me the longest time to get it through my head that Michael Bolton was *not* a Christian artist. By that point, I had written in my dictionary:

Christian Contemporary Music, *n.* A genre of song designed primarily to impart sound teaching, such as the doctrine that we are sanctified by faith and not by good taste in music.

One thing that has distressed me to no end is that much of today's Christian culture (popular sense, not anthropological sense) is garbage. What Dante and Handel produced is cherished on artistic merits by people openly hostile to their beliefs; the same cannot be said for the contents of John's Christian Bookstore. I don't want to analyze historical causes or implications, but it is something I find to be quite embarrassing — and one of the reasons I spend so much time on writing, namely to be one person who produces Christian art that is not trash.

At any rate, there was one point where I was browsing the web, searching for provoking Christian musings — and wading through one banal, syrupy, intellectually juvenile posting after another. I was quite bored, and kept searching long after I should have given up — and then read an article entitled, "Abortion: A Failure to Communicate", and sat there, stunned.

The article made an argument why, from a pro-life perspective, it is not helpful to say "Save the children!", argue that a foetus is a child rather than unwanted tissue, or erect a place called "New Life Adoption Center". The particular argument (or even issue) is not why I was stunned. I was stunned because the article represented an intellectually mature, nuanced, and insightful perspective, and raised points that made sense but which were not at all obvious trivialities. Once I got over being stunned, I poked around and found out a bit more about the site hosting it — an anthology site called Leadership University at www.leaderu.com. In the following days, I looked around and found a number of stimulating articles.

After reading a while — and enjoying it thoroughly — I paid attention to something I had not previously looked at, that the site had a science section. That seemed somewhat strange; I wasn't surprised at sections for humanities disciplines, as thinking Christianly makes a big difference in the humanities, but why science? My Dad shared both faith and enjoyment of heavily mathematical disciplines (math, computer science, physics) with me, but he had never hinted at what e.g. "Christian physics" would mean — nor had anyone else I knew of — so I clicked on the link to find out what on earth the site listed as a distinctively Christian way to think about science.

My estimation of the site dropped by about ten notches when I saw a list of titles attacking Darwinism. So this otherwise serious and intellectually responsible site had stooped to host Creation Science. I left the computer in disgust.

Some time after that, I began to experience quiet, nagging doubts — doubts that I was not being fair to Leadership University or even to those articles by dismissing them (and assessing penalty points) without consideration. I could see no justification for stooping to Creation Science, for trying to rehash a battle that was decided and over, but at the same time, there was no other

point at which I had looked at the site and regretted taking the time to read an article. If a friend (whom I had hitherto known to be trustworthy) were to say something I found hard to believe, wouldn't I consider him to have earned the benefit of the doubt? So I went back to the computer, expecting to read more Creation Research Institute-style materials, and met with yet another surprise.

I expected to see an attack on Darwinism. I hoped (but did not expect) to instead see something that would live up to Leadership University article standards. What I found was an attack on Darwinism that lived up to Leadership University article standards, and it produced a *lot* of cognitive dissonance in me.

Some years before, I might have jumped at an argument that Darwinism was seriously flawed. Not now. Darwinian evolution was a part of my education, and (if I did not go into naturalism) an argument that Darwinism was much more flawed than I had been led to believe, affected me as would an argument that any other major scientific theory was much more flawed than I had been led to believe — it had some very troubling implications. So I looked through several articles, hoping to find a fatal flaw — and the hope waned.

I was not open to resolving the question based on the online articles, but the articles disturbed me enough that I very distinctly believed that there was a question in need of resolution. So, not too much longer, I poked around until I found Philip Johnson's *Darwin on Trial* and, a bit later, Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*, hoping to find justification to persist in my previous belief, but even more hoping to resolve the inner tension between believing (and wanting to believe) one thing, and seeing evidence that appeared to suggest another.

Reading *Darwin on Trial* fleshed out what was sketched in the articles. (*Darwin on Trial* took me an afternoon to read, and I am probably not a fast reader by Megalist standards; *Darwin's Black Box* took me a day.)

The articles, at least at Leadership University, do not provide what I would consider a basis to decide; they outline the argument, but the length restriction makes it hard to make an argument without holes. The book, on the other hand, had the room to argue systematically and carefully. Its arguments were sufficient to dislodge me from the resting place I had found, and the best metaphor I can use to describe the subsequent sifting of thoughts is a loss of faith.

In a conservative Catholic family, perhaps pre-Vatican II, a child grows up to believe that if the priests say it, speaking officially, it is true — perhaps there is room for miscommunication and the like, but there is a basic faith that the mouth of a priest is the mouth of an oracle. In a contemporary scientific schooling context, a student is taught to believe that if the science teachers say it, it is a *bona fide* attempt to convey the truth as best understood by the scientific enterprise. There are any number of basic nuances — miscommunication, error, intentional simplification for any of several obvious reasons, the teacher articulating the views of one position in a controversy — but, as with the Catholic family, there is a basic faith (even if it's not put that way, a mistrust of faith and authority being one of the items on the catechism) that the teacher represents the best science can offer, and so (for instance) if evolution is portrayed as an established theory that explains reasonably well everything one would expect it to explain, then that must be true.

It is that faith which I lost.

There is one example that particularly sticks in my mind. I am not going to call it 'typical', with the accompanying implication that I could easily pull half a dozen other examples that serve my point equally well; there are a number of other examples, and this is the one made the most forceful impression on me.

One example that occurred in both my textbooks — as best I recall, they both had photographs to illustrate

camouflage effects — concerns pepper moths in England. Before the Industrial Revolution, the majority of pepper moths were white, with a significant minority that were black. Come the Industrial Revolution, when everything was blackened by soot, the proportions shifted, so that the majority of pepper moths were black, with a significant minority that were white. Then, after the Industrial Revolution had run its course and things were no longer covered with soot, the proportions again shifted, so that the majority of pepper moths were white, with a significant minority of black moths. This is given as a supporting example of "evolution".

Johnson does not treat "evolution" as one amorphous mass; he regards the distinction between microevolution and macroevolution as significant, including that evidence of one is not necessarily evidence of the other. Neither he nor anyone else I've read challenge microevolution (or the existence of natural selection as an influence on what survives — though he suggests that natural selection is a conservative force). What is specifically challenged is macroevolution, and whether natural selection constitutes a generative force that is responsible for the diversity of life now on this planet.

The pepper moth example shows natural selection in action; what it does not show is that natural selection is a creative force that causes new kinds of organisms to appear. If black pepper moths were unknown before the Industrial Revolution, and then (once the smoke started billowing) a mutation (one that hadn't occurred, or at least hadn't survived, before) introduced a black gene into a previously all-white pool, and the new kind of moth started to take over for as long as trees were covered with soot — then this would constitute a small-scale instance of evolution as a generative force. As it is, both kinds of moths existed before, during, and after the Industrial Revolution, in significant numbers — nothing even went extinct (at least in the pepper moth population). This provides evidence of natural

selection in some form, but to present it as evidence of "evolution" is presenting evidence of one claim as evidence of two or more distinct claims, at least one of which is not supported by the evidence — a practice that is, at best, sloppy, and at worst, deceitful.

(This one claim, by itself, is not fatal; it would be in principle possible to present a collection of examples so that natural selection, microevolution, and macroevolution all have their corresponding support; I am not presenting it to establish a case so much as to illustrate a picture.)

My disappointment at my teachers' presentation of undue optimism about macroevolution was not nearly as significant as my own disappointment at myself, and my having believed it. Perhaps it would have been easier to merely be angry at my teachers, but I was not angry; my chief disappointment was with myself.

After I had to some extent regained my bearings, I read *Darwin's Black Box*, which provided one major new concept not addressed by *Darwin on Trial*, and several examples of that concept (irreducible complexity), and started talking about it on IMSA alumni notesfile forums.

What I saw there was, for the most part, shock and outrage that anyone dare question Darwin's truth — most ridiculed what I was saying without providing counter-argument; one person, when I discussed the Cambrian explosion, suggested that it could have been caused by mutagen exposure. Mutagen exposure is a hypothesis I'm willing to entertain (stranger things have happened), but when I started doing some Feynman calculations to show how astronomically low the odds are of mutagen exposure producing Cambrian explosion effects, after first saying, "Suppose I claim to be able to predict lottery numbers, and suppose for the sake of argument you can rule out charlatan trickery on my part. After one success, I have your attention. After two successes, you say, 'What a bizarre coincidence!' Is there any number of successful guesses (subject to one guess per minute and an assumption of my

death in fifty years) that will lead you to believe that you may not know how I'm doing it, but it's not luck?" — and he said that at most a dozen would suffice, and then I showed how much lower the chances of raw mutagen exposure producing the Cambrian explosion would be than the chance of successfully guessing twelve consecutive lottery numbers — at which point he backed up and said, "There are some things we can never know."

The one exception was a microbiology graduate student. He read the arguments I drew from the other sources, and commented that I seemed well-read and that the arguments seemed plausible. Part of that is being diplomatic, but I don't think it was diplomatic politeness covering disrespect or distaste — he didn't want to commit to a position without first taking an unhurried investigation of the question (which I didn't want to do either — the web articles didn't convince me of any conclusion besides that I should read the unabridged take on them).

What is my present position? Let me list a few things that I presently hold, subject to revision if and when I encounter further evidence or indications that my past analysis is less valid than I thought:

- Old earth/universe.
- Microevolution as a consistent force in our time and probably at ages past, probably a conservative force.
- Sudden appearance and disappearance of species, such as has not been accounted for in evolutionary theory so far as I know (perhaps acknowledged in punctuated equilibrium, but not accounted for — saying that changes happen off camera in 100,000 year geological eyeblinks, without explaining why, doesn't constitute a valid theory).

- Irreducible complexity in living organisms due to intelligent design, and in many cases not explained by any known plausible evolutionary scenario.

This is not a scientific theory so much as a framework, a partial specification; it represents a move away from naturalistic evolution as the complete answer and does not represent a fully detailed alternative — I think other people should work on that; I just haven't invested in it myself. It is like, after having long believed a story about an event, coming to believe that the story is false — another explanatory story does not automatically spring up, although in a scientific community the rejection of one theory as flawed leads to the appearance of other theories to take its place, perhaps involving a shift in framework — witness the ultraviolet catastrophe. If I were a biologist working on a theory of origins, I would try to take this framework and extend it to the point of being a falsifiable theory — *Darwin's Black Box* at the end addresses some issues towards constructing falsifiable theories, suggesting the sort of questions to ask in the process. There might be material to be mined in cryptanalysis; a codebreaker who sees a pattern is constantly asking whether the pattern represents a step towards cracking the code, or is only fool's gold. The concept of p-values may be relevant.

[Remaining specific point, responding to other post, deleted for privacy concerns.]

-Jonathan

Post Script, May 5, 2003: *Since I posted this some time back, I have learned that leading members of the MegaList have become increasingly involved in the Intelligent Design movement.*

I do not believe I can take more than incidental credit for

this; I believe they are persuaded, not by my eloquence in a small number of posts, but because the evidence itself suggests things which a purely Darwinian account has trouble explaining.

Friendly, Win-Win Negotiations in Business: Interest-Based Negotiation and Getting to Yes

Getting to Yes: How to Negotiate Agreement Without Giving In

The negotiation classic *Getting to Yes: How to Negotiate Agreement Without Giving In* introduces something called "interest-based negotiation" and presents it as the ultimate power tool for adversarial negotiations where the other party has the upper hand. And it may well be that power tool, but some of the best mileage I've seen has been in friendly negotiations, and business world problem solving.

Getting to Yes opens by discussing two main styles of negotiation that occur to people: hard and soft negotiation. Hard negotiation is a matter of taking a position and insisting on it: playing hardball. Soft negotiation, more

characteristic of friendly negotiations, still involves taking a position, but being very flexible.

Getting to Yes presents a third option, that of interest-based negotiation. Individual positions taken by either side of the table are ordinarily poorly suited to the interests of the other side; and interest-based negotiation involves uncovering what the basic *interests* of the two sides of the table are, and then problem solving to, as best as possible, satisfy the interests of *both* sides of the table. *Getting to Yes* speaks of being *hard* on interests, *soft* on positions.

Examples from the world of information technology

It's obvious, in the context of a negotiation between bosses and stakeholders on the one hand, and information technology on the other, that a stakeholder or boss has interests involved in negotiating what information technology professionals will do for them. What is less obvious is that information technology professionals *also* have interests. These interests include interests that amount to good engineering concerns, including a realistic solution, avoiding technical ways of painting themselves into a corner, *and* solving the problem in a way that will work well for stakeholders. (If a cobbler makes a shoe that fits comfortably, the customer will make fewer requests for adjustments than if the shoe pinches.)

On this last point, it might be remarked that initial solutions (positions) proposed by stakeholders should be viewed with suspicion. When someone non-technical tries to design a technological solution, there is a real danger of a solution that looks good on paper, but amounts to a shoe that pinches. One time my brother, then a database administrator, commented that on his team there was a system administrator who, when he was asked something that amounted to, "Is there a way to—", would rudely cut

the person off and say, "Stop. Tell me what you want to have accomplished." And he gave an excellent example of interest-based negotiation, even if it is a better way to avoid being curt.

The example he gave was, if there was concern about a disk filling up, someone asking, "Is there a way to run [the Unix command] 'df' every five minutes and send it to the system administrator's pager?" And there are several things wrong with that position. First of all, this was a little while ago when there weren't smartphones with high-resolution screens. The Unix 'df' command is designed around a full (text) screen, producing half a page or a page of text (probably more given their environment), and decidedly not optimized to quickly give useful information on a pager. It would require scrolling to see if the 'df' output represented a problem or not. And constant messages that require digging to see if they mean anything important amount to spam from the system administrator's view: the fact that one more verbose message was sent to the pager means nothing particularly interesting to a system administrator. And that spam risks a real "boy who cried wolf" syndrome, with the system administrator having no clue when a real problem is occurring.

Not that there is any need for helplessness if disks fill up. There might even be a better solution that would use pagers. For example, there could be some monitoring tools that page a system administrator if a disk reaches some threshold of being too full, or if disk usage is growing too quickly. The basic issue is one that people can take steps to deal with. But the system administrator's blunt "Stop. Just tell me what you want to do," was almost kindness in disguise; it was meant to pursue the *mutual* interest of solving a problem as well as possible, as opposed to a solution that amounts to, "I've solved the problem badly; now you go implement it."

The system administrator's blunt response when he sensed positional negotiation was, "Stop. I don't even want

to *hear* your position. Just tell me your interest and let me address that."

For another, slightly more technical example, there was a system administrator at our company who had written an asset tracking program, and later on I was charged with writing a purchase order system. When the system was shaping up, he said he wished his asset tracking system could simply go away, superseded by the new purchase order system.

The general consensus was that the order tracking system was *tolerable*, and the CTO consulted with some people from other companies and said nobody had really done better than tolerable like our asset tracking. The system administrator wanted me to replace his asset tracking program, and my expectation was that I might be able to do a *little* better than him, but not a *lot* better. And I think he was modest about the solution he had pulled off given what he was dealing with. I told him, at a social meeting, "*The reason my program is crisp and clear and your program is messy, is that the problem my program solves is crisp, clear, and simple, and the problem your program solves is messy and hard.*" And I could see a smile and shining eyes on his wife's face, but my remark was not intended as a merely polite statement. As we did business, the problem of purchase orders was cut and dry, and I didn't have to make any especially hard judgment calls: mostly it was straightforward adaptation as requests came in. By contrast, the tracking system covered assets and components, venturing into territory the purchase order didn't touch, and the territory of assets and components came with genuinely fuzzy and difficult border cases, where you had to draw lines about what was an asset and what was a component and deal with subjective factors that the purchase order system never touched.

Once the two systems were up and running, it looked

like that meant duplicate data entry. It would have been an option for me to write a replacement asset tracking system, but I think my co-worker was being genuinely modest about a real achievement, and it did not seem obvious to me that my replacement for a working system would work better. We looked at publishing data from the asset tracking system to purchase orders, and then set things so that entries in the purchase order system were automatically carried over to the asset tracking system. That solution was one that was stuck with: it did not involve, as had originally been suggested, that the asset tracking system would be superceded by the purchase order system, but it did address the basic interest: *no need for duplicate data entry*. The asset tracking system was made aware of entries in the purchase order system, and the solution addressed the various interests. Including, one might like to add, that the company would lose *none* of the benefits of a respectable, solid existing system, which would now be working better than ever.

An example from private life

In one family I know, the parents decided that their son could own a pocketknife (he owns a couple), but not carry anything dangerous. That may be a sensible decision, but it was annoying to the son, and I understood his frustration: I know what a Swiss Army Knife meant to me when I was younger, and still to some extent means to me now. Besides being practical, a Swiss Army Knife is a nifty device, dipped in coolness. And I could identify with his being frustrated that his parents would not let him carry either pocketknife: not because he specifically wanted something dangerous, but because he wanted coolness.

For Christmas I gave him a Leatherman multi-tool designed to be useful and cool while still being something you could carry through TSA-approved airport security. It only has a few features as far as multitools go, but it has

enough, and he greatly appreciates the gift. It satisfied both his desire for something cool, and his parents' concern that what he carry not be dangerous, and so he carries it now.

In a non-work interaction at work, my boss received a copy of Hello World! Computer Programming for Kids and Other Beginners, a book that introduces the powerful language Python with pirates and ninjas, and I asked him if I could borrow the book for a few minutes to copy bibliographic information. His reply was "Let me send you an email," and forwarded me a promotional email with a coupon code worth \$20 off the book's price if you ordered by such-and-such a date. In this friendly negotiation, I took a position and my boss responded in a way that would address my interests better than my initial position.

Step one: Identify the interests

Step two: Problem solving

All of these negotiations have an element of problem solving. The first step is to identify interests. If someone comes to you with a position, which happens 99.9% of the time, it is a position motivated by interests, and you need to appreciate those interests. Anthropology-style observation, if you know how to do it, helps. Being empathic and trying to see what benefit someone's position will bring them helps. As much as possible, bring interests out into the open so they can be addressed.

A win-win solution may not always be possible; the pie may not be big enough for everyone even if they cooperate. (*Getting to Yes* may be of some help here.) But **a win-win outcome will be more often found by trying to address interests than simply starting with positions, *staying* with positions, and only doling out who makes what concession to the opposite position.** And creative problem solving can help address those interests once they have been identified: for my

brother's workplace, system administrators can be automatically notified, including by pager, when any of several identified red flags is tripped. Being dangerous is not intrinsic to being a cool multitool: therefore one can search for a safety-friendly multitool. *Is there a hidden opportunity in interests that have been identified?* Check and see.

Conclusion

Interest-based negotiation is not always easy; *Getting to Yes* provides few examples: one of these few has two sisters arguing about an orange, splitting it, and then one sister ate the inside of her half and the other sister used her half of the rind to bake a pie. And the introduction states that stories are hard to find. Part of my effort here has been to provide examples, taken out of my experience because that's what I know, even if it would be best to have third person stories and avoid stories that present me as a hero. But the rewards for at least *trying* for interest-based negotiation are worthwhile. And, as stated at the top, *Getting to Yes* may present interest-based negotiation as the central power tool for a hostile negotiation where the other party is more powerful than you, some of the best mileage I've gotten out of it has been in friendly negotiations with other people who share some of the same goals. And this is true inside and outside of the business world.

It's worth recognizing negotiation as negotiation: not all negotiations have a dollar amount. And once a friendly negotiation is recognized, identifying interests can be a powerful tool to obtain win-win results.

Is there a place where you could use friendly, win-win, interest-based negotiations more?

The Patriarchy We Object to

Tell me what kind of patriarchy you object to. As Orthodox, we probably object to that kind of patriarchy as well.

There was one chaplain at a university who, whenever a student would come in and say, "I don't believe in God," would answer, "Tell me what kind of God you don't believe in. I probably don't believe in that kind of God either." And he really had something in common with them. He didn't believe in a God who was a vindictive judge, or a God who was responsible for all the evil in this world, or a God who was arbitrary and damned people for never hearing of him. And the chaplain wasn't just making a rhetorical exercise; he didn't believe in many kinds of "God" any more than the students who were kind enough to come and tell him they didn't believe in God. He really had something in common with them.

There was one book I was reading which was trying to recover women's wisdom from patriarchy. I was amazed when I was reading it, as it talked about the holistic, united character of women's knowing, and how women's knowledge is relational, how women know by participating. What amazed me was how much it had in common with

Orthodox description of knowledge, because the Orthodox understanding of knowledge is based off an essential unity and knows by relating, participating, drinking, rather than by analyzing and taking apart and knowing things by keeping track of a systematic map.

What Orthodoxy in the West would seek to recover from the West looks a lot like what feminism would like to recover from patriarchy. Part of what may confuse the issue is that feminism lumps together two very different forces as "patriarchy." One of these forces is classical tradition, and the other is something funny that's been going on for several hundred years in which certain men have defaced society by despising it and trying to make it manly.

The reason that women's holistic, connected knowledge is countercultural is something we'll miss if we only use the category of "patriarchy". The educational system, for instance, makes very little use of this knowledge, not because patriarchy has always devalued women's ways of knowing, but something very different. The reason that there's something countercultural to women's holistic, connected knowledge is that that is a basic human way of knowing, and men can be separated from it more easily than women, but it's a distortion of manhood to marginalize that way of knowing. And there has been a massive effort, macho in the worst way, that despised how society used to work, assumed that something is traditional it must be the women's despicable way of doing things, and taken one feature of masculine knowledge and used it to uproot the the places for other ways of knowing that are important to both *men* and women. There are two quite different forces lumped together in the category of "patriarchy." One is the tradition proper, and the other is "masculism" (or at least I call it that), and what feminism sees as patriarchy is what's left over of the tradition after masculism has defaced it by trying to make it "masculine," on the assumption that if something was in the tradition, that was all you needed to know, in order to attack it as being unfit for men.

"Masculism" is what happens when you cross immature masculinity with the effort to destroy whatever you need to make room for your version of Utopia. What is left of the tradition today, and what feminism knows as "patriarchy," is a bit like what's left of a house after it's been burned down.

With apologies to G.K. Chesterton, the Orthodox and feminists only ask to get their heads into the Heavens. It is the masculinists who try to fit the Heavens into their heads, and it is their heads that split. This basic difference between knowing as exaltation and expansion, participating in something and allowing one's head to be raised in the Heavens, and domination and mastery that compresses the Heavens so they will fit in one's head, is the difference between what "knowing" means to both feminists and Orthodox, and what it means to masculinists.

The difference between Orthodoxy and feminism is this. Orthodoxy has to a very large measure preserved the tradition. When it objects to masculinism, it is objecting to an intrusion that affects something it is keeping. It is a guard trying to protect a treasure. Where Orthodoxy is a guard trying to protect a treasure, feminism is a treasure hunter trying to find something that world has lost. It is a scout rather than a guard. (And yes, I'm pulling images from my masculine mind.) Feminism is shaped by masculinism, and I'd like to clarify what I mean by this. I don't mean in *any* sense that feminism wants to serve as a rubber stamp committee for masculinism. The feminist struggle is largely a struggle to address the problems created by masculinism. that's pretty foundational. But people that rebel against something tend to keep a lot of that something's assumptions, and feminism is a lot like masculinism because in a culture as deeply affected by masculinism as much of the West, masculinism is the air people breathe. (People can't stop breathing their air, whatever culture they're in.) For one example of this, masculinism assumed that anything in the tradition was womanish and therefore unfit for men,

and feminism inherited a basic approach from masculism when it assumed that anything in tradition was patriarchal and therefore unfit for women. It's a masculist rather than traditional way of approaching society. Orthodoxy has been affected by masculism to some degree, but it's trying to preserve the Orthodox faith, where feminism has been shaped by masculism to a much greater degree and is trying to rebel against the air its members breathe. Feminism is a progressive series of attempts to reform masculism for women; if you look at its first form, it said, "Women should be treated better. They should be treated like men." Later forms of feminism have seen that there are problems with that approach, but they have been reacting to a composite of masculism and earlier versions of feminism. Feminism has been a scout, rather than a guard.

I say that feminism has been a scout rather than a guard, not to criticize, but to suggest that Orthodoxy has been given something that feminism reaches for, but does not have in full. It is a bit like the difference between maintaining a car and trying to go through a junkyard with the wrecks of many magnificent things and reconstruct a working vehicle. In a junkyard, one sees the imprint of many things; one sees the twisted remains of quite a few items that would be good to have. And one can probably assemble things, get some measure of functionality, perhaps hobble together a working bicycle. And if one does not have a working car, there is something very impressive about doing one's best to assemble something workable from the wreckage. It is perhaps not the best manners to criticize someone who has combined parts to make a genuinely working bicycle and say, "But you were not given a working car!"

But in Orthodoxy, there is a very different use of time. Orthodox do not simply spend time filling the gas tank (there are many necessities in faith like filling a gas tank) and maintaining the car (which we periodically break), necessary as those may be. Having a car is primarily about

living life as it is lived when you can drive. It is about being able to travel and visit people. It is about having more jobs open to you. If a car isn't working, dealing with the car means trying to do whatever you can to get it working. It means thinking about how to fix it. And feminism is trying to correct masculism. If a car *is* working, dealing with the car is about what it can let you do. It's like how when you're sick, your mind is on getting well and on your health. If you're healthy, you don't think about your health unless you choose to. You're free to *enjoy* your health by focusing on non-health-related pursuits.

What does Orthodoxy have to contribute to feminism? To begin with, it's not simply a project by men. Feminist tends to assume that whatever is in patriarchy is there because all-powerful men have imposed it on women, or to put things in unflattering terms women have contributed little of substance to patriarchal society. That may have truth as regards masculism, but Orthodoxy is the property of both men and women (and boys and girls), and it is a gross mischaracterization to only look at the people who hold positions of power.

Feminists have made bitter criticism of Prozac being used to mask the depression caused by many housewives' loneliness and isolation. Housewives who do not work outside the home have much more than housework to deal with; they have loneliness and isolation from adult company. And perhaps, feminists may icily say, if a woman under those conditions is depressed, this does not necessarily mean Prozac is appropriate. Maybe, just maybe, the icy voice tells us, the solution is to change those conditions instead of misusing antidepressants to mask the quite *natural* depression those conditions create. Feminists are offended that women are confined to a place outside of society's real life and doing housework in solitary confinement. One of the most offensive things you can say, if there is no irony or humor in your voice, is, "*A woman's place is in the house!*" (and not add, "and in the Senate!")

But Orthodoxy looks at it differently, or at least Orthodox culture tends to work out differently. And, like many alien cultures, things have a very different meaning. The home has a different meaning. When people say "family" today, we think of a nuclear family. Then it was extended family, and thinking of an extended family without a nuclear family would have been as odd to people then as it would be odd today to take your favorite food and then be completely unable to eat anything else. Traditional society, *real* traditional society, did not ask women to work in isolation. Both men and women worked in adult company. And the home itself... In traditional society, the home was the primary place where economic activity occurred. In traditional society, the home was the primary place where charitable work occurred. In traditional society, the home took care of what we would now call insurance. In traditional society, the home was the primary place where education occurred. Masculism has stripped away layer after layer of what the home was. In Orthodox culture, in truly Orthodox culture that has treasures that have been dismantled in the West, a woman's place really *is* in the home, but it means something totally different from what a feminist cringes at in the words, "A woman's place is in the house!"

America has largely failed to distinguish between what feminism says and women's interests, so people think that if you are for women, you must agree with feminism. Saying "I oppose feminism because I am for women's interests" seems not only false but a contradiction in terms, like saying "I'm expanding the text of this webpage so it will be more concise." It's not like more thoughtful Catholics today, who say, "I have thought, and I understand why many people distinguish or even oppose the teachings of the Catholic Church with God's truth. But my considered judgment is that God reveals his truth through the living magisterium of the Catholic Church." It's more like what the Reformers faced, where people could not see what on earth

you meant if you said that God's truth and the Catholic Church's teaching were not automatically the same thing.

In this culture, someone who is trying to be pro-woman will ordinarily reach for feminism as the proper vehicle, just as someone who wants to understand the natural world will reach for science as the proper vehicle for that desire; "understanding the human body" is invariably read as "learning scientific theories about the body's work," and not "take a massage/dance/martial arts class", or "learn what religions and cultures have seen in the meaning of the human body." A great many societies pursued a deep understanding of the human body without expressing that desire the way Western science pursues it. They taught people to come to a better knowledge **of** their bodies—and I mean "of," not just "about"—the kind of relational, drinking knowledge that feminists and Orthodox value, and not just a list of abstract propositions from dissecting a cadaver (a practice which some cultures regard as "impious and disgusting"—C.S. Lewis). They taught people to develop, nurture, and discipline their bodies so that there was a right relationship between body and spirit. They taught people to see the body as belonging a world of meaning, symbol, and spiritual depth—cultures where "How does it work?" takes a back seat to a deeper question: "Why? What does it mean?" Orthodoxy at its best still *does* teach these things. But Western culture has absorbed the scientific spirit that most people genuinely cannot see what "understanding the body" could mean besides "learning scientific theories about the body." And, in this context, it seems like a deceitful sleight of hand when someone says, "I want to help you understand the body" and then offers help in ways of moving one's body.

But I want to talk about some things that are missed within this set of assumptions. Feminism *can* speak for women's interests. It normally claims to. And women are ill-served by an arrangement when people assume that criticism of feminism is at the expense of women's interests.

We need to open a door that American culture does not open. We need to open the possibility of being willing to challenge feminism in order to further women's interests. Not on all points, but if we never open that door, disturbing things can happen.

If you ask someone outside of feminism who "the enemy" is to feminists, the common misunderstanding is, "Nonfeminist men." And that's certainly part of the problem and not part of the solution, but the real vitriol feeds into jokes like "How many men does it take to open a beer?—She should have it open when she brings it to him." The real vitriol is reserved for the contented housewife who wants to be married, have children, and make a home, and not have a professional career because of what she values in homemaking itself.

Feminism is against "patriarchy." That means that much that is positive in the tradition is attacked along with masculism. That means that whatever the tradition provided for women is interpreted as harmful to women, even if it benefits women. Wendy Shalit makes an interesting argument in *A Return to Modesty* that sexual modesty is not something men have imposed on women against their nature for men's benefit; it is first and foremost a womanly virtue that protects women. We now have a defaced version of traditional society, but to start by assuming that almost everything in the culture is a patriarchal imposition that benefits only men, sets the stage for throwing out a great many things that are important for women. It sets the stage, in fact, for completing the attack that masculism began. (The effect of throwing out things that strike you as patriarchal on a culture has much the same effect as killing off species in an ecosystem because you find them unpleasant. It is an interconnected, interdependent, and organic whole that all its members need. That's not quite the right way of saying it, but this image has a grain of truth.) Masculism scorned the traditional place for men, and was masculine only in that it

rebelled against perceivedly feminine virtue. Feminism does not include a large number of women's voices in America and an even larger number worldwide—because feminism lumps them all together in "The Enemy." At times feminism can look anti-woman.

So everything will be OK if we resist feminism? No. First, if the tradition is right—let us say, in the controversial point that associates women with the home—that doesn't make much sense of today's options that don't really let women be women and don't let men be men. What is the closest equivalent to women reigning in one of society's most important institutions? Is it to be a housewife with a lunchtime discussion group, which seems to work wonders for depression caused by loneliness? Is it for women to keep house and work part time? Is it to work full time, and find an appropriate division of labor with their husbands? I have trouble telling which of these is best, and it doesn't help matters to choose an option just because it bothers feminists. I think that women (and, for that matter, men) have an impoverished set of options today. Unfortunately, some of the most practical questions are also the ones that are hardest to answer.

Second and more importantly, reacting against feminism, or much of anything else, is intrinsically dangerous. If feminism has problems, we would be well advised to remember that heresies often start when people react against other heresies and say that the truth is so important they should resist that heresy as much as they can. Reactions against heresy are often heresy.

Let me explain how not to respond to feminism's picture of what men should be. You could say that feminism wants women to be more like men and men to be more like women, and that has a significant amount of truth. But if you dig in and say that men should be rugged and independent and say, "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul!", and women should be weak, passive creatures that are always in a swoon, there are several

major problems.

The phrase "I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul!" is something that nobody but God should say. Someone greater than us is the master of our fate, and someone greater than us is the master of our soul, and that is our glory. To be a man is to be under authority. Perhaps it irks feminists that the Bible tells wives to submit to their husbands as well as telling husbands to love their wives with the greatest and most costly love. (I've heard some first class citizens pointing out that the Bible requires something much heftier of husbands than mere submission—loving *and loving* their wives on the model of Christ going so far as to give up his life for the Church.) But the tradition *absolutely does not* say "Women are to be second-class citizens because they are under men's authority and men are to be first-class citizens because they have the really good position of being free from authority." To be a man is to be under authority, to be a woman is to be under authority, and to be human is to be under authority. To masculinism this looks demeaning because immature masculinity resists being under authority or being in community or any other thing that men embrace when they grow up. But Orthodoxy is a call to grow up, and it is a call to men to be contributing members of a community and to be under authority. To tell men, "Be independent!" is to tell them, "Refuse to grow up!"

What about women? Shouldn't they be passive and dependent? Let's look at one of the Bible's most complete treatments of what a woman should be like. I'll give my own slightly free translation from the Greek version of Proverbs (31:10-31):

Who can find a valorous wife?
 She is more precious than precious stones.
 Her husband wholeheartedly trusts her, and will have
 no lack of treasures.
 Her whole life works good for her husband.

She gathers wool and linen and weaves with her hands.
She has become like a trading ship from afar, and she gathers her living.
She rises at night, and gives food to her house, and assigns work to her maids.
She examines and buys a farm, and plants a vineyard with the fruit of her hands.
She girds her loins with strength and strengthens her arms for work.
She tastes how good it is to work, and her candle stays lit the whole night long.
She reaches her hands to collective work, and applies her hands to the spindle.
She opens her hands to the needy, and extends fruit to the poor.
Her husband does not worry about the men at home when he spends time abroad;
All her household has clothing.
She makes double weight clothing for her husband, And linen and scarlet for herself.
Her husband is respected when he engages in important business at the City Hall.
When he is seated in council with the elders of the land.
She makes fine linens and sells belts to the Canaanites.
She opens her mouth with heedfulness and order, and is in control of her tongue.
She clothes herself in strength and honor, and rejoices in the future.
The ways of her household are secure, and she does not eat the bread of idleness.
She opens her mouth with wisdom, according to the deep law.
Her mercy for her children prepares them, and they grow rich, and her husband praises her.
Many daughters have obtained wealth, and many have

worked valiantly, but you have surpassed them all.
 Charm is false, and a woman's [physical] beauty is shallow:

For a wise woman is blessed, and let her praise the fear of the Lord.

Give her the fruit of her labors, and let her husband be praised at the City Hall.

I have several things to say about this text. To open with, I'll understand if you say this is an intimidating standard to be held up against, but if you say this affirms the ideal of women as passive and delicate, I'm going to have to ask what on earth you mean. Second, if you read the text closely, you can see hints of how important homes were to business and charity. Most business and charity were based in the home. Third, most translations use not quite the right word when they say, "Who can find a good wife?" The word used is not just "good". It's a word one could use of a powerful soldier. Fourth, at the risk of sounding snide, the words about not measuring womanhood by physical beauty beat body image feminism to the punch by about three thousand years. Fifth and finally, the text talks about this woman as a lot of things—as strong, as doing business, as farming, as manufacturing. But there's one thing it does not say. It does not interpret "woman" in terms of "victim."

There is something somewhat strange going on. If we ask what is the wealthiest nation on earth, it's the U.S.A. If we ask what nation wields the most political clout on earth, it's the U.S.A. And if we ask some slightly different questions, and ask what nation feminism has had the most success reforming the culture, the U.S. might not be at the very top, but it's at least *near* the top. The same is true if we ask what nation women hold the most political clout in: the U.S. is either at the top or near the top. If we ask what nations women hold the most civil rights, and have most successfully entered traditionally male occupations, the U.S. is probably near the top. Now let us turn to still another

kind of question: what are the women in the most powerful, and one of the most feminist-reformed, nations in the world, doing? If we're talking about uneducated and lower-class women, the answer is simply living life as women. But if we look at educated, middle-class women, the answer tends to be simple but quite different: they are Fighting in the fray for the lowest rung on the ladder of victimization.

To be fair to feminists, I must hastily add that it's a fray because it has a lot of participants besides feminists. The handicapped, gay, and racial minorities are also fighting, and it seems that everybody wants in. For that matter, a good many able-bodied, straight, white men also want in on the action; many middle-aged white applicants complain that affirmative action has biased the hiring process against them. To many of those who do not belong to an easily recognized victim's group, the cry is, "When can I be a victim so I can get some rights?" It seems that fighting for the lowest rung on the ladder of victimization has become the American national sport.

It seems like I'm mentioning a lot of paradoxes about feminism. Let me mention something else that concerns me. The term "consciousness raising" sounds like something everybody should support—after all, what could be wrong with enhancing someone's consciousness? But what does this term mean? To be somewhat blunt, "consciousness raising" means taking women who are often happy and well-adjusted members of society and making them hurt and miserable, not to mention alienated. Among feminists today, the more a woman identifies with the feminist movement, the more hurt and angry she is, the more she seems to be able to see past appearances and uncover a world that is unspeakable hostile to women. For that matter, historically the more feminism has developed and the more success feminism has had reforming society, the more women, or at least feminists, are sure the world is grinding an invisible, or if you prefer, highly visible, axe against women. Are there alternatives to this? What about

feminists who say that going back isn't an option? I'm not going to try to unravel whether there is an escape; I'm focusing on a different question, whether "consciousness raising" contributes to living in joy. If an animal's leg is caught in a steel trap, the only game in town may be to gnaw off its own leg. The question of, "Is it necessary?" is one question, but I'm focusing on the question of, "Is it basically good?" For the animal, chewing off its own leg is *not* good, even if it's the only game in town, and taking women who are happy and making them miserable is *not* good. You can argue that it is the only game in town, but if it's a necessary evil, it is still an evil, and naming this process "consciousness raising" is a bit like taking a piece of unconstitutional legislation that rescinds our civil liberties and naming it the "USA Patriot Act." It's a really cool name hiding something that's not so cool. The issue of whether there is anything better is one issue (I believe Orthodoxy is a better alternative), but there are two different issues going on here, and it is not clear that "consciousness raising" benefits women.

I've raised some unsettling points about feminism. And at this point I would like to suggest that Orthodoxy is what feminism is reaching for. What do I mean? There are a lot of points of contact between feminism's indictment of what is wrong with patriarchy and Orthodoxy's indictment of what is wrong in the West. (Both are also kook magnets, but we won't go into that.) I mentioned one thing that feminism and Orthodoxy have in common; there are a great many more, and some of them are deep. But there are also differences. Orthodoxy doesn't deliver women who are hurt and angry; Orthodoxy has a place for women to be women, and for women to enjoy life. Feminism tries to be pro-woman, but ends up giving its most vitriolic treatment to women who disagree with it: we do not have the sisterhood of all women, as feminism should be, but a limited sisterhood that only includes feminists. Orthodoxy has its own vitriol, but there is also a great tradition of not judging;

even in our worship people are doing different things and nobody cares about what the next person is doing. We don't believe salvation ends at our church doors, and in general we don't tell God who can and cannot be saved. Feminism is a deep question, and Orthodoxy is a deep answer.

That is at least a simplistic picture; it's complex, but I cannot help feeling I've done violence to my subject matter. It seems my treatment has combined the power and strength of a nimble housecat with the agility and grace of a mighty elephant. I would like to close with something related to what I said in the beginning, about knowing.

Christiane Northrup's *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom* talks about how women do not always feel the need to rush and get to the point, not because they are doing a bad job of getting that task out of the way (as necessary but unpleasant), but because to women things are interconnected, and the things a woman says before "the point" are things she sees as connected that add something to the point. This article has some of the qualities *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom* finds in women, and I see things as interconnected. Beyond analysis, there is synthesis. If this article discusses many things that are connected to the point, that is not because I am trying to write like a woman would. It's not something extra that I've decided to add; in fact it would be difficult for me to uproot this from how I communicate. And it's *not* because I am trying to balance out my masculinity by being more feminine, or be androgynous, or because I'm trying to be woman-like out of a guilt factor. There are other reasons why, but I would suggest that it's an example of Orthodox manhood at work. Not the only example, and certainly not the best, but my point is that there is an important sense in which Orthodoxy is what feminism is reaching for. But to immediately get to the point would give an impression that is strange and deceptive, and almost completely fail to convey what is meant by the claim. That is why I've been spending my time exploring a web of interconnections that help show what

that claim means.

Orthodoxy is about helping us to be fully human, and that includes divinely inspired support for both men and women. It is other things as well, but part of why I became Orthodox was that I realized there were problems with being a man in Western Christianity. Orthodoxy is the most gender balanced Christian confession in terms of numbers, and I came to ask the rather abrasive question, "Does Orthodoxy draw more men than Evangelicalism because Orthodoxy understands sanctification as deification and Evangelicalism understands sanctification as a close personal relationship with another man?" I never got much of an answer to that question (besides "Yes"). And even though I'm looking for more in Orthodoxy than help being a man, one of the reasons I became Orthodox was that it is the best environment for being a man that I found. And I'm coming to realize that men are only half the picture in Orthodoxy.

Because everything is connected, if you hurt men, women get hurt, and if you hurt women, men get hurt... and if you think about what this means, it means that you cannot make an environment that is healthy for men but is destructive to women. Nor can you make an environment that is healthy for women but destructive to men. Orthodoxy's being good for men is not something that is stolen from women. It is good for men because God instituted it as a gift to the whole human race, not only for men.

There are things that are deeply wrong with Western culture. Would you rather be working on an analysis of the problem, or learn to grow into its solution?

The Fulfillment of Feminism

There was one time when I was sitting in Danada Convenient Care, waiting for a blood draw. A mother led in a little girl who was bawling, sat her down in the waiting area, and began to attend to all the little details: sign in on a clipboard, speak with the office staff, sign a waiver, present an insurance card. The girl was bawling because she had apparently slammed her thumbnail in a door. After a little while I came over and began talking with her. I asked her what her favorite color was. I asked, "What kind of musical instrument does a dog play?" (answer: a trombone). I tried to get her talking, but most of what I said went over her head. After a while, I realized two things. First, I was failing rather miserably to engage her in conversation; I literally could not think of many things to say that a child of that age could respond to. And second, she stopped crying. Completely. I was struck by the near-total lack of pain in her face as she looked at me.

Eventually, I was called in for my blood draw. When I came out, things were totally different. The mother was sitting next to her daughter, and paying attention to her. The daughter was drawn into her mother's attention. I said goodbye and left.

On another occasion, I was at a dinner at someone's house, and my eyes were drawn to a goldfish in a fishbowl. I asked the hostess how old the goldfish was, and her answer was followed shortly by my asking how she managed to keep a goldfish for that long. And I remember vividly her answer. She said, "I talk to it," and then stooped down and began talking to the fish like it was a small child. The fish began eagerly swimming towards her, as if it were trying to swim through the glass to meet her.

Love is a spiritual force, and I thought her answer was looney then because I didn't understand that there are more than material forces that can affect whether a fish is healthy. I thought that the idea of love or hate affecting how a plant grows made a great exotic feature in fantasy, but in the real world science accounts for all the factors in how long a fish lives. Of course it matters that the hostess fed the goldfish and kept the fishbowl clean, but the reason the fish was alive and healthy was because she loved it. (And she's a woman with a *big* heart.) And it matters, no doubt, that I made eye contact with the little girl and squatted to try to be at eye level. But the reason I was able to draw her out of intense pain was the power that love has. I can count on my fingers the times I've been in worse pain than smashing my thumbnails as a child; her pain was atrocious. What was strong enough to pull her out of that pain wasn't my posture, or anything suave at my clumsy failures to say things that were age-appropriate. What pulled her out of her deep pain was love, and I was delighted to see her mother, who had been so busy with a thousand necessary details, giving her attention and love to her now comforted daughter. The mother told me as I said goodbye, "You have a very gentle way about you," and I hold that story in my heart as one of my triumphs.

It's hard to pick out a theme more foundational to feminist ethics, and perhaps the whole of feminism, than caring. Many feminists understand feminism as trying to move from a world dominated by male aggression to a

world nurtured through motherly love and caring. And I would like to talk about love in Orthodoxy after talking about aggression.

The term "male aggression" is used a lot. The word "aggression" has a double meaning. Narrowly, "aggression" means "unprovoked violence," a violence that is evil. But there is another meaning to "aggressive," when a doctor pursues an "aggressive" treatment, for instance. Here "aggressive" does not literally mean violence and need not be at all evil... but there is a connection between the two. There is a real reason why we speak of an "aggressive" business plan as well as an "aggressive" assault. Why does "aggressive" sometimes mean "energetically active," something that can be good, when the "main" usage is for something despicable?

Men are more likely to be aggressive than women. In which sense? Actually, both, and there's a link between the two senses that offers insight into what it means to be a man. Talking about "male aggression" is not simply man-bashing, even if it is often done in exactly that fashion. There is something spirited and something fiery that is part of manhood, something that can be very destructive, but something that can be channeled. I don't think any of us need to be told that masculine aggressiveness can be destructive. But that is not the full story of masculine energy. Channeled properly, male aggressive energy means projects. It means adventures and exploration. It means building buildings, questing after discoveries, giving vision to a community. The same thing that can be very destructive can also energize a man's gifts to society. It can be transformed.

I would pose the question: If masculine aggression can be transformed in this manner, what about feminine and motherly caring?

Love is big in Orthodoxy. God is love. God is light, and other things can also be said, but he is love. The entirety of ethics and moral law is about loving God and one's

neighbor. The entirety of spiritual discipline, which Orthodoxy as well as feminist spirituality recognize as important for sustained growth, is a spiritual support not simply to one's salvation, but to love. If my spiritual discipline does not turn me in love towards you, it is fundamentally incomplete. Spiritual discipline without love for others is self-contradictory as a friendship without another person.

What's the relationship between love and caring? Are they synonyms? There is a deep connection, but I believe that an important difference shows up in the question of abortion.

"My body, my choice!" makes a powerful and easy-to-remember political slogan. But nobody believes it, or at least people who have abortions don't believe it. Post-abortion is not about assuring women that it was just a surgery that removed something unwanted, but quite to the contrary is about helping women grieve the loss of a child. You may be able to make a legal argument that the child is part of the mother's body, or say it's just a *potential* life that was stopped. But trying to use that in post-abortion counseling is like telling someone who's drinking milk that has gone bad that the milk is really quite fresh. You might be able to convince *other* people that the milk is really quite fresh, but not the person who's actually *drinking* it. And women who have abortions are the ones who are drinking the rancid milk. In coffee table discussions you can deny that the death of a child is involved and say it's just unwanted tissue. If you're not drinking the milk, you can be conned into believing it's still fresh. But if you're *drinking* it? Post-abortion counseling helps women grieve the loss of a child, and for that reason cannot say "It was just a *potential* life!"

If women who have abortions don't believe the rhetoric, then why does abortion take place? Quite often, these women feel stuck between a rock and a hard place in which there seem to simply be no good options. This is part of why

the pro-life movement has made a major shift to offering compassion and practical help to people in that position. It's a difficult position, and feminists will often argue that abortion is the most caring way out. It is not caring, the line goes, to bring a child into a situation where it will not be cared for, and women should be caring to themselves by not saddling themselves with too much responsibility. And so the ethics of caring sometimes finds abortion the appropriate choice.

In many ethical frameworks you can get away with saying that a mother's love is one love among others. That simply doesn't fly here. In feminism, a mother's love is considered the most intimate love and a mother's caring is meant to be the foundation of a better way of living. It is feminists who have given motherly caring the greatest emphasis and the most central place, and feminists who most fervently defend what any woman who's had an abortion knows and grieves as the loss of a child. It's almost as if a coalition of historians and archivists were the ones most fervently defending the practice of burning old documents.

My reason for mentioning this is not simply irony. My reason for pointing this out is to suggest that something's wrong, and maybe motherly caring isn't strong enough to support the weight feminism asks it to bear. Part of this odd picture is surely rationalization: part of what feminists want is the freedom to live a certain way but not deal with its consequences: be sexually active and not deal with children when they don't want to, and if killing, or in today's carefully chosen terms, "reproductive choice," is the necessary price for freedom on those terms, they accept that price. Part of this is rationalization, but not all. Part of this is the weakness of caring when it is asked to do what feminists hope it will do. Asking motherly caring to do what feminists want is kind of like trying to drive a top-notch car engine to work. It may be a very good engine, and an engine may be *indispensible* to any functioning car, but things go

much better if we have the whole car. I'm not just saying that abortion is wrong. I'm saying that if the people who bear the banner of "mother's love" as the healing balm for society's ills are the ones who defend that practice, we have a red flag that may point to another problem: maybe caring might not do what feminists think it does. Maybe it's not enough.

So what would a whole car look like?

I'd like to quote a passage that has one teacher's take on love:

Then a Jewish law scholar stood up to test Jesus, and said "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus answered him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?"

He said to him, "You must love the Lord your God out of your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole strength, and with your whole mind, and love your neighbor even as you love yourself."

He said, "That's right; do this and you will live."

But the scholar wanted to be proved righteous before Jesus. He said, "Who is my neighbor?"

Jesus answered and said, "Someone was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and brigands assaulted him, stripping him and leaving him half dead. And by providence a priest was going down that way and saw him and passed by, giving him a wide berth. Likewise, a Levite was travelling the same way, saw him, and gave him a wide berth. Then a travelling *Samaritan* came across him and was moved with mercy, in the depths of his bowels, and came over, and dressed his wounds with oil and wine, mounted him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and nurtured him. And the next day he gave a good chunk of his wealth to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him, and if he needs anything more, I will repay you

when I come back.' Now which one of these three do you suppose showed himself a neighbor to the man who was assaulted by brigands?"

He said, "The one who showed mercy to him."
Jesus said to him, "Go and live that way."

(Luke 10:25-37, my translation) Cloud and Townsend's appropriately titled *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* argues that this story is a good illustration of their version of boundaries, and that was when I started listening to some nagging doubts about their theory. They said this was a good example of a measured response: the Samaritan made a moderate and limited response, got the Jew to safety and paid some expenses, and left. Cloud and Townsend ask us to imagine the wounded Jew saying "I need you to stay here," and the moderate Samaritan drawing a their-version-of-appropriate-boundary and saying "I've made a moderate response and need to move on." and saying "No," the way their version of boundaries draws a line and says, "No." And I have not heard a treatment of this story that is further from the truth.

The route from Jerusalem to Jericho was up until the eighteenth century a dangerous place with bandits, and one well-known ruse was to have one bandit lying in the way, apparently grievously wounded, and if someone stopped, the bandits would take advantage of that mercy to assault and rob him. Jesus was saying that the Samaritan stopped in a bad part of Chicago in the middle of the night because a voice in a dark alley said, "Help me." And the Jews and Samaritans hated each other; they didn't have, like today, a setup where people want not to be racist. For that Samaritan to help that Jew was for one gang member to stick his neck out pretty far for a stranger who was from a hostile gang. This is near the top of stupid things you *absolutely* don't do. Was Jesus exaggerating? He was making a quite ludicrous exaggeration to make the point

that your neighbor is every person you meet and every person you do not meet, every person who you like, every person who bothers you, every person who is kind, every enemy and every pest you loathe. Jesus was exaggerating, in fact, to respond to someone who was trying to be too comfortable and make him pointedly uncomfortable. I believe the other person was expecting Jesus to draw a reasonable line of reasonable boundaries to his love, and Jesus was quite blunt about setting an impossible and unreasonable standard.

If we try hard enough, we can shut our eyes and neutralize this story. We can neutralize how uncomfortable it makes us; we can neutralize any way this story might contradict today's psychological dogma of boundaries... and we can neutralize the priceless pearl that this story is meant to help us find. And this story does hold a priceless pearl for us.

The point is not that if someone asks you into a situation that makes you uncomfortable, you must go. I don't really think the point is to set much of *any* kind of literal prescription for how far your love must go. The point is that what is being asked is impossible. Simply impossible, and beyond your power, and beyond my power. It's a command of, "You must be strong enough to lift a mountain." If someone said, "You must be strong enough to lift four hundred pounds off the ground," that would be possible for some people with dedicated training. But the most powerfully built athlete who goes through the most disciplined training cannot lift a medium-sized boulder, let alone a mountain. Jesus isn't saying, "You must be strong enough to lift four hundred pounds," which is something that some of us could achieve through a gargantuan effort. He's saying, "You must be strong enough to lift a mountain," and he's exaggerating, but the whole point is that he's asking something impossible. Only the divine can love that way.

The whole secret hinges on that. The divine became

human that the human might become divine. The Creator entered into the creation that the creation might enter into the Creator. Orthodoxy is not a set of rules, however good, to safeguard purely human love. The point of Orthodoxy is to be transformed by the divine love so we can live the life that God lives and love with the love that God loves. It is to live the life of Heaven, beginning here and now. It is to transfigure every human love so that it becomes divine love. Out of love, God became as we are, that out of love we might become as he is. And what feminism seeks in caring grows to its full stature in Orthodoxy.

There is something fundamental that is missed about Orthodoxy if it is understood as a set of practices organized around love, or a set of ideas in which love is prominent, or a movement which tries to help people be more loving. That has some truth, but the truth is more than that. The human cannot be understood without the divine; to be human is to participate, however imperfectly, in God. Orthodoxy can no longer be understood as a movement or a system of ideas and practices than a campfire can be understood as a collection of sticks. The sticks are not just arranged a certain way in a campfire; they burn, and you cannot understand even the arrangement of the sticks unless you are aware of the fire that is the reason they are arranged. Not only to be Orthodox but to be human is to be made in the image of God, which in Orthodoxy has always meant that we are not separate miniatures of God, but manifestations of his glory. God is not merely a First Cause who started things off; he is the blazing Sun whose light shines on everything that daylight illuminates.

Orthodoxy is the fulfillment of feminism. If feminism is a deep question, Orthodoxy is a deep answer that responds to the depths of motherly love with the limitless depths of divine love. This is not just with love. More spiritual feminists tend to like the idea of synchronicity, the idea that materialist causation isn't the whole picture. Synchronicity is the idea that they're not just isolated domino chains with

one domino knocking another domino down; the chains are linked in ways that go beyond dominos bumping into each other. There is a richer picture. And Orthodoxy believes all this and more. Orthodoxy has never been through the Enlightenment, when people tried to argue that scientific knowledge is the only valid kind of knowledge and that the kind of cause-and-effect science studies is not only valid but the only way things come about. People used to believe something richer, and in Orthodoxy we still do: that there can be reasons why things happen; there is an *explanation* for "*Why?*" and not just a *mechanism* that answers "*How?*" Dominoes do fall, but you will never understand the picture if you only think there are isolated chains of dominoes. All of this is part of the Orthodox understanding of divine providence. Yet providence is deeper than synchronicity. Synchronicity is a jailbreak; providence is a voyage home. Less flatteringly, synchronicity is providence with its head cut off. Synchronicity recognizes interesting designs in the events of our lives. Providence turns from those interesting designs to an interesting designer, and to some Orthodox, the idea of trying to be spiritual by delving into synchronicity and other themes of Jungian psychology is like inviting people over for wine and cheese and serving Velveeta. We have Camembert, we have Brie, we have goat cheese, and when Orthodox see how often "being spiritual" to a feminist means "digging into Jungian psychology," we want to tell you that Velveeta isn't your only choice! Jesus said, "You will know a tree by its fruits:" people's lives can offer a serious red flag about whether you should trust them and trust what they say. Orthodoxy has saints with better lives than a psychiatrist widely known to have slept with his patients in a relationship that was far more problematic than a mere case of raging hormones. Velveeta's the easiest cheese to find at most stores, but it's possible to find better. Orthodoxy deeply engaged the pillars of Jungian psychology far earlier than Jung did, and the reason we reach for something better is that there is something better to reach

for.

Feminism senses that there is something wrong with Western culture, and is searching for healing. One of the strange things about Orthodoxy is that you realize you were right all along. Becoming Orthodox has been a confirmation of things I've sensed, and this is not because I was a particular type of Christian or because I am a man, but because I'm human. I believe that becoming Orthodox, to a feminist, will mean much more than an affirmation of what feminism yearns for. But that's not the only strange thing. One Calvin and Hobbes strip shows the two characters walking through a wood. Calvin asks, "Do you believe in evolution? You know, do you believe that humans evolved from monkeys?" Hobbes' answer is simple: "*I can't tell any difference.*" The strip ends with Calvin chasing Hobbes. Orthodoxy might answer the question, "Do you believe evolution is the right answer to the question, 'Why is there life as we know it?'" by saying:

No, evolution is absolutely not the right answer to the question, "Why is there life as we know it?" For that matter, it is not even a wrong answer to the question, "*Why* is there life as we know it?" It is not an answer to any "Why?" question at all. It is an answer to a "*How?*" question, and even if evolution were the whole truth and didn't have any problems answering, "*How* is there life as we know it?" it is a mechanism to tell how things happen and not an explanation of why things happened. To say, "Why is there life as we know it? Because life evolved just like the theory of evolution says," is a bit like saying, "Why is the dining room light on? Because the switch is in the 'on' position, causing electricity to flow so that the light glows brightly." That's how the light is on, but the reason *why* the light is on is that someone decided, "I want light."

The theory of evolution doesn't answer that question. It might answer a different question, but the

theory of evolution is not so much false as a distraction, if you are interested in the great and terrible question, "*Why?*" Instead of figuring out whether evolution is the correct mechanism, you might realize that it answers a different question, and start to ask the question, "*Why* is there life as we know it?"

"Why is there life as we know it?" is a meaty question, a you can grow into, and if you grow into it, you can learn about a creation that reflects God's glory. You can learn about layers of symbol, and a physical world that is tied up with the spiritual and manifests its glory. You can learn about many layers of existence, and the body that has humanity as its head. You can learn that the mysteries in a woman's heart resonate with the mysteries of life, and begin to see how a woman in particular is an image of the earth. You can learn about all sorts of spiritual qualities that the theory of evolution will never lead you to ask about. And you might learn that there are other questions, deeper questions to grow into, and start to grow into something even deeper than trying to answer questions.

So no, the theory of evolution is not the right way to answer the question, "Why is there life as we know it?"

And most of the time it happens without any philosophy or need to wrap your mind around some dense or subtle idea. Part of Orthodoxy is being caught off-guard by God again and again. It's being informed, "I can't tell any difference." It's asking how to pursue a great goal and learning that you shouldn't have been pursuing that goal in the first place. It's trying to find the best way to get all your ducks lined up, and asking the Lord's help, and realizing that the Lord is calling for you to trust him and let him worry about the ducks. *If* he wants to. These are two sides of

a paradox, and Orthodoxy presents them both to everyone.
And both are part of coming home.

A Glimpse into Eastern Orthodox Christianity

Introduction

Do children and adults understand each other? To some degree, and if many adults have lost touch with childhood, there are some who understand childhood very well. But when I was a child, I wanted to write a book about things adults don't understand about children. (I have since forgotten with what I wanted to write.) There is a gulf. A father can read a *Calvin and Hobbes* strip, and his little girl can ask what's funny, and the father is in a pickle. It's not that he doesn't want to explain it, and he may be able to explain the humor to another adult, but all of those explanations fail with his daughter. Children often believe that there's a big secret the adult conspiracy is refusing to tell them. And the adult who is trying to get a child to "be serious" by setting aside "make believe" and dealing with what is "real" is like someone who wears a raincoat to the shower. The things that go without saying as part of being serious are in many cases not part of childhood's landscape.

In this sense, children understand each other. This understanding is compatible with friendship, liking, hating, being aloof, and several other things, but there are certain things that go without saying, and the things that go

without saying are shared. Two young children will have a world where the difference between "real" and "imaginary" is not very important, where they have no power and adults laugh at things the children don't understand, and where the world is full of wonder. And in that sense two children can understand each other even if they don't know each other's heroes, favorite ways to play, and so on and so forth. And adults likewise understand things that can normally be taken for granted among adults.

Before suggesting that Western Christianity (in other words, Catholic and Protestant Christianity) is best understood in continuity with the West, I would like to explain what I mean. There are a good many Catholics and Protestants who try to be critical towards Western culture, and who do not accept uncritically what is in vogue. I know several Western Christians who tried to live counterculturally and not accept sour things in Western culture; I was such a Western Christian myself. So is it fair to talk about the continuity between Western Christianity and the West?

There is a common Western tendency to criticize common Western tendencies. I've seen Christians eager to criticize Western tendencies. I've also seen liberals who were not Christian eagerly criticize common Western tendencies. For that matter, I don't remember ever hearing someone use the term "common Western tendency" in a flattering way, even though the West is home to many great cultural triumphs (as well as problems). Criticizing "Western tendencies" is a Western thing to do. Taking a dim view of the culture that raised you is a Western thing to do. Working to create a counterculture is a Western thing to do. The focus of this article is not to rebut the West but to explain the East and describe things Western Christians may not know to look for. The Orthodox classics do not try to be Christian by making unflattering remarks about "common Western tendencies." For reasons that I will elaborate, I know that there are countercultural Western

Christians who strive to construct or reconstruct a Christian culture that is very different from the Western mainstream (I was such a countercultural Western Christian), and I still consider their continuities with the West to be significant. More on that later.

This article explores the suggestion that **Eastern (Orthodox) Christianity is best understood in continuity with the East, and Western (Catholic and Protestant) Christianity is best understood in continuity with the West.** There are of course continuities between Eastern and Western Christianity. But they usually aren't the point where Western Christians do not understand Orthodox. There are important ways that a Western Christian understands an Eastern Christian and members of (other) Eastern religions don't. There are also important ways that members of (mostly) Eastern religions understand each other. **The purpose of this article is to explain things that the East naturally understands about Orthodoxy,** not to explain everything important about Orthodoxy. The understanding between Orthodox, Hindus, Muslims, Orthodox Jews, Buddhists, and many less well known religions is of this kind. And so is understanding within the West, but East and West are different as children and adults are different—not because one is more mature than the other (each can see the other as childish), but because there is a gulf. The understanding isn't a matter of how many details you know, or agreement on important matters. For that matter, it's not even a matter of civil disagreement. Understanding another religion is perfectly consistent with fighting religious wars. But there is a gulf that is rarely bridged, and I am trying to bring a spark of understanding of the gulf. I am trying to explain what is shared that Westerns, even Western Christians, need to have explained. And I will be looking at both East and West, at both worlds.

This article is partly Eastern and partly Western, and doesn't completely belong to either world. It's meant to give

explanations a Westerner would recognize, while addressing important things that a Westerner might not think to ask about. I was raised an evangelical, and I am a relatively recent convert to Eastern Orthodoxy. This means that for better or worse I have a foot in both worlds. I hope to use this position to build a bridge.

The Most Important Thing Is

"Article on understanding Orthodoxy" is a dread oxymoron, a red flag like the phrase "committee to revitalize," or for that matter a thick commentary on Ecclesiastes 6:11: "The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?" (NIV)

Orthodoxy is something you understand by doing. If you want to learn to swim, you get in the water with someone who can show you how to swim. So the first thing an article on understanding Orthodoxy can say is that you can't understand Orthodoxy by reading an article on understanding Orthodoxy. You can understand it by visiting a parish and seeing how we worship, and maybe participating. A book can be a useful tour guide that can help you keep your eyes open for what to see at a historic site, but it cannot substitute for visiting the site yourself. The first thing to do is, if you know someone Orthodox, ask, "May I join you at church?" Orthodoxy is a live community, and the way to understand it is to interact with the community. If you don't have that live connection, you can search online for a nearby parish. Some parishes (churches) are warmer than others. There are some parishes that unfortunately aren't welcoming. If a church doesn't have a sign out in front, that may be a warning. But there are many churches that are welcoming. And don't worry if everybody seems to be doing things that you don't understand. There is a great deal of freedom in Orthodoxy, and apart from receiving communion you should be welcome to do (or not do) anything people are doing. Sometimes you will see

different members of the faithful doing different things, walking around, entering, leaving. This is because of the freedom in Orthodox worship and a grand tradition of not sticking your nose in what other people are doing. When I first visited my present parish, well before I became Orthodox, I was self-conscious about following what other people were doing and sticking out. In the time that I've been Orthodox, I realized that there was no need to be self-conscious, and in fact no one cared that I wasn't acting like everyone else.

So make a note in your planner, or call a friend who's Orthodox. Decide exactly when you will make that contact, and do what you need to do to get that in your planner. Actually visiting the site is infinitely more valuable than reading a guidebook about it.

Symbol and Nominalism

Before explaining what symbol is in the East, I would like to talk about what has happened in the West. Symbol in the West used to be close to what it was in the East—like two trees standing tall. Then something called *nominalism* came along, and cut down the Western tree, leaving a stump of a once great tree. Nominalism is a good part of what has defined the West.

Nominalism was one side in a Western medieval debate, and it was called the "modern way." The debate was whether categories of things were something real that existed before things and before our minds, or whether categories are things we construct after the fact. What people used to believe, and what the nominalists' opponents believed, was that a lot more things were real than the nominalists acknowledged. Their opponents looked at the structures we perceive and said, "It's out there," and the nominalists said "No, it only exists in your head." Nominalism was an axe for cutting down most of what people sensed about the world around us. In its extreme

form nominalism says that brute fact is all that exists; if it's not a brute fact, it can only exist in people's heads. Some scholars will recognize that as a postmodern distinction; nominalism was something that flowered in modernism and bore fruit in postmodernism. At one stage, nominalism defined modernism and the Enlightenment, while at a later stage, people were more consistent and became postmodern.

Another thing that nominalism did was to cut apart the thing that represents and the thing that is represented in a symbol. **Nominalism is the disenchantment of the entire universe.** Nominalism is a disenchanting force that says, "If you can't touch it, it can only be in your head," and the place of symbol was changed from what it once was. Symbol wasn't the only casualty, but it was one of the casualties.

Imagine two very different surfaces, like the surface of the ground. The first surface, Orthodoxy, is rich in connections, layers, and colors. Imagine that the first surface is textured, like the surface of the earth, while there are not only buildings but great arcs connecting one part to another so that what is present in one place is present in another. A symbol is an arc of this kind, and symbol is not something externally added to reality; it is something basic to what reality is, so that the surface is in fact richer than just a surface and is as connected as a web. If there is something in you that responds to beauty in the surface, or to ways it has become ugly, that is because something inside you is resonating with something out there.

Now imagine another picture, of a surface that is flat and grey, where there is no real order, and any structures and connections you see are only ways of lumping things together inside your head. You can read things on to it; you can imagine structures in its randomness and pretend any two parts are linked; because it has no order, you can project any kind of structure or connection you want, even if this freedom means it is only your particular fantasy. If you

find it to be drab and empty, that is a private emotional reaction that says nothing interesting about the drab and empty world, in particular not that it is failing to be in some way colorful like it "should" be. "Should" has no meaning beyond something about our private psychology.

If you imagine these two surfaces—one of them structured, many-layered, colorful, and possessing a veritable web of connecting arcs (symbols), and the other one having only a single grey layer and no connections—you have the difference between what Orthodoxy believes and where nominalism leads. Few people believe nominalism in a pure form; I don't even know if it is *possible* to believe nominalism in a few form. Nominalism is more a way of decaying than a fixed system of ideas. Part of what has shaped Western Christianity is the influence of nominalism as the disenchantment of the entire universe. Nominalism disenchant the treasure of a world of spiritual resonance, where symbol and memory have a rich meaning, where a great many things are not private psychological phenomena but something that is attuned to the world as a whole, as much as a radio picks up music because someone is broadcasting the music it picks up.

What was before nominalism in the West, and what is the place of symbol in Orthodoxy now? Christ is a symbol of God, and he is a symbol in the fullest possible sense. How? Christ is not a miniature separate copy of God, which is what a symbol often is in the West. Christ is fully united with God: "I and the Father are One." God is fundamentally beyond our world; "No man can see God and live." But "in Christ the fullness of God lives in a body." And if you have seen Christ, you have seen the Father. Christ visibly expresses the Father's hidden reality.

The image of God, in which we were all created, does not mean that we are detached miniature copies of God. What it means is that we, in our inmost being, are fundamentally connected to God. It means that we were created to participate in God's reality, and that something of

God lives in us. It means that every breath we breathe is the breath of God. It means that we are to reign as God's delegates, the moving wonders who manifest God in ruling his visible world.

As an aside, symbol is one important kind of connection that makes things really present, but it's not the only one. Memory is not understood as a psychological phenomenon inside the confines of a person's head; to remember something is to make something really present. "This do in remembrance of me" is not primarily about us having thoughts in our heads about Christ, just as saying "Please assemble this cabinet" is not primarily about us seeing and touching tools and cabinet pieces. Saying "Please assemble this cabinet" may include seeing and touching what needs to be assembled, but the focus is to bring about a fully assembled cabinet which not just something in our minds. When Christ said "This do in remembrance of me", he wasn't just talking about a psychological phenomenon, however much that may be necessary for remembering; he was telling us to make him really present and be open to his presence, and he isn't present "just" in our thinking any more than a working cabinet is "just" a set of sensations we had in the course of assembling it. And the idea of "This do in remembrance of me" goes hand in hand with Holy Communion being a symbol in the fullest possible sense: the bread and wine represent the body and blood of Christ. The bread and wine embodies the body and blood of Christ. The bread and wine *are* the body and blood of Christ. All of these are tied together.

Among these symbols, a reader may be surprised about one kind of symbol I haven't mentioned: the icon. Icons are something I tried to overlook to get to the good parts of Orthodoxy; it took a while for me to recognize how much icons *are* one of the good parts of Orthodoxy. Icons are in fact key to understanding Orthodoxy.

When one bishop is giving a speech, sometimes he will hold up a picture, of a traffic intersection (or something else

obviously secular), and then say, "In Greece, this is an icon. It's not a holy icon, but it's an icon."

Part of what icons are in the East is easier to understand in light of what happened to icons in the West, not only religious artwork but painting as a whole. What happens if you ask an art historian to tell the story of Western art after the Middle Ages, roughly from the Renaissance to the Neo-classicists?

The story that is usually told is a story of Western art growing from crude and inaccurate depictions to paintings that were almost like photographs. It is a story of progress and advancement.

Orthodoxy can see something else in the story. Western art became photorealistic, not because they progressed from something inferior, but because their understanding of symbol had disintegrated.

If a picture is real to you as a symbol, then you don't have to strive too hard to "accomplish" the picture, in the same sense that someone who has never gotten in trouble with alcohol doesn't have to make an unprovoked lecture on why he doesn't have a drinking problem. People who use alcohol responsibly rarely feel the need to prove that they don't have a drinking problem; it's someone who has a drinking problem who feels the need to make sure you know that his drinking is under control. People who don't have a problem don't feel the need to defend themselves, and artists and publics who haven't lost symbols don't feel a need to cram in photorealism. When Renaissance artists inaccurately portrayed the place of Christ's birth as having a grid of rectangular tiles, they were cramming in photorealism. It wasn't even that they thought they needed photorealism to make a legitimate picture. They went beyond that need to make the picture an opportunity to demonstrate photorealism, whether or not the photorealism really belonged there. From an Orthodox perspective the problem is not the historical inaccuracy of saying that Christ was born in a room with a tiled floor instead of a cave. The

anachronism isn't that big of a deal. From an Orthodox perspective the problem is that, instead of making a symbol the way people do when they really believe in symbol, people were making pictures the way people do when the pictures are unreal to them as symbols. The artists went for broke and pushed the envelope on photorealism because the West had lost something much more important than photorealism.

Good Orthodox icons don't even pretend to be photorealistic, but this is not simply because Orthodox iconography has failed to learn from Western perspective. As it turns out, Orthodox icons use a reverse perspective that is designed to include the viewer in the picture. Someone who has become a part of the tradition is drawn into the picture, and in that sense an icon is like a door, even if it's more common to call icons "windows of Heaven." But it's not helpful to simply say "Icons don't use Renaissance perspective, but reverse perspective that includes the viewer," because even if the reverse perspective is there, reverse perspective is simply not the point. There are some iconographers who are excellent artists, and artistry does matter, but the point of an icon is to have something more than artistry, as much as the point of visiting a friend is more than seeing the scenery along the way, even if the scenery is quite beautiful and adds to the pleasure of a visit. Cramming in photorealism is a way of making more involved excursions and dredging up more exotic or historic or whatever destinations that go well beyond a scenic route, after you have lost the ability to visit a friend. The Western claim is "Look at how much more extravagant and novel my trip are than driving along the same roads to see a friend!"—and the Orthodox response shows a different set of priorities: "Look how lonely you are now that you no longer visit friends!"

The point is that an icon, being a symbol, is connected to the person represented. It is probably not an accident that in the Reformation, the most iconoclastic people were

those in whom the concept of symbol as spiritual connection had completely disintegrated. When I was a Protestant, the plainest sanctuaries I saw were the sanctuaries belonging to people who disbelieved in symbols as spiritual connections. If a symbol is not spiritually connected, then reverence to an icon is inappropriate reverence to a piece of wood; Orthodox believe that reverence to an icon passes through to the saint depicted in part because of the connection that is real to them.

There are other things to discuss about icons. Here I want to talk about them as symbols, and symbols in an Orthodox picture—the mental image I drew above that has a web of interconnections, has both spiritual and material layers, and is very different from the (almost empty) nominalist picture. A lot of people who try to understand icons are trying to fit the Orthodox icon into the nominalist picture, or at least a picture where part of the Orthodox framework is replaced with something more nominalist. I want to return to icons later, after some comparisons.

Compare and Contrast

How is Orthodoxy different from Western Christianity? I would like to answer, focusing on evangelical Christianity in my treatment of Western Christianity but referring to Catholicism. I don't believe evangelical Christianity is the only real version of Western Christianity, but it is the middle of the (Western) road. From an Orthodox perspective, "Catholic," "evangelical," and "mainline" (or, if you prefer an alternative to "mainline," you can say "oldline," or "sideline," or "flatline") represent three degrees of being Western, much as "rare," "medium," and "well done" denote three degrees of a steak being cooked. There are important differences, but there is also something that's the same. Catholicism is like a rare steak, is almost raw in some parts and almost well done in others. A Catholic may be almost Orthodox (certainly a Catholic is not discouraged

from trying to be almost Orthodox), and there are a lot of Catholics who believe that Vatican II says that the Reformers were right about everything (or something pretty close to that).

Catholics tend to be sensitive to the differences to Catholic and Protestant (even if they choose not to pay enough attention to those differences). Yet it is common for Catholics to believe that Catholics and Orthodox only differ in the addition of "and the Son" to a creed. Saying that's the only difference between Catholicism and Orthodoxy is like saying that the difference between the Bible and the Quran is only that "Bible" was a French word for "book" and "Quran" is, with remarkable similarity, an Arabic word that can mean "book." Catholic priests will tell you that Catholics and Orthodox believe almost exactly the same thing, and this is because Catholics know how they are different from Protestants but don't know where their differences with Orthodox lie. The Reformation took a lot of trends in Catholicism and pushed them much further, but the problem isn't just that the Reformers pushed them further. The problem is that the trends became a part of Catholicism in the first place. To Catholic readers who have been told that Catholicism is almost the same as Orthodoxy and the two should be joined together—I understand why you believe that and it is what one would expect the Catholic tradition to say. But to the Orthodox that is like saying that the Quran is of a piece with the Bible. You're looking in the wrong place for the differences between the Bible and the Quran when you try to reconcile them by pointing out that "Bible" and "Quran" both mean book in influential languages. Not only do the differences lie elsewhere, they are far, far deeper.

Western Christianity	Orthodoxy
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<p>Sin is understood as essentially crime, and the remedy to sin provided by Christ is understood as being cleared for the guilt of a crime. Hence in <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i>, for instance, there are elaborations designed to convince you that your crimes (sins) are great, and that you cannot ever clear yourself of these crimes (sins), but Bunyan does not seem to even see the question of whether sin and the consequence of sin are like anything besides crime and criminal guilt.</p>	<p>Sin is understood as spiritual disease, and the remedy to sin provided by Christ is understood as healing. The Eucharist is "for the healing of soul and body," and as the Great Physician Christ is concerned for both spiritual disease and physical disease, and drawing people into the divine life that he gives.</p>
<p>The reformation created mass literacy so that everyone could read the Bible. As a culture, it is heavily oriented towards written text. Someone said after visiting an Orthodox Church that it was the only church</p>	<p>If evangelicalism is essentially a written culture, then in keeping with the observation that the opposite of a "literate" culture is not "illiterate" but "oral," Orthodoxy has the attributes of an oral tradition. Many of its members can read and write, but writing has different implications. It's the</p>

<p>he'd been to that didn't offer him printed material. At least for Protestant churches, a visitor is offered some kind of paper documents; there is a bulletin that is passed out; one of my friends had been a member of church where people said "No creed but Christ!" (which he was quick to point out, <i>is a creed</i>), and then asked him to sign a sixty page doctrinal statement.</p>	<p>difference between a natural environment that includes some things people have created (a campsite) and a basically artificial environment (a laboratory). At the parish where I was accepted into the Orthodox Church, there was no literature rack and no stack of booklets for you to follow along the service. Even where those booklets are offered, incidentally, I prefer to participate without reading what is being said—I think it's not just economic reasons that the main historic way for Orthodox to follow along a service doesn't depend on reading.</p> <p>Part of an oral tradition means things that are alive, things that are passed on that have a different basic character to what can be preserved in a text. This is present in Western Christianity, but it is more pronounced in Orthodoxy.</p>
<p>The written character of the culture is focused on Scripture. It is expected, especially among Evangelicals, that if</p>	<p>Scripture is the crowning jewel of Tradition. Scripture is not something understood apart from Tradition; Scripture is something alive, something dynamically maintained by</p>

<p>your faith is strong, you will read Scripture privately.</p> <p>Catholics and some Protestants do not believe Scripture has sole authority; Catholics assert the authority of Tradition alongside Scripture ("Scripture and Tradition"), and different Protestant groups have different solutions to the problem of how to balance the authority of Scripture and tradition.</p>	<p>Tradition and something inspired not only in that the Spirit inspired ancient words but in that he speaks today to people who can listen to him. And Scripture is at its fullest, not read privately, but when proclaimed in Church.</p> <p>One Orthodox priest tells people, "Reading Scripture privately is the second most spiritually dangerous thing you can do. All sorts of temptations will flare up, you'll be assailed by doubts, and the Devil will whisper into your ear all these heretical 'insights' about the text. It is an extraordinarily dangerous thing to do."</p> <p>Some people are intimidated, wonder if they should really be reading the Bible privately, and ask timidly, "Well, I should reconsider reading the Bible privately. But one question. What's the <i>most</i> dangerous thing you can do spiritually?"</p> <p>"Not reading the Bible privately."</p>
<p>There is a set of important questions, "What part of the</p>	<p>I'd like to answer the same basic questions as I outlined to the left:</p>

person do we know with?" "What is knowledge?" "How can knowledge be built in another person?" Let me start with some secular answers:

What part of the person do we know with? We know with the mind, which is what is studied by the secular discipline of cognitive psychology. One big example is the part of us that reasons.

What is knowledge? Knowledge is having true mental representations that correspond to the world. It is the sort of thing we acquire from books.

How can knowledge be built in another person? Knowledge is built, to speak crudely, by opening the head and dumping something in. Now of course we need words/numbers/pictures to do this, but you teach

What part of the person do we know with? At least in matters of faith, we know with something that could be called "spirit" or "mind," a part of us that is practical (the knowing we have when something becomes real to us). This part of the person thinks precisely because it is the center of where we meet God. It is the part of us we use to pray and worship. It is part of us that is connected with God and can *only* be understood with reference to God.

What is knowledge? Knowledge is when you participate in something, when you drink it in, when you relate to it. Someone's talked about the difference between knowing facts about your wife, and knowing your wife. The West uses the first kind of knowledge as the heart of its picture of knowledge. Orthodoxy uses the second.

It is normally vain for a person to say, "To know me is to love me." But there is another reason why someone might say that. To know anything is to love it. To know any person is to love that person because

by a classroom or a book.

Now this is a purification of something that is mixed in any Western Christian. It doesn't even represent postmoderns well; in fact, it describes something postmoderns are trying to get away from. But admitting all these things, there is an element of the above answers in how Western Christians understand knowledge. Many Western Christians do not purely believe these answers, but they do believe something mixed with them.

knowledge is connected to love.

How can knowledge be built in another person? Knowledge works from the outside in. The reason the first chapter after the introduction asked you to visit Orthodox worship is that that is how one comes to understand Orthodoxy. We don't believe in trying to open the head and dump in knowledge. You can't gain knowledge of Orthodoxy that way. You might be able to learn some of the garments surrounding Orthodoxy, but not the spirit itself. The point of asking you to visit Orthodox worship is that that's not something important that needs to be added to learning about Orthodoxy. It is learning about Orthodoxy.

By the way, the same kind of thing is true of evangelicalism, even if people are less aware of it. Evangelicalism can never be understood as a system of ideas. An evangelical might only be aware of the ideas to be known, but that can only happen if the participation-based knowledge of the evangelical walk, in other

	<p>words the Orthodox kind of knowledge, is in place.</p>
<p>I'd like to look at one more specific kind of knowledge, theology. In the West, theology is an academic discipline, and used to be called the queen of the sciences. Theology is a system of ideas, much like philosophy, and every other kind of theology is a branch of systematic theology.</p>	<p>It took me a long time to make head or tail of my deacon's insistence, "Theology is not philosophy whose subject-matter is God," or of the ancient saying, "A theologian is one who prays and one who prays is a theologian." But that was because I was trying to fit them into my Western understanding of theology tightly tied to a philosophy.</p> <p>Theology is not the queen of sciences because it is not a science, and only with reservations can it be called an academic discipline. Calling theology an academic discipline is like calling karate an academic discipline (because you can take classes in both at college). Academic theology has a place, and in fact I intend to study academic theology, but the real heart of theology is not in the academy, but in the Church at prayer.</p> <p>Theology is knowledge. More specifically, it is mystical or spiritual knowledge. It is knowing with the part of you that prays, and that is why</p>

	<p>Orthodox still say, "A theologian is one who prays and one who prays is a theologian." Theology is knowledge that participates in God, that eats and drinks Christ in Communion, <i>Communion</i>, that seeks a connection with God. And because Orthodox theology is Orthodox knowing, as described above, books can have value but can never contain theology.</p>
<p>In the West, some Christians regard Christianity as a system of ideas. Hence one Catholic author writes, "It is fatal to let people suppose that Christianity is only a mode of feeling; it is vitally necessary to insist that it is first and foremost a rational explanation of the universe." If this is not universal among Western Christians, it nonetheless represents one of the threads that keeps popping up.</p>	<p>Eastern Orthodox would agree that Christianity is not primarily a mode of feeling; indeed, Orthodox do not believe that feelings are the measure of worship. But we part company with the Catholic author quoted, in trying to fix this by placing a system of ideas where some place emotion.</p> <p>Orthodoxy is a <i>way</i>, just as many Eastern religions are a way. It is a path one walks. A worldview is something you believe and through which you see things; those elements are present in a way, but a way is something you do. It is like a habit, or even better a skill,</p>

	<p>which you start at clumsily and with time you not only become better at, but it becomes more natural. But it is more than a skill. It is even more encompassing than a worldview; it is how you approach life. Part of the West says we must each forge our own way; Orthodoxy invites people into the way forged by Christ, but it very much sees the importance of walking in a way.</p>
<p>The West tends to treat society as to a raw material, a despicable raw material, which will begin to have goodness if one puts goodness into it, transforming it according to one's enlightened vision.</p> <p>This undergirds not only liberalism but most criticism of "common Western tendencies", and in particular most Christian attempts at counterculture. This attitude behind</p>	<p>In the East, as in the medieval and ancient West, the assumed relationship between a man and his culture is like the relationship between a man and his mother. It is a relationship which respects authority, femininity, and kinship.</p> <p>This is not to say that one's culture cannot be wrong. What it is to say is that there is a world of difference between saying, "Mother, you are wrong," and "You are not my mother! You are nothing but a despicable raw material which it is my position to put something good in by transforming it according to</p>

<p>counterculture is not only that the Fall has impacted one's culture, but that there is nothing really good or authoritative about culture unless one puts it in.</p> <p>Counterculture tends to be seen as essentially good.</p>	<p>my ideas." There can in fact be counterculture, but it is not counterculture according to the example of the Renaissance magus, the Enlightenment (or contemporary liberal) social engineer, or the postmodern deconstructionist. It is rather like the wild offshoot into Christ's body the Church, who regards his mother the Church, and patristic culture, as more authoritative than the culture he was born in.</p> <p>Counterculture can be seen as a necessary evil.</p>
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What the Incarnation Means

In the West, doctrines have worked like elements in a philosophical system, while in the East, the focus is on what doctrines mean for us. There is a difference of focus, more than ideas contained, in the doctrine of the Trinity. The Western emphasis has been on philosophical clarity in describing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Eastern emphasis has been on what the persons of the Trinity mean for us and how we relate to them.

The Church didn't even spell out a philosophical analysis of the Trinity until almost three centuries had passed and a heresy contradicted what they had always known. The Church had always known that the Son and the Holy Spirit were just as divine as the Father, and it taught people to appropriately relate to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit before it spelled out why people should relate that

way.

The Incarnation, God becoming human, is recognized by all Christians who have their heads screwed on straight (and quite a few who don't). But in the East, believing in the Incarnation isn't just an idea that we agree with (although that is important). It is something that in practice determines the shape of a great many things in our spiritual walk. It is something that has great practical relevance. I would like to explain some of what the Incarnation means in the East, and that means explaining how the Incarnation gives shape to our spiritual walk.

There has been a saying rumbling down through the ages. The Son of God became a man that men might become the Sons of God (Protestant). The divine became man so that man might become divine (Catholic). God and the Son of God became man and the Son of Man that men might become gods and the sons of God. This teaching has mostly fallen away in Protestantism, even if Luther and Calvin believed it, and it is one puzzle piece among others in Catholicism. To the Orthodox it is foundational. The whole purpose of Christ becoming man, and our becoming Christian, is to become like Christ. Furthermore, becoming like Christ does not simply mean becoming like Jesus the morally good and religious man without reference to Christ's divinity. We don't split Christ like that. If God wants to make us like Christ, he wants to make us like Christ who is fully God and fully human, and that means that we "share in the divine nature" (as spelled out in II Pet 1:4). It means that if we read Paul talking about the Son of God as meaning divinity, then when Paul talks about us as sons of God he is saying something in the same vein. There are caveats the Orthodox believe that help balance the picture—in particular, we can be made divine by grace, but only God can be divine by nature, ever. We cannot make others divine. God has his essence which is beyond knowing and his energies which reach out to us, but we can never reach beyond his manifest energies to see his essence.

Catholics believe in a "beatific vision" that in Heaven we will see God as he truly is. Orthodox call that heresy. God can reach out to us and we can meet him when he reaches out, but it is radically, utterly, and absolutely impossible for us to ever know God as he truly is. Neither our being divine by grace nor our glorification in Heaven can ever overcome God's absolute transcendence. The Orthodox liturgy and prayers not only take account of sin; they spend more time bringing sin we need to repent of before God, than our being made like Christ. With all these caveats, the basic picture means that the Incarnation is not a one-time unnatural exception, something which runs against the grain of how God operates, or something totally unlike what can happen with us. The Incarnation is a peerless model that established the pattern of what it means to be Christian. Christ as the example of who a Christian should be is the only human who was fully divine, and even the only one to be fully human, but the Christian walk was meant to be, *and is*, a symbol that both represents and embodies what happened in the Incarnation. Christ is really incarnate in every member of the Church, and the Incarnation is not an anti-natural exception, but the pattern for being Christian. The purpose of being Christian is what Orthodox call "theosis," or "divinization," or "deification."

Part of understanding that Christ became human, and in fact became flesh, requires an understanding of how spirit and matter relate. DesCartes is one of the more Western philosophers. Part of his contribution was a lot of thinking about the famous problem of the "ghost in the machine." The problem of the "ghost in the machine" is the problem of how our minds can interact with our bodies, once you put mind and body in watertight compartments and assume that they shouldn't be able to interact. It's possible to be Western and disagree with DesCartes—but the main Western starting point is that mind and body are things one would expect to be separate.

In the East we don't have trouble with the "ghost in the

machine" problem because we don't treat matter and spirit as things that are cut off from each other. We believe that matter and spirit are tightly bound together. It doesn't seem strange to us that our minds can move our bodies—it's a wonder, as all of God's works are wonders, but it's not something illogical.

This understanding means that the Incarnation doesn't just mean that Christ had a body; it means that Christ was connected to his body on the most intimate level. What the Incarnation means for us isn't just that Christ's body, and our bodies, are somehow part of the picture. It means that our bodies are an *inescapable* part of the picture, and they are very relevant to our spirits.

If you visit Orthodox worship, you may wonder why people stand, cross themselves, bow, kiss icons, and so on and so forth—in short, why their bodies are so active. The answer is that since our spirits and bodies are tied together in the whole person, worship includes the whole person. We don't just park our bodies while our spirits get on with worship. We might do that if we thought that our minds and bodies were separate, but we don't. We believe that Christ's incarnation is a matter of the Son of God, and the man's spirit, mind, soul, *and body* making one being, Christ, who was as united as possible. And that means that worship at Church and the broader spiritual walk both involve the whole person.

This integrated view of spirit and matter, and of the Incarnation, helps create the space for icons. I found icons strange at first, largely because as a Western Christian I had no place for icons that was appropriate. Believing that physical matter can have spiritual properties, that an icon can embody a real presence, all seems strange to someone shaped by nominalism and a rigid separation of spirit and matter. But I am learning to appreciate that to an Orthodox, to say that Christ had a body and to say that matter and spirit are tied together paves the way to recognizing that icons are a gift from God. They mean that matter is not cut

off from spirit when it comes to our bodies, and they mean that matter is not cut off from spirit in places where we worship. Icons are another part of the incarnate faith of the Orthodox Church, and if you disagree with them, please understand that they are part of the understanding of how the Incarnation tells us practically how the Father wants us to worship him.

When I was a Protestant, the songs I heard in Church were about spiritual themes, and more specifically they are about themes in the Bible that seem spiritual and theological given a watertight idea of spirit. As contrasted to the Psalms, there was almost none of the imagery of the natural world. Orthodox liturgy, which contains a lot of teaching, sweeps across the both material and spiritual creation. One hymn praises Mary, the mother of our Lord, as "the volume [book] on which the Word [Christ] was inscribed," and "the ewe that bore the Lamb of God." The frequent physical and nature imagery that seamlessly praises God and rejoices in his whole creation is what being spiritual looks like when spirit is recognized as so deeply connected with the material dimension to our Lord's creation.

Like other Eastern religions, Orthodoxy has a supportive framework of formal and informal prayer, fasting from foods, ritual worship, hesychasm (stillness) and other aspects of spiritual discipline (which some Orthodox call "asceticism"). These are not "rules," but they do provide a concrete structure to help people. Partly because Orthodoxy assumes the relevance of matter to being spiritual, Orthodoxy doesn't just say "Go, be spiritual," without giving further direction as it doesn't just say "Park your bodies so your spirits can worship." The structure provided for spiritual discipline is shaped by the Incarnation, and not only because it addresses the whole person. The spiritual discipline is not very different from other Eastern religions, but the meaning of that spiritual discipline is very different. In Hinduism and Buddhism,

asceticism is something you do for yourself, and other people often aren't part of the picture. When the Buddha decided to turn back and share his discovery with others, he was choosing a second best—according to Buddhism, the best thing would have been to enter complete release (salvation) instead of compromising his own benefit to share his discovery with others. Being good to other people, in Buddhism and in Hinduism tends to be like a boat you use to cross a river: once you have crossed the river, you don't need the boat any more.

What about Orthodoxy? One Orthodox saying is, "We are saved in community. We are condemned all by ourselves." Another Orthodox saying puts it even more strongly: "We can't be saved. The Church is saved, and we can be in it." Orthodox spiritual discipline is not something that makes ethics unnecessary. The whole point of spiritual discipline is ethical. If I pursue asceticism, the goal isn't for me to be saved all by myself; it is impossible for me to be saved all by myself, just like it's impossible for me to have a good friendship all by myself. The goal of asceticism is for the Orthodox to love God and his neighbor, and if someone fails to recognize this, this is a problem. Spiritual discipline is Incarnational because, as much as the Incarnation was an act of love for others, spiritual discipline is oriented to loving with Christ's own love.

In the West, people see salvation as accomplished through Christ's cross; in Orthodoxy, we believe that Christ's whole time on earth, including the cross, saves us. "Incarnation" means not only the moment when the Son of God became a man, but his baptism, ministry, cross, tomb, and resurrection. And thus the Incarnation I have discussed above is not simply the moment when the Son of God became a man, but Christ's whole coming that saves us.

Ella Enchanted

The movie *Ella Enchanted* has beautiful fantasy-

themed computer graphics. Ella, the daughter of a nobleman, lives in a lovely Gothic-looking house in the middle of a suburban yard, goes down a lovely rustic-looking wooden escalator complete with a rustic-looking peasant turning a manual cogwheel, and is surrounded by stained glass windows and other medieval-looking trappings when she goes to her coed community college and gets into a debate about government policy and racial exploitation. One of the characters is an elf who wants to break out of the stereotype and be a lawyer instead of an entertainer (which is prohibited by law), and one of the nice things that happens at the happy ending is that the elf and a giantess fall in love with each other.

This movie is not just historically inaccurate; it is historically irrelevant, and it wears its historical irrelevancy with flamboyance. Everything you see has a medieval theme. The lovely Gothic-looking architecture, the richly colored medieval-looking clothing, and the swords and armor all tried to communicate the medieval. And it would be horribly unfair to treat the film as a botched version of historical accuracy, because it simply wasn't playing that game. However much things had been made to look "medieval," to someone who didn't understand the Middle Ages, it wasn't even *pretending* to faithfully represent that era. It was using the medieval as a projection screen as a whimsical place to address today's concerns. That was its real job.

That basic phenomenon affects a lot of how the West tries to understand the East, even when it *is* trying to faithfully represent it. In *Ella Enchanted* it is intentional, and the effect must be seen to be believed. (But then, that may be too high of a price to pay—as has been said about another movie.) I was appalled when I visited Victor Hugo's house, heard about Victor Hugo's fashionable interest in the Orient, and saw an Oriental-themed wooden painting of Chinese acrobats using their bodies to make a V and an H for "Victor Hugo." China has produced acrobats, and

Chinese acrobats are presumably capable of making those shapes with their bodies. But is this China, even allowing for cultural translation errors?

One major thread in most cultures outside the West is a tendency to exalt the whole of society and de-emphasize the individual person; indeed, people are seen without the Western concept of an "individual." Individualism is historically anomalous, and having acrobats shape their bodies to the greater glory of Victor Hugo would be about as out of place in Chinese culture as a large pro-censorship demonstration would be at an American university. Here and in other places, the "East" is not really the East, even an imperfectly understood East, but a projection screen for use by the West. *Ella Enchanted* was tongue-in-cheek and knew what was going on, where this was serious (and didn't know what was going on), but they were both using exotic places as a projection screen rather than something understood in itself.

New Age quotes the East, as well as "anything but the modern West," and it has its various attempts to create an alternative to traditional society. The East is over-represented in terms of spiritual practices and ideas, but I suggest that the same thing is going on here as *Ella Enchanted* or the supposedly Chinese acrobats celebrating the greater glory of Victor Hugo. In other words, we have a projection screen (in this case, non-Western) being used to project a thoroughly Western approach to life. The forces displayed are much an exaggeration of things that are accepted in Protestant Christianity.

What is the Western element that is found in New Age?

In the West, heresy is understood as condemned ideas. But the word "heresy" comes from a Greek word meaning "choice," and in the East heresy is making a private choice apart from the Orthodox Church. This can mean rejecting Church teaching, or splitting off from the Church, but the core of heresy is not the destructively false idea but the private choice. (This already has implications for the

American definition of religion as a private choice.)

New Age is Gnostic, but there is something interesting in how it departs from ancient Gnosticism. Ancient Gnosticism was not a single, unified movement, but a broad collection of related but quite different movements with conflicting ideas. In this sense it was like New Age, and for that matter there is a certain *deja vu* between New Age and ancient Gnosticism. What's interesting is how New Age is unlike Gnosticism.

Gnostics had a lot of different ideas that conflicted not only with Orthodox Christianity but with each other. *And they argued.* Gnostics argued with other Gnostics and with Christians. Agreeing to disagree was as foreign to the Gnostics as it was to the Orthodox Christians. Saying "That's true for you, but this is true for me" or "That's your choice but this is my choice" would be as strange in classical Gnosticism as an escalator would have been in the Middle Ages.

New Age is a choice, and it is even more of a choice than in Gnosticism in its classical forms. Yes, the ideas are often Gnostic. Yes, New Age gives many of its members permission to indulge in magical, sexual, pride-related, and other sins, almost the same list as what ancient Gnosticism gave its members license for. But the essence of New Age is about a *choice*, the kind of choice that undergirds heresy. You choose (within certain broad parameters) what you will believe, what your spiritual practices will be, and so on and so forth, and the religion you practice is the sum of the private choices you make.

Where does this idea of religion as defined by private choice come from? One gets the impression from the New Age that it is the wisdom of the East to recognize that all religions say the same thing, and that a sort of Western style inquisition wouldn't happen. And that is true. *Kind of.*

In English, poetic license is a legitimate aspect of the language. And there isn't any central authority to approve instances of poetic license, nor can a poet be expelled from

the English Speaker's Guild for abusing the language. But if one simply tears up the English language, it loses its coherence as English. And so there is poetic license in English, but that doesn't mean that anything goes. And in Hinduism, for instance, there is no centralized authority and no systematic purge of heretics, but that doesn't mean that a Hindu (or Buddhist, etc.) approves of religion being approached as a salad bar. Leaders in many Eastern religions may say that all religions are equivalent, and Japanese are often both Buddhist and Shinto, but most Eastern religious leaders would rather have you be coherently Christian, or Taoist, or Buddhist, or Hindu, or Jain, than simultaneously try to mix being Christian, *and* Taoist, *and* Buddhist, *and* Jain. That kind of incoherence is not very Eastern in spirit, nor is the idea of creating your own religion particularly Eastern.

What does Orthodoxy say? It matters whether or not you are Christian, and it matters whether or not you are Orthodox. But there is a saying that we can tell where the Church is, but not where it isn't. There is real truth in all religions, and if the Orthodox Church claims to be the fullness of Christ's Church, she would never claim that Christ's Church is limited to her walls. And her rules mean something different from in the West; instead of meaning "You must or must not do _____," they are resources that your spiritual father can use in addressing the specifics of your situation. In Orthodoxy your spiritual father helps decide what you are going to observe instead of you making the decision on your own, but the rules are more guidelines that your spiritual father can use in meeting the specifics of your situation, than rules in the Western sense.

"Oikonomia" is an official recognition that your priest can work with you to figure out how Orthodoxy plays out in your situation.

Which brings me to the Reformation. Martin Luther did something original, but it was not the substance of his criticisms. Almost everything he had said was said earlier by

someone else; there were things a lot like the Reformation floating around. Nor would Luther claim to have originated his criticisms much more than a baseball coach telling a boy to "Keep your eye on the ball" would claim to be the first one to give that advice. Luther didn't get his historic position solely by copying other people, but if you seek new criticisms from him, you're barking up the wrong tree.

Did Martin Luther contribute anything new? His criticisms had generally been circulating in the Catholic Church. An Orthodox might say that the Catholic Church had drifted from its Orthodox roots even further since 1054, when the Catholic Church broke off from the Orthodox Church. An Orthodox might interpret the general malaise in the Catholic Church as a malaise precisely because it had drifted from its Orthodox roots, and that the Orthodox Church agrees with the vast majority of Luther's criticisms (as for that matter the Catholic Church has—it acted on many of Luther's criticisms). Then what was new about Luther? Is Luther famous for an obscure reason?

Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of Popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe.

After Luther said this, he split the Church. This is a rousing statement, and it is a rousing statement that contains the heart of heresy. A heretic is not so much someone who has a wrong idea, but someone who has a wrong idea *and is willing to split the Church over it*. Luther's distinctive and historic contribution was not levelling particular criticisms against the Catholic Church, but *choosing* to split the Church rather than go against his conscience, and his understanding of Scripture and plain reason. This choice is at the very heart of heresy.

Luther was a monumental figure, a great hero and a great villain rolled into one. His courage was monumental; so was his anti-semitism. And Luther was a prime example of a heretic. He was a heretic not so much by the points which he had wrong, which are relatively unimportant, but because he defined the Reformation with his precedent of splitting the Church.

So Luther worked to establish the re-established ancient Christian Church, and I am not particularly concerned here with the ways the re-established ancient Christian Church served as a projection screen for ideas that were in vogue at the time. (Somehow, when people re-establish ancient glory, their work ends up with a large dose of ideas that are in vogue with their creators. It happens again and again, and I think it has to do with how the ancient glory serves as a projection screen, much like New Age.) That tendency aside, Luther and the Catholic Church treated each other as heretics for a very good reason. It wasn't that they weren't ecumenical enough, or that they needed to be more tolerant, or that they needed to be told they were all Christians and Christianity is Christianity. The reason was something else. I can lament the blood that was shed, but there was a very healthy reason why people went that far against their opponents.

The Catholic Church, along with Luther, and for that matter along with the Orthodox, recognized that there is one Church, bound together in a full communion that cannot exist without agreement in doctrinal matters. Luther's reconstituted Church and the Catholic Church differed in doctrine and could not have this common basis. If you have two different groups which differ in doctrine, at least one of them is not the true Church. This is for the same reason that if one person says that an airplane is in Canada and another person says the same airplane is in Mexico, at least one of them has to be wrong. They could both be wrong; nothing rules that out. Luther and the Catholic Church might neither be the true Church. But if there are

two conflicting organizations competing to be called the true Church, at least one of them has to be wrong, just as an airplane cannot simultaneously be in Canada and in Mexico. Luther and the Catholic Church both recognized this.

What one might have expected, if Luther were simply re-establishing what the Christian Church was in ancient times, was that there would be one and only reformer's Church. When Luther couldn't agree with other reformers, they split off from each other, each saying, "We're the true Church!" "No, we're the true Church!" It wasn't long until there were seventy or so different groups, and the claim, "We're the true Church" could no longer be taken seriously. In retrospect, Luther's saying "I do not accept the authority of Popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other," and then moving to Protestant churches was a move out of the frying pan and into the fire. Perhaps Luther could not have foreseen this unintended consequence, but the disagreements and divisions in Luther's wake made the disagreements of Popes and councils pale in comparison.

At that point, the reformers reconsidered what was going on, but they chose to consider the Church structure generated by the Reformation as valid. There was an unwritten rule: "Whatever you say about churches, it has to approve of what's happened with the Reformation splintering into many groups that could not be in communion with each other, no matter what Christians have believed about Church since the days of the Apostles themselves."

The solution they invented included the concept of a "denomination". The idea was that these different groups were not competitors for the title of "true Church;" instead, they were simply names for parts of the true Church. The true Church was not a unified organism complete with authority as it had been understood from the days of the apostles; it was something invisible and quite independent of formal structures. It's kind of like there had been a

supercomputer club whose charter said that they would have one supercomputer, but they couldn't agree on which computer was the most appropriate supercomputer, so they violated the club charter by each buying his own computer, and to be able to say they had one computer like the charter said, hooked the computers up and said that the real club supercomputer was something invisible, a sort of virtual computer, that was emulated over the club network—and then said that this is what the original charter *really* called for. This is *not* because the reformers read the Bible and this was the best picture they could come up with of what the Church should be. It was much closer to an answer to the question of "How can we re-imagine Church so it won't look like the Bible condemns the church structures which the Reformation can't escape?"

Today we have:

- All denominations point to the same Christian truth.
- It doesn't matter which denomination you're part of, as long as you have faith.
- It doesn't matter much whether you stick to one denomination's prayers, doctrines, and so on and so forth, or for that matter whether you consider yourself a member of one denomination at all.
- We should pursue the goal of uniting all the different denominations.

But let me change barely more than one term:

- All religions point to the same truth.
- It doesn't matter which religion you're part of, as long as you have faith.

- It doesn't matter much whether you stick to one religion's prayers, doctrines, and so on and so forth, or for that matter whether you consider yourself a member of one religion at all.
- We should pursue the goal of uniting all the different religions.

Sound familiar? It should. It's New Age. It's the foundation to the New Age movement that all the exotic Asian decor rests on, and it is more Western than most of the West. Or at least there's an uncanny resemblance between Protestantism and something most Protestants wouldn't want to be associated with. (Or at least evangelicals wouldn't want to be associated with New Age. With mainline, er, oldline, er, sideline, er, flatline Protestantism, the line between "Protestant" and "New Age" is often crystal clear, but at other times can be maddeningly difficult to tell the difference.) Beyond all New Age's Eastern trappings, the heart of the New Age is a non-Christian twist on a very Western way of thinking about religious community. That way of thinking is the Protestant understanding of Church.

Why am I making such a disturbing and perhaps offensive connection? Do I believe Protestantism is as bad as New Age? Absolutely not; I think there's a world of difference. The answer has to do with something else, something about Orthodoxy that seems strange to many Protestants. What is this something else?

Jesus, in the great prayer recorded before his execution, prayed fervently that all his disciples may be one, and Paul made incendiary remarks whenever he discussed people having different denominations. So it is important for all Christians to be united, and that goes for Orthodox. So why do Orthodox refuse to attend non-Orthodox worship and especially to take non-Orthodox communion? Why do we

exclude non-Orthodox from our own communion cups? So why don't Orthodox recognize that we are just one more denomination, even if we are a very old denomination? Why are there so few Orthodox at ecumenical gatherings?

Something has to give, and Protestants often try to figure out whether the observations about Orthodoxy are what gives, or whether Orthodox really being Christians gives. Which one gives? *Neither*. Neither the practices that seem so strange to Protestant ecumenism, nor the imperative to Christian unity, give. What give are the Protestant assumptions about what makes Church, that determines what Protestants see as real ecumenism.

I've written a long and subtle discussion about *Ella Enchanted*, New Age, and other things because I wanted to get to this point. New Age may do all sorts of things to get an impression of being Eastern, and it may be chock full of exotic decor. But underneath that decor is something very Western. It is a modified form of Protestant teachings about Church. The similarity between:

- All denominations point to the same Christian truth.
- It doesn't matter which denomination you're part of, as long as you have faith.
- It doesn't matter much whether you stick to one denomination's prayers, doctrines, and so on and so forth, or for that matter whether you consider yourself a member of one denomination at all.
- We should pursue the goal of uniting all the different denominations.

and:

- All religions point to the same truth.

- It doesn't matter which religion you're part of, as long as you have faith.
- It doesn't matter much whether you stick to one religion's prayers, doctrines, and so on and so forth, or for that matter whether you consider yourself a member of one religion at all.
- We should pursue the goal of uniting all the different religions.

is a disturbing similarity. And most evangelicals wouldn't touch the second list of statements with a ten foot pole. Yet it is connected to the first statement. The first set of statements isn't what the Bible says. It isn't what Christians have believed from ancient times. Its job was to give a rubber stamp to the sort of churches the Reformation created, and serve as a substitute for what the Orthodox believe about Church. And, with modifications, that way of thinking about Church has been perfectly happy to abandon Christianity and help give us the New Age movement.

My purpose isn't to get you to reject Protestant assumptions about church. But it is my purpose to help you see that they are assumptions, and that Orthodox have worshipped God for two millenia with a quite different set of assumptions. If you can see your own objection to New Age treating all religions as interchangeable, you may be able to see the Orthodox objection to treating all denominations as interchangeable, even if it's on a smaller scale. And to show why Orthodox do not simply see the Protestant style of ecumenism as necessary to a full and robust obedience to the commandment to Christian unity.

The Focus

In Chinese translations of the Bible, the main rendering of Logos (Word in the prologue to John) is Tao, a concept in

both Taoism and Confucianism which is important to Chinese thought and includes the Eastern concept of a Way. In Chinese translations, the prologue opens, "In the beginning was the Tao, and the Tao was with God, and the Tao was God." Is this appropriate?

"Tao" translates "Logos" better than any word that is common in English, and the real question is not whether it is appropriate for the Chinese to render "Logos" with their "Tao," but whether it is appropriate for us to render "Logos" with our much less potent "Word," which is kind of like undertranslating "breathhtaking" as "not bad."

Is it OK to mix Christianity and Taoism? There are important incompatibilities but my reading the classic Taoist *Tao Te Ching* put me in a much better position to understand Christ the Logos and the Christian Way than I would have otherwise had. God has not left himself without a witness, and Taoism resonates with Orthodoxy.

In fact, there are quite a lot of things that resonate with Orthodoxy; it would be difficult to think of two religions, or philosophies, or movements, that have absolutely no contact. It may be easy to forget this in the West; one of the Western mind's special strength is to analyze things by looking into their differences. This is a powerful ability. But it is not the only basic insight. Essentially any two grapplings with human and spiritual realities (religions/philosophies/movements) will have points of contact. It isn't just Taoism that resonates with Orthodoxy. Hinduism is deep and has a deep resonance with Orthodoxy. The fact that I have not said more about Hinduism is only because I don't know it very well, but I know that it is deep. Catholicism resonates with Orthodoxy even more than Western Christianity as a whole. Platonism resonates with Orthodoxy, and the Church Fathers learned from their day's Platonism, however much they tried to avoid uncritically accepting Platonism. For that matter, Gnosticism resonates with Orthodoxy. But isn't Gnosticism a heresy? Yes, and it couldn't have a heresy's sting unless it

resonated with Orthodoxy. Part of a heresy's *job description* is to be confusingly similar to Orthodoxy. Postmodernism resonates with Orthodoxy. I wouldn't be surprised if some scholar has said, "Orthodoxy is postmodernism done right."

It should not come as a surprise that feminism resonates with Orthodoxy, evangelicalism, and the Bible. Jesus broke social rules in every recorded encounter with women in the Gospels. And "In Christ there is no Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" is profound, and cannot be separated from the rest of the Gospel message. Looking at a historical context and a cultural context where feminism is floating around, where some form of feminism is the air people breathe—in other words, not the Early Church's context, but *our own* historical and cultural context (yes, we have one too!), it should come as no surprise that people see the Gospel as moving towards what we now call feminism, a moderate feminism of course, and so people work to develop a Biblical egalitarianism that will coax out the woman-friendly vision the Gospel is reaching towards, and correct certain abuses and misunderstandings of the Bible in its cultural context.

This should not come as a surprise. What I had originally thought to write is as follows: It is entirely understandable to try to adjust Christianity with a moderate feminism and try to help Christianity move in the direction it seems to have been moving towards, from the very beginning, but even if it is understandable it is not entirely correct. It is not entirely incorrect but it is not entirely correct either.

Christ's robe is a seamless robe that may not be torn. So is the Gospel. The same God inspired "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female," and equally inspired, "Wives, submit to your husbands... Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her." *The same God who inspired one inspired the other*, and if your interpretation doesn't have room for both, it is your interpretation that needs to be

adjusted, not God's revelation.

But what about cultural context? That question comes up a lot. And let me share some of what I found in my studies. I set out to do a thesis on how to tell when a book which treats a Bible passage's cultural context is misusing the context to neutralize a pesky passage that says something the scholar doesn't like. The first time I heard that someone had made an in-depth study of a pesky passage's cultural context and it turned out that the pesky passage meant something very different from what it appeared to mean, I believed it. I fell hook, line, and sinker. But after a while, I began to grow suspicious. It seemed that "taking the cultural context into consideration" turned out to mean "the pesky passage isn't a problem" again and again. And I began to study. That seemed to happen with every egalitarian treatment of one particular important passage—not only that I could find, but that my thesis advisor could find, and my advisor was a respected egalitarian scholar who spoke at a Christians for Biblical Equality conference! There were a lot of things I found about using cultural context, and my advisor liked my thesis. But in the end, there is a simple answer to, "How can you tell, if a book studies a pesky passage's cultural context in depth and concludes that the passage doesn't mean anything for us that would interfere with what the scholar believes, if the book is misusing cultural context to neutralize the passage?" The answer is, "There will be ink on its pages."

"In Christ there is no male nor female" is true, and it is for very good reason that that resonates with feminists. What a Biblical Egalitarian or feminist may not realize is that there is also a truth which feminism does not especially sensitize people to. "God created man in his image" is tightly connected with "Male and female he created them." There is unity in Christ, and we are called to transcend ourselves, including being male and female. But when God invites us to transcend our creaturely state, that doesn't

annihilate our creaturely state; it fulfills us—just as God's promise that our bodies which are sown in decay and weakness will be raised in power and glory. Christ's promise of a transformed resurrection body does not take away our bodies; it means that our bodies will be glorified with a depth we cannot imagine. Christ's establishment of a Church that transcends male and female does not mean that being male and female is now unimportant, but that God uses them in his Kingdom that is being built here on earth. Men and women are meant to be different, in a way that you're going to miss if you're trying to see who is greater than who else. Paul writes, "There are Heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the glory of the Heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and star differs from star in glory" (I Cor 15:40-41). If star differs from star in glory, so do women differ from men in glory. Men and women are different as colors are different, or as a blazing fire is different from a deep and shimmering pool. This is truth, and if you take the feminist truth alone and not the other side of the truth, you flatten out something that is best not to flatten out—and it makes a bigger difference than many people realize.

That's what I would have written earlier. What I would have focused on now is different. It seems that when people return to past glory, or *try* to return to past glory, the past resonates with what's in vogue, and we don't pick up on things people knew then that we aren't sensitive to now, or even worse we pick up on them but neutralize them. ("Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on.") We unwittingly make the past a projection screen for what is sensible to us—which often means what's in vogue. The Renaissance called for a return to past glory and ended up being an unprecedented break from the past. The same thing happened with the neo-classicist Enlightenment. And

something like this happened with the Reformation. When you sever yourself from tradition to get to the past, you're cutting open a goose to get all the golden eggs.

Part of being Protestant, whether it is evangelical, or the more liberal *Prayers of the Cosmos: Meditations on the Aramaic Words of Christ* (note the effort to reach further back than even the Greek New Testament), or deconstruction to get to what a text really meant (so that the text agrees with deconstructionist revisions to morality)—part of all of this is the idea that you dig past the tradition's obstacles and barnacles to unearth the Bible's meaning, perhaps a meaning that is hidden from the common multitude who blindly accept tradition. The idea that tradition is a connection to the past seems to be obscured, and sometimes the result seems to be digging a hole with no bottom. There's no limit to how much tradition you can dig past in an attempt to reach the unvarnished text. And this phenomenon is foundational to Protestantism. There are things that distinguish evangelicals from liberal Protestants, but not the effort to liberate the text's original meaning. In that sense Biblical egalitarianism is a member in good standing of Protestant positions—not the only one, but one member in good standing. And if past glory has functioned as an ambiguous projection screen, this may mean that Biblical egalitarianism has problems. But it doesn't mean that Biblical egalitarianism is a different sort of thing from Protestantism. It may be an example of how a Protestant movement can misunderstand the Gospel.

Attempts to recover past glory **can** be for the better. One group of evangelicals, originally in a parachurch organization, came to realize that "parachurch" wasn't part of how Early Christians operated. There was no parachurch, only Church. So, assuming that the ancient Church disappeared, they agreed to research the ancient Church and each century's developments and follow them if they were appropriate, and founded the Evangelical Orthodox Church. They went some distance into this process before

they ran into a Russian Orthodox priest, and they (the real Church) were examining the outsider, or so they thought... and they found that Orthodoxy preserved the ancient teaching about the Lord's body and blood, and about Church structure, and... things were suddenly upside-down. The ancient Christian Church had not dried up. It was alive and well; they had simply overlooked it when they tried to re-create the ancient Church. It was *they* who were the outsiders. And they realized they needed to be received into the Orthodox Church.

My parish was Evangelical Orthodox before it became part of the Orthodox communion, which I think is special. So Evangelical Orthodoxy turned out all right. Why then would Biblical egalitarianism have gone wrong? That's not the puzzle. The puzzle is Evangelical Orthodoxy. Evangelical Orthodoxy is a surprise much like getting an envelope that says "Extremely important—open immediately!" and finding that it has something extremely important that needs to be opened immediately. Usually "Extremely important—open immediately" is a red flag which suggests that the contents of the envelope are something other than what you're being led to believe.

But my focus is not to say who's wrong and who's right in the Protestant theme of recovering the glory of the Early Church. It's not even to suggest that tradition is a mediator that connects us with past glory, a living link, instead of an obstacle which chiefly gets in our way. My focus is to talk about something that looms this large in Orthodoxy.

Orthodoxy is not understood best as the content of a private choice, any more than learning physics is privately choosing ideas about how the world works. In one sense it's hard to out-argue someone who says that, but that isn't a very Orthodox way of thinking. It could be called using Orthodoxy as if it were a private heresy. (Once I wanted to be Orthodox out of that kind of desire, and God said, "No.") It's also deceptive to say that a convert Orthodox should select Orthodoxy as a sort of winner in the contest of "Will

the real ancient Church please stand up?" which he's judging. It's truer to say that that happens for many former evangelicals (including Your Truly) than I would like to admit, but Orthodoxy points to something deeper.

Repentance (which some Orthodox call "metanoia") looms almost as large in Eastern Orthodoxy as recovering the past glory of the ancient Church looms large in Western Protestantism. For that matter, it might loom larger. And I'd like to comment on what repentance is. This may or may not be very different from Western understandings of repentance—I learned much about repentance as an evangelical—but it would be worth clarifying.

Repentance is not just a matter of admitting that you're wrong and deciding you'll try to do better the next time. That's what repentance would be if God's grace were irrelevant. But God's grace is key to repentance. Grace isn't just something that God gives you after you repent. Repentance itself is a work of grace.

If repentance isn't simply admitting your error and deciding you want to do better, then what else is repentance? In this case, Orthodoxy becomes clearer if it is compared and contrasted with other Middle Eastern or Eastern religions.

"Islam" means "submission," and "Muslim" means "one who submits to God." Submission is not one feature of Islam among others; it is foundational to the landscape, and one of the deepest criticisms of Islam is that the Islamic way of understanding submission, and the Islamic picture of God, effectively deny the reality of man. How does Islam deny the reality of man? God alone contributes to the world's story. The only real place for us is virtual puppets—not people who help decide what goes into the story. But Islam's central emphasis on submission is itself something that's not too far from Orthodoxy.

In Hinduism and Buddhism, one of the defining goals is to transcend the self and become selfless, and both Hinduism and Buddhism believe this requires the

annihilation of the self. In some of Hinduism, salvation means that the self dissolves in God like a drop of water returning to the ocean. In therevada Buddhism, to be saved is to be annihilated altogether.

Orthodoxy, by contrast, is deeply connected with the Gospel words, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will find it." (Mark 8:35) One of Orthodoxy's founding goals is to become selfless and transcending oneself—offering oneself totally and wholly to God, saying, "Strike me and heal me; cast me down and raise me up, whatever you will to do." This is how Orthodoxy believes in transcending one's being male and female: something that is totally offered up to God and which God, instead of annihilating, breathes his spirit into. This is the difference between Orthodoxy on the one hand, and on the other hand Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and even moderate feminism. Unlike Islam's picture, whoever totally submits to God, or strives for submission, hears God's voice boom forth, "Come! I want you to contribute to the story of my Creation! I want you to work alongside me!" The goal of Orthodoxy, or one of its defining goals, is to help each person to be fully who God created him or her to be.

What does this have to do with repentance?

Repentance means losing yourself. It means unconditional surrender. Losing yourself for Christ's sake and for the sake of the Gospel is transformed to mean finding yourself. Repentance is unconditional surrender, and it is one of the most terrifying things a person can experience. It's much more than letting go of a sin and saying, "I'm sorry." It's letting go of yourself. It's obeying God when he says, "I want you to write me a blank check." Perhaps afterwards you may be surprised how little money God actually wrote the check for—I am astonished at times—but God insists on us writing a blank check. God tells us to place our treasures, our sins, our very selves at his feet, for him to do whatever he wants, and that is absolutely

terrifying. *Repentance isn't letting go of sin. It is unconditional surrender to God.* And it's the only way to transcend the self and become a selfless and transformed "me."

One pastor used the image (he held up his keys when he said this) that we've given God absolutely all of our keys—all but one, that is. And God is saying, "Give me that one," and we're giving God *anything* but that. God demands unconditional surrender, and he calls for unconditional surrender so that we can be free, truly free. In my own life I've offered God all sorts of consolation prizes, all sorts of substitutes for what he was asking me, and when I did let go, I realized that I was holding onto a piece of Hell. Before it is terrifying to let go, and then after I let go of my sin, I am horrified to realize that I was holding on to a smouldering piece of Hell itself. A recovering alcoholic will tell you that rejecting tightly held denial is something that an alcoholic will do absolutely anything to avoid—and that rejecting to denial is the only way to be freed from bondage to alcohol. That is very much what Orthodoxy announces about repenting from our sin.

Hell is not something external that will be added to sin starting in the afterlife. Every sin is itself the beginning of Hell. Orthodox theology says that the gates of Hell are bolted, barred, and sealed *from the inside*. It's not so much that God casts people into Hell as that Hell is a place people refuse to leave: Hell's motto may be, "It is better to reign in Hell than serve into Heaven." Hell is where God leaves people when they refuse to unbolt its gates and open themselves to the Father's love. I've experienced the beginning of Hell, and the beginning of Heaven, and you've experienced them both. Every sin is a seed that will grow into Hell unless we let God uproot it, and that means letting him dig however deep he wills.

Repentance needs to be not only admitting to a sin, but an unconditional surrender that leans on God's grace because apart from God it is beyond us. Repentance needs

to be unconditional surrender because only when we give God our last key will we be released from holding on to that one piece of Hell we are trying to avoid giving to God. Repentance is a work of grace, both in God taking the piece of Hell we were clinging to, and in God's power helping us give us the strength to let go of that one piece of Hell.

That much is true, but this article is incomplete even as a tour guide. I'm not even sure it's an accurate picture of Orthodoxy. There's a joyful dance, a dance of grace and ever-expanding freedom, and this article is a still, flat picture of that dance. Everything I describe is meant as Orthodox, but I have flattened out its living energy (which is why this is so philosophical), without doing it justice. The solution is not a better and more complete picture of the dance that will still be flat and still. The solution is for you to see the dance live, whether or not these observations are what God wants you to see. God may want to show you things I've never hinted at, or use something I've written to help you connect with Orthodox worship, or for that matter use this article as a key to open the treasurehouses of Orthodoxy. But that is God's choice. And he can also connect you with the here and now as many Orthodox emphasize, or make everyday life more and more a home for contemplation, or pick out other treasures that you need. We don't know our true needs—God does, and he cares for them.

For Further Reading...

If you've read this far and want to know how you can read more, I have not succeeded very well at communicating. I'm not saying there aren't any good books out there. There are scores and scores, and I've even read some of them. I love to read. But please don't try to read five more books on Orthodoxy so you'll understand it better. *Please don't.*

Go visit a parish. Participate, and come to experience

firsthand, for real, what this book is at best a tour guide to. Even if this tour guide helps you see things you might not pick up on your own, it's only the tour guide. The reality is the life that Orthodox live, and if you come to a service wanting to take something in, I will be surprised if nothing happens. Joining Orthodox worship (even just sitting or standing) and trying to take everything in, is like falling into a lifegiving river, being surrounded by its mighty currents, and coming to contact with a little bit of it. Don't worry if you don't understand everything that's going on. I serve at the altar as an adult acolyte, and I *certainly* don't understand all that's going on. But I don't need to. There's a saying that a mouse can only drink its fill from a river, and it's simply beside the point that we can't drink all the water in the river. We don't need to. What we can do is take away what we are ready for and drink our fill.

And if you still feel a bit intimidated, like most of this is too subtle to understand—don't worry. You don't need to understand it the Western way, by figuring out all the concepts in an article. The Eastern way is to go to an Orthodox Church, and let God teach you over time. If you do that, it doesn't matter how much or how little this article seemed easy to think about.

He Created Them Male and Female, Masculine and Feminine

God is the Creator and Origin of all. Leaving out of address the Problem of Evil, there is nothing good which does not issue from him.

That stated, God does have the power to create something which is both new and good, a good which is not in himself. That is an implication of the extent to which he is the Creator.

I would point to the material, physical world as a prime example of this. We are created as carnal creatures, and that is good. It is a gift given to us, and any spirituality which shuns or disdains the physical is a lie.

The physical, though, was wholly created. In history, after the Creation in Eden, God the Son became incarnate by the virgin Mary, but now (God the Father and God the Holy Spirit) and then in the three persons of God, God (was) an aphysical spirit.

When I speak of God as being masculine and not feminine, I am not asserting that femininity is an evil characteristic, or unreal, or something else of that order. Femininity was created as good. I am simply speaking of

God as being masculine and not feminine.

I think that the Chinese concept of Yin and Yang (although not perfect for this purpose — look far enough in writings, and you will find lots of weird mysticism that wanders from truth) is capable of illuminating the matter a great deal. (I will, rather than refute, simply leave out what is inconsistent with Christian teaching)

First of all, the thought of Yin and Yang is greatly present. Something highly similar is embodied in that the structure of most languages intrinsically speaks of masculine and feminine; if I were writing this in French, at least half of the words would be masculine or feminine. It is not another superficial detail; it is a manner in which the world is seen.

Yang is the masculine, active principle; Yin is the passive, feminine principle. In a landscape, Yang is the great mountain which thrusts out and stands because that is the nature of its solid presence; Yin is the flat land or the valley whose quiet nature is there. Yang is rough and solid, the might and majesty of an organ played *sforzando*, the deep echo of *tympani*, the firmness of a rock. Yin is the soft and supple, the peacefulness of an organ (key of F) played *gedekt*, the sweet resonance of a soprano voice, the pliancy of velvet and water. Yang is constant and immutable; Yin is conformant and polymorphic. Yang gives; Yin receives.

The relation between God and man is the relation between Yang and Yin.

God is HE WHO IS, the rock and foundation. In God is such power and authority that he commanded, "Let there be light," and it was so. It is God whose mere presence causes mountains to melt like wax, at whose awesome presence the prophet Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me, for I am destroyed."

God created a garden, and placed man in it, telling him to receive; he forbade eating one of the two trees in the center of the garden (the other was the Tree of Life) only

after telling them to enjoy and eat freely of the trees.

Again to Noah, God gave salvation from the flood.

Abraham, God called.

Moses, God bestowed the Law.

David, God promised an heir.

Israel, God sent prophets and righteous men.

In the fullness of time, God sent his Son.

"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth. Yahweh Sabaoth is with us; The God of Jacob is our fortress."

Righteousness is not something we earn; it is something Jesus earned for us when he offered one perfect sacrifice for all time. Works come because "we are sanctified by faith and faith alone, but faith which sanctifies is never alone." The forgiveness of sins is a pure and undeserved gift; the power to obey, by the motion of the Spirit is a gift. All who accept and abide in these gifts will be presented spotless before God the Father, as the bride of Christ to feast with the bridegroom in glory, joy, and peace for all eternity. Christ, like the phoenix who dies only to shoot forth blazing in new glory, afire with the power of an indestructible life, offers this life to us, that we also may receive it.

The thread running through all of these things, through the words "Ask and receive, that your joy may be complete," indeed through all of Scripture from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, is, "I love you. Receive."

To ask if God is more like a man or more like a woman is a backwards question.

The answer instead begins by looking at God.

God is the ultimate Yang.

"All creatures embody Yin and embrace Yang."

-Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

Man, next to God, is Yin. It is only in comparison with each other that the human male is Yang and the human female is Yin; both are very Yin in the shadow of God.

It is something of this that is found in the passages that most explicitly speak of the imago dei:

"God created man in his image; In the image of God he created him; Male and female he created them."

Gen. 1:27

"With [the tongue], we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, made in God's image."

James 3:9

"...[the man] is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.... In the Lord, however, man is not independant of woman, nor is woman independant of man. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."

I Cor. 11:7-9, 11-12

Now, before I proceed, let me issue a clear statement that this does not bear an implication of murder of a woman is no big deal, men are moral entities but women are chattels, or some other such nonsense. The Golden Rule is "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," not "Do unto other males as you would have them do unto you;" indeed, the Sermon on the Mount, Paul's letters, etc. were addressed to women as well as men. I could devote space to a detailed explanation of why it is wrong to treat women as subhuman, but I do not think that that particular problem is great enough now (at least here/in formal thought) to need

a refutation, although it certainly merits a sharp reproof when it does appear.

The picture painted is one of the male being a Yin-reflection of God, and (here in a manner which is not nearly so different, and is essentially equal) the female being a Yin-reflection of God and man.

It is all humanity to which obedience means being Yin to God's Yang, being clay which is pliant and supple in the hands of the potter. It is, in my opinion, one of the great graces, along with becoming the sons and daughters of God, that the Church is/is to be the bride of Christ. (Note that in the Old Testament and the New Testament alike, the metaphor is quite specifically bride, not 'spouse' in a generic sense and never 'husband'.)

The relation between God and man is the relation between Yang and Yin; God is more Yang than Yang. The difference dwarfs even the profound differences between human male and female. There is a sense in which the standard is the same; even in the passages in which Paul talks about this order, there is nothing of a man having a macho iron fist and a woman being a nauseating sex toy. Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as if to the Lord," comes immediately after some words that are quite unfortunately far less cited: "Believers, submit to one another in love," and the following words to husbands make an even higher call: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up to her." Elucidation elsewhere ("Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them," Col. 3:19) speaks at least as plainly; the passages addressed to wives telling them to submit are quite specifically addressed to wives, and not to husbands. The words, "Husbands, here is how you are to impose submission on your wives and keep them under control," do not appear anywhere in Scripture.

To have a man who is macho and dominant, whose

ideal of the ultimate form of manhood is Arnold Schwarzenegger carrying around a Gatling gun, or to have a woman who is wishy-washy and insubstantial, who is "so wonderfully free of the ravishes of intelligence" (Time Bandits), is disagreeable. It is, however, not at all disagreeable because "All people are essentially identical, but our phallogocentric society has artificially imposed these unnatural gender differences." It is not anything close to that.

It is rather that macho and wishy-washy both represent an exceedingly shallow, flattened out (per)version of masculinity or femininity. It is like the difference between an artificial cover of politeness and etiquette over a heart of ice, and a real and genuine love.

The solution is not to become unisex, but to move to a robust, three dimensional, profound, and true masculinity or femininity. There is a distinctly masculine, and a distinctly feminine way to embody virtue. It is like eating a hot casserole as contrasted to eating a cool piece of fruit: both are good and solidly nourishing, but they are different. [note: I handwrote this document, and decided to type it later... a part of this next paragraph will have the same effect as Paul's words, "See what large letters I am using as I write with my own hand," in the tiny print of a pocket NIV... I am choosing to leave it in, because its thought contributes something even when the script is lost]

I know that I am not the perfect image of masculinity — there is a good deal of both macho and effeminacy in me — but there is one little thing of myself that I would like to draw attention to: my handwriting, the script in which this letter is written. It should be seen at a glance by anyone who thinks about it that this was written by a male; rather than the neat, round letters of a feminine script, this script bears fire and energy. I draw this to attention because it is one example of (in my case) masculinity showing itself in even a tiny detail.

A good part of growing mature is for a man to become

truly masculine, and for a woman to grow truly feminine; it is also to be able to see masculinity and femininity.

Vive la différence!

Meat

I was sitting at a table with my classmates, and there was one part of the conversation in particular that stuck in my mind. One of my classmates was a vegan, and my professor, who was Orthodox but usually was not as strict as some people are observing Orthodox fasts, said that he was challenged by that position. He talked about Orthodox monasticism, which usually avoids meat, and its implication that meat is not necessary. I wanted to contribute to that discussion, but my sense was that that wasn't quite the time to speak. When I explored it after that meal, it seemed more and more to be something that was part of a deep web, connected to other things.

What is Theophany? And what does it have to do with meat?

When I became Orthodox, one of the biggest pieces of advice the priest who received me (my spiritual father) gave me was to take five or ten years to connect with the liturgical rhythm. Now in the Orthodox Church advice from spiritual fathers is like a doctor's prescription in that what is given to one person may not be good at all for another: like a prescription given by a doctor, it is given to one person for

that specific person's needs, and should not normally be seen as universal advice that should be good for everyone. However, that doesn't mean that advice is perversely designed to be useless to everyone else. I believe this was good pastoral advice not because of something ultimately idiosyncratic about me—something true of me but no one else—but because of something I share with a lot of other people, especially other Westerners.

In the Orthodox Church, there are days, weeks, and years as in the West, but what they mean is different. In some respects the similarity is deceptive. The biggest difference is less a matter of linear vs. cyclical time, as that in the West time is like money: people will say, "Time is money," and if it is a metaphor, it is none the less a metaphor that captures people's outlook very well. Time is like a scarce commodity; it's something you use to get things done, and you can not have enough, and run out of time. Language of "saving time" like one would save resources is because the way people treat time is very close to how one would treat a commercial resource that you use to get things done. This may be deeply rooted in some Orthodox, especially Western members of the Orthodox, but instead of time being like a limited supply of money, time is like a kaleidoscope turning. There are different colors—different basic qualities held in place by worship, prayer at home, fasting from certain foods, feasting, commemorating different saints and Biblical events, and being mindful of different liturgical seasons—and they combine in cycles of day, week, and year, given different shades as people grow. Again, this is much less like "Time is money." than "Time is the flow of colors in a kaleidoscope."

One of those seasons is called "Theophany," and it is defined by the third most important feast in the year. I am writing in that season, and it seems an appropriate enough season to write this piece. It fits Theophany.

"Theophany" means "the manifestation of God." That word does not refer to icons or animals. But the way that

God was manifest in Theophany has every relevance to icons and animals.

Theophany is the celebration of the Lord Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan, and at one point this was not celebrated from what we now celebrate in Christmas. At that baptism, the Father spoke from Heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," the Son was baptized, and the Spirit appeared in the form of a dove. The Trinity was made manifest, but more to the point, the Trinity of God was made manifest *to and through material Creation*.

The Fathers have never drawn a very sharp line between Christ the Savior of men and Christ the Savior of the whole creation. This isn't something the Fathers added to the Bible: the Son of God has entered into his creation so completely that the Bible itself says that Christ is "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

When Christ was baptized in water, he blessed the whole creation. Yes, he set a precedent for his followers. I wouldn't want to diminish that. But if you draw the line and say the story is relevant to our being baptized but nothing more, you have cut off its fundamental relevance to the whole Creation. The Orthodox liturgy never forgets the rest of the created order, and the liturgy for Theophany crystallizes this in the service for the blessing of the water:

Great art thou, O Lord, and wonderful are thy works, and no word doeth justice to the praise of thy wonders; for by thy will thou didst bring out all things from nonexistence into existence; and by thy might thou dost control creation, and by thy providence thou dost govern the world. Thou it is who didst organize creation from the four elements, and crowned the

cycle of the year with four seasons. Before thee tremble supersensual powers; thee the sun praiseth, the moon worshippeth, the stars submit to thee, the light obeyeth, the tempests tremble, the springs worship thee. Thou didst spread out the heaven like a tent; thou didst establish the earth on the waters. Thou didst surround the sea with sand. Thou didst pour out the air for breathing. Thee do the angelic hosts serve; thee the ranks of the archangels do worship, the many-eyed cherubim, the six-winged seraphim, as they stand in thy presence and fly about thee, hiding with fear from thine unapproachable glory...

And shortly the water is blessed, opening a season of blessing in which people's houses are blessed, icons are blessed, people are blessed, and so on. To be human is to be created for worship, but it is not only humans; every material creature and every spiritual creature (the "supersensual powers", the "many-eyed cherubim", and other figures in the liturgy quoted above) are not only created to worship but have a place in what could be called a united organism.

People today are seeking a harmony between man and nature, and some people may wonder if Orthodoxy has a basis for such a harmony. The answer is a yes and no. Let me explain.

If we ask a different question, "What would harmony between humans and technology be? What would a society look like?" then there might be an image of people caring for machines, adapting themselves to them, and so on and so forth. And that image, or that projection, would lead to a deceptive image among societies today. If we are talking about the kind of technology in the first world today, then the first world today not only is better attuned with technology than the second or third world, but has done something with technology that is simply without parallel in the first 99.999% (literally) of the time humans have been

around. Although some other nations like Japan may have a slight edge over my native USA, I'm going to focus on the USA for the simple reason that I know it better.

In the USA, which has something about technology that exceeds what has been done in the same vein in the first 99.999% of the time humans have been around, there are people who develop technology and are carefully attuned to it. And the culture is optimized to support technology in a way that I didn't appreciate until I lived in the second world. You may be able to count on your fingers the number of societies that have ever managed, in the entire history and prehistory of the human race, to be more attuned to technology. And yet the society is not what one would imagine if one tried to imagine a society in harmony with technology.

This is a society with a minority current making Luddite arguments about why computers are bad (and to me the arguments have more weight than some might suspect). There are also people who have no academic axe to grind about the sociological effects of video games, but hate learning new programs. The predominant computer operating system is the most insecure operating system, the one that most exposes its users to viruses and worms—better operating systems are available, at very least from a security and privacy perspective, *for free* in some cases, but the industry standard is the one that leaves its users most vulnerable to malicious software. Furthermore, people do not hold technology as objects of reverence, or at least most people don't. Not only is it not a big deal to dispose of no-longer-wanted technology, but "planned obsolescence" means that technology is made to be thrown away. When technology is broken, it will probably be replaced instead of being repaired. You can be very educated and know very little about technology. And the list goes on.

Now I ask: Is this attunement with technology? And the answer is "Yes," but it is the kind of attunement seen in real society (perhaps more perfectly in Japan and other places),

not what one would imagine as "harmony with technology." The difference between the two is like the difference between romantic relationships—the kind you have with another flesh-and-blood human who has things that your imagination didn't put there—and romantic fantasies. In fact people don't think in terms of "harmony with technology;" to ask if American culture lives in harmony with technology is a question few Americans would ask.

Does Orthodoxy have a key to harmony with nature? Let me give one clue. No single technology—not SUVs, not environmentally incorrect inks, not styrofoam—dictates a heavy environmental footprint. Even if there were no soy inks, the printer in itself need not dictate environmental damage. What dictates environmental damage is waste. And Orthodoxy never tells a society what technologies it may and may not use—when someone ran an anti-SUV advertisement asking, "What would Jesus drive?" Orthodoxy may well agree with the archaeologist who in essence said, "Speaking as someone who's done excavations in the Holy Land's rugged terrain, you basically need an SUV, and Jesus with his twelve disciples would have driven a Hummer." (This does not mean that we all need Hummers. I get rides from people but don't own a car myself.) Even if Orthodoxy does not give a list of what technologies its people can't use, Orthodoxy does join voices with many other Christians in saying that part of the walk of virtue is living simply, meaning using what you need but being willing to ask "Do we need what we can afford?" instead of just "Can we afford what we need?" This simplicity is not lived consistently in the first world, but the classical virtue of living simply, formulated at a time when people simply were not thinking in environmentalist terms, has implications for appropriate stewardship of the earth. Living simply has usually been conceived as something that deals with rich and poor—almost all people in the first world who have a home would be considered rich—but it is part of a right ordering that will rightly orient people and

society to the material world.

But there is another side to the issue. In the Western way of looking at it, there is a fundamental opposition between harmony (shaded by equality) and domination (shaded by inequality). Harmony, by definition, does not include domination. But the way the Eastern Church approaches it fits neither into the Western boundaries of harmony nor the Western boundaries of domination. The link between man and nature needs harmony, but it is incomplete if it cannot include domination and even destruction. The PETA position, admittedly extreme for people who have animal rights sympathies, is that a duck is a rat is a goat is a boy. To them, meat is murder, not just as a way of exaggerating something deep, but in a literal sense. And I cannot agree with that. If I could kill a goat and save a girl, I would do so. And beyond that, I eat meat, more than most people (at least before low-carb diets came in vogue, and perhaps after).

The smock

When I was a boy, my art teacher told the class to get smocks, and my father gave me an unwanted shirt—but he would have given me his best shirt if I needed it. I used it and it kept me from getting clay and paint on my other clothing. (In other words, I destroyed it.) That wasn't the only thing of my parents' that I destroyed. I destroyed the meals my mother cooked for me (usually by eating them and throwing away as little as possible—you wouldn't want them when I was done). I destroyed things that weren't working by taking them apart to see what was inside. I destroyed clothing that my mother brought for me, usually by wearing it out. If my parents had back every penny they spent on something that I destroyed, they would have a good deal more money.

However, my parents did not raise me to be a destructive man. The smock is an example of justified

destruction. The fact that my father gave me one of his shirts to destroy as a smock does not mean that it didn't matter if I destroyed his shirts. He would have been quite bothered if I had rubbed red clay onto all of his shirts. Quite a lot of the destruction I did was appropriate. It was justified destruction within a context, and I believe it illustrates what it means to say both that destruction can be permissible, and that destruction matters. To speak of justified destruction is both to say that destruction can be justified and that justification *needs* to be justified: it is acceptable to destroy a dress shirt when a smock is needed, but destroying a dress shirt *needs* to be justified, and is not appropriate when it is not justified.

The concept of "raw materials" applied to the natural world isn't a very Orthodox concept, for much the same reason that it would seem strange to interpret our house as merely a bunch of raw materials for me to destroy at will. The examples above notwithstanding, my parents did not want me to be destructive, and the fact that I was permitted to destroy things was not the central truth of the matter. It would be much closer to the truth to say that I was in that home to grow into a Christian and a man, and be a member of that family. There was also a footnote that said I could destroy some things in some circumstances. But even the things which I was permitted to destroy were not "raw material". A shirt has value in itself, as a shirt, even if it is used as a smock.

The problem with considering the items in my parents' house is raw material is that *they have both status and value* independently of what I might get out of destroying them. It might matter that I would benefit from destroying the shirt by using it as a smock, but the heart of the matter is that "potential for making a smock" is neither the only status nor the only value of a dress shirt.

An icon, a picture painted to help make spiritual realities manifest, has value as the emblem of a view of the Creation where science and materialism do not tell the

whole story, where matter has spiritual qualities above the legitimate observation of scientists, and where saying "Nature is simply what science describes" is as fundamentally erroneous as saying "Your value as a human being is simply what you get when you subtract your financial liabilities from your assets." If an icon is spiritual, if it is part of God manifesting himself through matter and restoring matter to his circle of blessing, then there is something inadequate if the only meaning to "matter" is "what science describes." Matter is a part of the treasurehouse of God, and the icon is spiritual not as an exception to inert matter and raw material, but as the crystallization of something at the heart of Creation. Seeing the natural world as raw material is almost as strange from an Orthodox perspective as seeing people in terms of their financial net worth. It's the same kind of error.

Of the possessions in my parents' house, not all are equal, and it makes a difference whether I am destroying a plastic cup or a landscape painted by my mother. In God's own house with his treasures, not all are of equal value. There are some of these treasures that exist, in their way reflecting a God who is existence itself: rocks, for instance. There are some possessions which exist in a deeper sense, having an existence that is alive, a reflection of a God who is not only Being itself but Life itself. Then, beyond these oaks and roses, there are treasures which exist and even live in a way that moves: gazelles and badgers. As the pinnacle of material creation and the microcosm that brings together the material and the spiritual, are creatures that exist, live, and move in out of rationality—on a richer and more interesting understanding of "rationality" than most people would associate with the word today. That would be the realm of men. Lastly, there are bodiless rational spirits. rank on rank of angels.

We can destroy treasures that exist, live, and even move, and some people think that in dire circumstances we may destroy the highest of material treasures, the ones that

are rational. But that does not mean that it's all the same to destroy rocks, plants, and animals. Destroying a plant—to make a vegan's meal, for instance—is more serious than smashing a pebble. (Unfortunately, you can't live off of a diet of rocks.) Destroying an animal is far more serious, and there are sources which suggest it is more a concession than what we would think of today as a right. You can find people arguing that meat is more of a condition to weakness and medical concerns than something healthy people should need to resort to.

Kosher meat

In Judaism, "kosher" is not only a matter of whether the meat comes from a clean animal like a cow or a sheep or an unclean animal like a pig. It also is a matter of how the animal was slaughtered.

The butcher says a blessing over the animal and then makes a single motion with a knife that has to be sharp, and is specified so that the animal dies as swiftly and painlessly as possible. Its lifeblood is also to be poured out as thoroughly as possible—because the animal's life belongs to God, not to us, and even if we may kill it, Judaism at least frames acceptable slaughter in a way that shows respect for the animal killed.

If we look at a Jewish shepherd with his flock of sheep, under second temple Judaism, and a contemporary (to him) pagan Greek swineherd with his flock of pigs, they (or at least the Jew) would have seen themselves as complete opposites, at least after taking into account that they both raise a group of animals. There may have been a difference in whether all the animals were being raised for meat, but let's ignore that for the sake of argument. The Greek swineherd might have found the comparison rather insulting: to Greeks, Jews were these antisocial people who wouldn't mingle in polite company and for some reason treated one of the most delicious meats (pork) as if it were

something revolting and putrid. In other words, Greeks perceived Jews as rather a bit weird, a beer or two short of a six-pack. The Jew, however, would have *certainly* found the comparison insulting to the extreme: not only was this figure a goy, a heathen dog, but he was raising pigs. Saying that he was like a *swineherd* is offensive in much the same way it would be offensive to tell a UPS delivery driver who is proud of helping the business world and contributing a little to help the economy run smoothly, that that she is like a gang's drug runner because they both deliver packages, whether the packages are productive business documents or street drugs. The Jew would have been more offended by the comparison, but for people who raise flocks of animals, the Jew and Greek would have seen themselves as very different.

But let's compare them to how pigs are raised today, in today's factory farming. Pigs spend almost their entire lives in tiny cells, with an hour of artificial light a day—the rest of the day being surrounded by darkness—constricted in cells too small for them to turn around, deprived of a herd animal's normal contact with other animals from its herd, traumatized not only by sounds but by the unending stench of rotting feces. The workers who treat them come down with atrocious respiratory diseases—and they are exposed to the vile air for a few hours a day instead of 24/7 as the pigs are. I don't believe that feeding animals antibiotics is innately wrong, but with pigs it serves as an inappropriate band-aid for the damage caused by a dungeon—if that is a strong enough word—which is such a toxic environment that feeding the animals constant antibiotics actually makes a marked difference in the number of pigs killed by the life in their dungeon.

If we compare the Jew and the Greek herd-keepers, suddenly they look the same, and some things take on a new significance. Both allowed their herds to graze at least some of the time. Both allowed their animals to have natural contact with other like animals as part of a herd. Both

raised their animals in daylight. Both raise their animals in places that gave them not just room to turn around, but room to move about normally. And now I'd like to ask what the Jewish shepherd (at least) would have thought of the factory farming way of raising (in the example above) pigs. Or, if you prefer, a rabbi.

Do you know how when you step on a tack or stub your toe, you feel tremendous pain, *immediately*, but if you get in a car accident and really need to go to the emergency room, it takes a while for the pain to register? My suspicion is that kosher slaughter techniques leave an animal unconscious and possibly dead before the pain has had time to register. Even if it is not painless slaughter, the specific rules are motivated by a principle that reduces suffering in a timespan of only a few minutes. And non-kosher slaughter, unless people go out of their way to cause suffering, cannot come anywhere near the suffering which factory farming inflicts on pigs. For that matter, it's not clear how one would go about creating a torment-filled slaughter technique that would come anywhere near the lifelong suffering animals experience in factory farming. My suspicion is that people who are criminally convicted of cruelty to animals (at least in the U.S.) cause nowhere near the suffering before the animal is dead that factory farms do. To the best of my knowledge, Orthodox Judaism has not made rules about how an animal must be treated for its entire life to provide kosher meat, but if the rules were being articulated today, I suspect that the rules would recognize that lifelong torment is more of a problem than failing to kill an animal quickly and with a minimum of pain (as well as pouring its blood out as a reverent recognition that the life of an animal belongs to the Lord).

Before further discussion about factory farming's evil side, I would like to explain what it has allowed. Raising animals the traditional way is expensive, requiring a lot of land and a lot of manpower. Factory farming—stacking animal cells in warehouse-like fashion and in general

treating animals like mere machines—is a way to automate and mechanize the production of both meat and animal products like eggs and cheese. It is a tremendous way to cut corners, and the result is that things that come from animals are drastically reduced in price, drastically cheaper.

It is difficult, at least in the first world, for people to understand that for most of history people have not been vegetarians but neither did they eat meat every day. There have been a few hunter tribes that had a meat-based diet. For most people whose food came from farms, bread or rice has been the staple food. Meat was for special occasions or a seasoning; eating meat every day would seem strange to most people, like ordering lobster every time you feel like a snack, or drinking Champagne with every meal. Meat, being an expensive thing to produce, was something people didn't have as the basis for normal meals. If you are an American adult—and you have not made a conscious choice early in your life to drastically reduce or eliminate meat from your diet—then you have almost certainly eaten much more meat than Jesus did. This does not automatically mean that we shouldn't eat meat ever, or that we should eat meat rarely, but it does suggest that eating meat every day is not really the traditional way of doing things, even if most people were not vegetarians. A lot of people today love lobster and Champagne, but that doesn't mean it's normal in my society to have them every day. It might be telling that the "Our Father" Jesus gave doesn't say, "Give us today our daily meat," but "Give us today our daily bread." That doesn't mean that we shouldn't eat meat, but it seems not to assume, as people sometimes do, that meat is the main food.

Three American rules

I'd like to point out something more about American culture. Where I was growing up, I heard that a restaurant, Dragon West, had been closed down for improper use of

domestic animals. For those of you who don't have X-ray goggles, "improper use of domestic animals" is an opaque bureaucratic euphemism for the fact that they were serving dogs as food. The reason the restaurant was shut down has to do with the fact that eating dogs is culturally offensive to much of American culture, and there is a reason for that.

There's a rule in America that if you keep a particular type of animal as a pet, you don't eat that kind of animal's meat. The rule is not absolute, and part of it is that most kinds of pets (carnivorous cats, for instance) would make poor livestock, and most kinds of livestock (behemoth bovinés, for instance) would be hard to keep in a suburban home. And the rule isn't absolute. Aside from rabbits, people swallow goldfish, although they seem to do that precisely *because* it crosses a line. But once you acknowledge a jagged border, it's not just true that we happen not to eat the most common pets; many Americans would find the idea of eating a dog or cat to be nauseating. And it's deeply seated enough to close down a restaurant.

You can, at some restaurants I've been to, order fish head curry. That doesn't get a place shut down, but it breaks another rule. More specifically, it breaks the rule that meat shouldn't give obvious clues that it came from an animal. Fish, which look the least like people, can be sold with their heads on. But unless you go out of your way, chickens are sold without head and feathers, and red meat and pork (which are from non-human mammals) is sold with even fewer clues that it's some of the flesh of a slaughtered animal. Not that a detective couldn't figure it out, but meat is sold in a form that hides where it came from, and people buying or eating beef would probably be grossed out by having a cow's severed head nearby. Surely some of this is for economic reasons, but Americans who eat meat tend not to want to be reminded where it came from.

Lastly, people can be disturbed by the idea of eating certain kinds of "gross" things, things that creep and crawl—eating a tarantula or scorpion would be disturbing.

(Interestingly, this rule seems to have a clause that says, "except if it came from the sea," so the tarantula's watery cousin the crab is fair game, as is the scorpion's cousin the lobster.) That observation aside, the animals used to evoke horror in movies are generally not used as food.

My point in this is not to say that we all have rules, or think that only Orthodox Jews and Muslims have dietary rules. Even if the last rule has a strange exception, these rules are not random.

A devout Muslim will not eat pork and a devout Hindu will not eat beef, but the reasons are opposite: to the Muslim, a pig is an abomination, while to the Hindu, the god Shiva's steed is a cow, and it would be an affront to Shiva to kill his steed for food. So we have abstinence out of disrespect and out of respect.

In the last rule I gave, "Thou shalt not eat anything creepy," is an abstinence out of disrespect: spiders and lizards are dirty things that aren't clean enough to eat. But neither of the first two rules is like this. The rules against eating animals that could be used as pets, and meat that looks too much like it came from an animal, are not rules of disrespect but rules of "Don't remind me that an animal was killed for this." The average suburbanite would rather be fed by meat from a kind of animal he has never interacted with closely—i.e. a cow—than think, "This came from a dog like the one I had growing up."

This adds some complexity to the picture of "America is a place where people eat lots of meat and that's that." It suggests that, even if we eat lots of meat, there is something residual, a reticence that tries not to know that meat comes from slaughtered animals. (That is even without adding any knowledge of what it means for livestock to be raised under factory farming, which in my mind far outweighs the slaughter itself.)

Two things animal rights activists won't tell you

Not all meat is created equal.

I had a bear of a time learning what specific conditions animals are raised under. Animal rights activists tend to want to treat animals as people, and only tell about what is inhumane, never what is humane, and so they will never tell you that beef cattle are raised under much nicer conditions than pigs. The people involved in factory farming seem not to advertise what they are doing. This makes not the easiest conditions to find out how much cruelty is associated with different things. (Or maybe I was just looking in the wrong places.)

What I was able to find—or the impression I was able to get—makes for a sort of ascending scale of cruelty, moving from least cruel (no more cruel than traditional animal husbandry) to most cruel. This scale isn't perfect, but it's the one I use.

Before we get on the scale, there is soy milk (which I've found to be available at grocery stores, and the chocolate is easiest to get used to), soy cream cheese, and so on. I still haven't gotten the hang of liking tofu. I've found some other soy substitutes not to taste equivalent, but to taste good enough, and soy is claimed to have a complete protein signature.

At the base of the scale, the purest and most humane end, include ocean caught fish and seafood, and organic and free range anything. Organic food (which goes a little further than free range food—free range means that livestock can move about, *free range*, instead of being confined to coffinlike cells) can be found if you look for it at some supermarkets, and can be found at yuppie, granola music listening places like Whole Foods, which stacks exclusively organic produce, is pure as the driven snow, and has prompted a nickname of Whole Paycheck.

Next up the list are beef and mutton. Beef cattle do end up in fattening lots where they have little space, but they spend most of their lives growing up on open grazing land, able to move about, see sunlight, and be part of a herd.

Next up are eggs and dairy products. Because of the moral tenor of factory farming, animals can be treated cruelly even if they're not exactly being raised for their meat, and *if you order a cheeseburger, there's more cruelty in the cheese than in the burger*. Dairy cattle live much like pigs, although less of their lives (and therefore less cruelty) goes into producing a gallon of milk than a comparable amount of pork.

Last on the list are chicken, pork, turkey, and (the worst) veal. Many people know veal is cruel; pork and chicken are not much better. Chickens have a space roughly equal to a letter-sized paper folded in half, and farmers melt much of their beaks off (this is called "debeaking" by the farmers and the literature) because the living conditions cause so much fighting that the chickens would kill each other if they had their beaks and could peck like normal chickens would.

That is one of two things the animal rights crowd won't tell you. There's one other major thing I found that they don't advertise.

In the Orthodox tradition, part of the story is fasting, which doesn't mean abstaining from all foods and drinking only water, but usually means abstaining from some foods. The requirement on paper is to essentially go to a vegan diet (shellfish are allowed; oil and alcohol aren't) and avoid most meat and animal products. This is more of a measuring stick than a requirement on paper, and some Orthodox bishops are concerned that new converts do not fast strictly. But, among people that observe fasting, most people go at least a notch or two closer than usual to a vegan diet. A little less than half the year has some fast or other, and the fast can be relaxed to some degree while still being observed. There are seasons of fasting, as well as days of the week.

What I realized in relation to fasting is that I hadn't expected what fasting would really do. Giving up some of my favorite tastes was obvious, and I experienced that. But craving meat and not giving into that craving came up, and I don't know that I consciously expected that, but it didn't surprise me. What did surprise me was consciousness, or more properly the effect it had on my consciousness.

Fasting quiets sinful habits and makes it easier to fight them. But at the same time, it drains energy and puts your mind in a fog. I have reason to believe that's not the final effect, that your body responds differently over time, but fasting affects different people somewhat differently, and the effect on me is quite strong.

What I realized, that animal rights activists will not tell you, was that the main difference in giving up meat (temporarily or permanently) is not the taste; it's not even really the craving, even if you fight a strong craving. It's consciousness, and when one friend said he was going to cut meat mostly out of his diet as he married his mostly vegetarian fiancée, I strongly urged him to monitor his state of consciousness.

Why I'm glad I can't eat Splenda

When I eat more than a little Splenda, it makes me sick—nothing life-threatening or anything like that; I don't need a medical alert bracelet. But Splenda doesn't agree with me. If I eat a little, nothing happens. If I eat a bit more than that, I feel mildly sick. If I eat a lot, not only will I feel sick but nature will call with a louder-than-usual voice.

It's a shame, really. Every other artificial sweetener I've tried doesn't taste right; it tastes like something that's meant to taste like sugar, but fails. Splenda tastes like sugar's cousin come in for substitute duty, instead of complete strangers dressed up to vaguely resemble sugar. And I'm not the only person who likes the taste.

Actually, I don't think it's a shame at all. Perhaps it has

its downsides: I suddenly can't eat most desserts, because at least where I buy desserts it's hard to find a dessert sweetened with real, honest sugar. If you can't eat Splenda, you can't eat most desserts. And perhaps I will have to turn down more than a tiny serving of some hand-cooked desert made by the friend I am visiting. But there's something to real, honest sugar, and it betrays something about Splenda.

A couple of friends in Kenya sent a newsletter trying to explain to the Western mind that people value a ring of oil as evidence of a stew's richness, that bread lists its calories as how much energy it provides for hard work, and they underscored that the calorie is a unit of energy. This is a totally different attitude from in the U.S., when calories count as strikes against food.

It is also a healthier attitude, which underscores that food is eaten to nourish the body. Now God, in his generosity, has made it a pleasure as well, but we don't need the pleasure, and we do need the nutrition (i.e. nourishment).

Splenda represents an effort to sever the link between eating and nourishment. It may be physically healthier to eat one ice cream bar sweetened with Splenda than with sugar, but it is not spiritually healthier, and there may be hidden consequences to the message, "I can eat and eat and not get fat." Not only is that bad for the spirit, in that it causes you to fall short of the full stature of being human. If you think about it, it may end up being bad for the waistline.

Splenda is, in short, a very attractive invitation to become a moral eunuch.

In contrast to this, I remember a plaque with a picture of a pig, which said, "Eat to live. Don't live to eat." It is the same mindset as Richard Foster saying (I think quoting someone), "Hang the fashions. Buy only what you need." Maybe he was talking about clothes, but it applies to foods too.

A private response

I try to eat animal products and meat, as much as are necessary for me be able to function. Unfortunately, I've found that I need a lot to function, partly for medical reasons. When I am receiving hospitality, I eat freely from what is offered to me; when I buy food, I buy a lot of beef, tuna, and chocolate soy milk. I try to get the minimum I need to function, and to take as much as I can from the lowest end of the cruelty scale. (I try. Sometimes I eat more than I need.) I also try to avoid wasting food and *really* try to avoid wasting meat—if it bothers me to see a pig raised in cruelty so I can eat a pork chop, it would be even worse for that pork chop to be thrown into the trash.

But there's something wrong with that. I don't mean that I chose the wrong private response to this dilemma. I think that as far as private responses go, it's at least tolerable. Perhaps other people have chosen different responses, and maybe it could be better, but the problem is that it is a private response in the first place.

PETA, officially "People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals" and labelled by some as "People Eating Tasty Animals," tend to be the sort of people Rush Limbaugh would have lampooned when he wanted to give the impression that all liberals were crackpots. They made a gruesome TV commercial telling children to run from their fisherman fathers, apparently for much the same reason you'd run from a serial killer. They've probably done quite a lot that will prevent moderates and conservatives from taking animal welfare concerns seriously. But there is one area in which they are perfectly rational.

If, as they believe, meat is literally murder, and if, as they believe, imprisoning animals under lifelong conditions of misery is morally equivalent to imprisoning humans under lifelong conditions of misery, then it is entirely inappropriate to say "I'll privately choose to be a vegan and you can privately eat your meat, and we can disagree

without being disagreeable." Whatever else they may have wrong, what they have right is that society's default placement for the matter, of private decisions where people exercise their own private judgment on what if any dietary restrictions it may be. If they are completely wrong, and there is nothing wrong with veal, then maybe they have a private right to eat as if their erroneous beliefs are true, but if substantial parts of their claims are true, even the claims I have made, then there are real problems with the way American culture frames it.

I think I'm going to have to leave this approach "depricated without replacement"; I don't see anything better that could believably replace it.

An animal lover

I've been told I'm good with animals. I certainly love pets, other peoples' as well as my own: when I visit certain friends, I usually have a pet on my lap.

There was one point when a friend was moving into the area, and (for reasons I don't understand) asked me to stay with her dog, who was afraid of men. (Even though there were women in the group of friends who had come to help her.) At the beginning, it was very clear that the dog was nervous about being at the other end of a leash from me. But after half an hour, the dog's head was in my lap as I petted him, and when the group came, he was jumping up and down and wanted to meet the men as well as the women in the group. Part of what happened was because I knew how to approach slowly and let an animal get used to me, but part of it was probably something else.

That is probably the most exotic, or at least most impressive, story I can muster about my being good with animals. If I visit friends with pets, I usually ask to see the pets. And I believe my family's warm atmosphere is part of why our cat is nineteen years old and still catches mice. This is *not* to say that we love our cat more than one friend,

whose dog was hit by a car, or another friend, whose dog died of cancer. But it is to say that she might not have lived nearly so long if we merely gave her food and water, and that when she was attacked and was found curled up and not moving, she desperately needed a vet's attention, but I'm not sure she would have pulled through if she didn't have the love and prayers she received. (As it is, we are delighted that she pulled through and is back to being her old sweet self.)

When I left to study, I moved to an apartment where pets were not allowed—not dogs, not goldfish. (And even if they were allowed, I wouldn't want to buy a pet that I wasn't reasonably confident I could care for properly with vacations, moves, etc. I wouldn't want to put a pet to sleep because it was no longer convenient to me.) So, I thought, I knew the perfect creative solution. I would buy a Furby—a furry stuffed animal that talks and moves, due to the technology inside. (In other words, a pet that wouldn't make messes or upset the powers that be.)

So I tried to convince myself that I could enjoy it as a pet, and for a while I thought I was successful: the Furby spoke its own language, and I learned a few words, being fond of languages. It would respond to my commands at least some of the time. The perfect pet for my situation... and it took a while before I acknowledged that there was something creepy about it. It wasn't creepy when it just stood there, looking like a stuffed animal and adding color to my room. But when it opened and closed its eyes, the technology seemed different from what I was expected. It almost seemed like the unnatural un-life of a vampire. I knew, of course, that it would run according to technology, and having done a master's thesis about artificial intelligence running into a brick wall, I knew that it wouldn't be truly intelligent. Yet I didn't count on the creep effect. Now the Furby stands as a decoration in my room, one I like looking at. But it isn't really to conserve battery power that I don't activate it very often. I recognize it as an

impressive technical achievement, but not as a pet.

There's a spark of something that is there in a real animal that isn't there in a robot dressed in a stuffed animal costume, and it was driven home to me when I tried to pretend that it didn't make a difference. There is something special about existing, and there is something more special about living as a plant does, and something about the moving force that is an animal. Something that I can enjoy when I am with pets.

What is the point of this? Am I saying that being an animal lover is an obligation? No. I do not believe that the minimum acceptable requirement is being an animal lover. I don't think there is any moral imperative to learn how to deal with animals or have the faintest desire for a pet. But I would say that it is part of the spectrum of things that are acceptable. Not everyone needs to be a big animal lover, but it is an appropriate exercise of freedom. Not everyone needs to be a wine aficionado, but it makes sense to savor subtle differences in flavor and aroma for good wines that doesn't make sense with Mountain Dew. Slowly savoring a tiny taste of different years of Mouton Cadet rouge is not incongruous; slowly savoring a tiny taste of different years of Mountain Dew is absurd. It might me good for making a delightful lampoon of wine snobs, but Mountain Dew does not merit a treatment ordinarily reserved for wine. For the same reason, there is something that fits about luxuriating on a waterbed that does not fit about trying to luxuriate and savor a sleeping bag on a hard floor. There is no moral obligation to seek out a waterbed or even a bed, but there's a difference between a waterbed and a floor. Similar things could be said about painting with oil paints versus trying to paint with SAE 10W-40 motor oil. There's something there to animals that means that they make much better pets than shampoo bottles, so that being an animal lover is a fitting response whether or not it is a moral obligation. And that "something there" is present whether or not you are an animal lover.

There's something there. The "something there" of animals undergirds the possibility of people enjoying pets as some of us do, a "something there" that is not human and is less than humanity, but is something more than almost anything else in nature. There is also "something more" than machinery, and while there are not ethical problems about cruelty in how we treat machinery, there is a dimension to a farm animal that isn't there for economic assets in general. That means that there are ethical concerns surrounding meat and animal products even after some of us acknowledge that God has given us authority to slaughter his creatures.

Animal rights activists tend to think animal rights means treating animal rights as human. When people have treated me as human, they have given me a bedroom and made other rooms available. They have spent time with me, and made good food available—not raw unless there was good reason to serve it raw. They have given me Christmas presents and a million other signs of respect that animals do not merit. If I looked at things in terms of rights (I don't), I would draw a much narrower and much more modest list of rights for animals: being part of a herd, moving about out doors, seeing sunlight during the day, and so on. Nothing about beds and cooked foods, but treated like an animal, which is much less than being treated as human, but it's also different from being treated like a mere piece of machinery.

This leaves loose ends untied. I haven't explained why the breeding that went into the breed of 96% of turkeys sold in America (which causes an ungodly amount of meat to grow on a skeleton and beast that really aren't built to carry anywhere *near* that much weight—imagine the frame of a compact car supporting the bulk and weight of a full-fledged SUV) is cruel, and the breeding of housecats (which also introduces profound changes that some animal rights activists call out-and-out cruel) is appropriate stewardship with regard to God's creation. And this article is dense

enough without exploring all of those. Environmentally conscious readers may not be pleased to note that my ranking of cruelty encourages people to buy foods that have some of the worst environmental footprint—a pound of beef is said to require 4000 gallons of our scarce water. You can make meat with less impact on the environment if you are willing to cut corners, not only economically but morally. But I would argue that cruelty concerns are heavier than even environmental. And those are presumably not the only loose ends I've left. But there are a couple of points I would like to underscore.

First, thinking in terms of "raw material" is inappropriate. Destruction may be justified, but if so it is justified destruction of items that have something to them besides what economic use we might be able to find. The whole system of factory farming treats animals as mere economic assets who cannot suffer or whose suffering is not as important as making the most money. That causes terrible, usually lifelong suffering. Cruelty to animals matters.

Second, cause as much cruelty as you need to, but not more. Try to have the lightest footprint that doesn't cause trouble to you—trouble meaning something more than "A cheese and bacon omelet would really hit the spot." (In my case trouble meant difficulty concentrating on my studies, and since then I've learned what my body can handle.) Eat to live. Don't live to eat. Remember that not all foods are created equal. Aside from soy, organic animal products and meat, and sea-caught fish and seafood are by far the least cruel; beef is more cruel than these, but *less* cruel than animal products like milk, cheese, and eggs; dairy and other animal products are less cruel than most meats, including turkey, pork, chicken, and especially veal. If you are eating meat because it tastes good and not because your body needs its nutrition and energy, that is unnecessary.

Third, caring about the living conditions of farm animals has been framed as a liberal thing. That may be

because there's a problem which arose, and liberals have been better at waking up to something conservatives should have been noticing. If you are dubious of my credentials as a conservative, I invite you to read *Our Food from God*, published in a Christian journal that argues long and hard against even the more moderate forms of feminism. It's not just liberals who have a strong moral ground to criticize factory farming. It's just that liberals have been quicker to wake up and say, "Houston, we have a problem."

Seeing animals only as financial assets whose suffering is not important, instead of God's treasures which may be judiciously destroyed but have value independent of their economic usefulness, is the same basic error as seeing a person in terms of financial worth. The error is more grievous in seeing a person in terms of money, but that same basic error—as opposed to keeping a light footprint and trying to keep to justified destruction—has caused terrible animal suffering. Consider ways in which you might limit suffering you cause, and consider emailing a friend a link to cjshayward.com/meat/. And maybe visit the store locator for Whole Paycheck, er, Whole Foods.

On Mentorship

The specific principles which I see as applicable to mentorship are as follows:

- Love is the foundation to all healthy human relationships. The mentoring relationship is first and foremost a human relationship, and will function best if it is a relationship between whole persons built on love and friendship.
- Effective teaching in that context begins, not with the mentor talking, but listening. There are at least three reasons for this:
 - Listening is valuable in and of itself.
 - When a person is listened to, it helps him to trust and open up. This will help the teacher to gain a very important trust in instructing the student.
 - It will give the mentor a basis to connect with the student, and tailor messages to him.

- Beauty is forged in the eye of the beholder. A willing student can be powerfully shaped by a mentor who looks at him and sees him, not merely as he is, but as he will become.
- Effective mentoring is not only teaching of one specific area, but first and foremost a teaching about life. It is teaching of life and wisdom in such a way as to usually take the form of a kind of specific lesson.
- The mentor should approach the relationship as being for the student's benefit, and only incidentally for his own. He should be willing to do things that are difficult for him, and he should be happy for the student's success — even (especially) when the student does better than him, or catches him in error.
- The mentor should not only be concerned with imparting knowledge, but more importantly concerned with helping the student to think and use knowledge effectively.
- The mentor should not be trying to clone himself or make the student an extension of himself. He should try to help the student be the person God created him to be, not who the mentor wants to be or in fantasy would selfishly like him to be.
- The student should not be passive, regarding the mentorship as something which is done to him. He should regard it as a resource to take advantage of in his efforts to actively learn. He should take responsibility on himself for his own progress. He should concentrate on actively listening, and asking intelligent questions. The student should be like Prometheus, looking for every opportunity to steal

knowledge from his teacher.

- Both parties should work hard — not asking "Can this work?", but "How will we make this work?" Persistent in making things work, the mentor should none the less vary his methods of explanation, like water flowing down a hill — it *will* get around obstacles, and it does so by flowing around and through them, which is in turn accomplished by adapting its shape to whatever there is, and thereby slipping around obstacles that would stop a rolling rock.

[N.B. The following segment refers to the following joke/story, recounted in Reader's Digest:

A professor believed that his students were mindlessly copying too much of his lectures instead of thinking and then writing down key points. One day in class, he interrupted his lecture and said, "Stop. I want you to put down your pens and pencils and listen to me. You are not here to transcribe my lectures. You are here to think first and foremost, and only then to write down the essence of what I am saying. You don't have to write down every word I say verbatim. Now, any questions?"

One student raised her hand. "Yes?" "How do you spell 'verbatim'?"]

- A rare but important part of teaching is shattering limits on the way a person is thinking ("How do you spell 'verbatim'?"). This should never be done lightly

or as a first approach, nor should it be done carelessly or insensitively. It needs to be done with the utmost care, and is probably very difficult to do well. That stated, a mentor does a student no service by helping him to write down an hour's worth of requests to stop writing and start thinking.

- Metacognitive thought is important both for mentor and apprentice. The mentor should be thinking about both his own thought and the student's, and when the student isn't hearing what the mentor is saying, the mentor should ask, "How am I thinking? How is he thinking? Why are we not connecting?" — but he should primarily be concerned for the student's thought. The student should be thinking about both people's thought as well — the mentor's, because it is an example of how an expert thinks, and his own, because if he understands how he is thinking he will be better prepared to transcend his current limits. Both of them should expect the other to periodically have an alien insight to share that won't fit in their present mindsets.
- The mentor should be emotionally intelligent, and be sensitive to the emotions and emotional needs of the student. If the student is not in the right emotional state, learning will be almost impossible. We are not just pure, emotionless minds, and we can be far more effective if we care for emotions and use them than if we act as if emotions were not a serious part of us. If either person is not able to give full attention, a meeting should be either shortened or postponed.
- The mentor, precisely because he is a unique leader, should take the attitude of a servant to the student, just as Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

- The mentor should realize that the lesson he is teaching is first, who he is; second, what he does; third, what he says. The mentor should model an excitement and interest in the material, and focus less on what to think than how to think. He should also model before the student effective human relationships with other people.
- In the beginning especially, the mentor should not deluge the apprentice with information. Assimilating new and foreign information — particularly when you don't have a framework to put things into — is hard, and overloading a student prevents him from learning anything. A mentor should begin by asking questions of the student, trying to understand him better, and only slowly ease into talking about philosophical frameworks and then details of the subject area of the mentoring.
- The mentor and eventually the student should know not only their cognitive strengths, but at least as importantly their cognitive weaknesses — both those that are part of being human, and those that are specific to a person. Code Complete (referenced below) says that there is a tenfold productivity difference made when programmers use principles and techniques grounded in a respect for cognitive weaknesses.
- The mentor should be an expert in his field, and should also be continuing to learn and do research. Graduation is not the end of learning, but a beginning of a new kind of learning.
- The mentor should help the student to put the day's lessons into practice. The student should be asking

the question, "How can I apply this? How can I practice it?" Homework will help the student to learn, although perhaps shouldn't be started until the mentor has earned the student's trust and the student is motivated to use homework assignments to squeeze every last benefit out of time with the mentor.

- The student should be safe and free to make mistakes, for a couple of reasons. First, if he isn't making at least some mistakes, he probably isn't being challenged enough or learning enough new material. Second, a mistake is a tremendous educational opportunity. It provides a unique insight into the student's thought, and therefore should be treasured, grasped, analyzed.
- There is no quick fix. The most effective (and, for that matter, even the fastest) way to get results is to work slowly, patiently, unhurriedly towards achieving mastery. There is often a tradeoff between optimizing for short term and long term effectiveness; patiently working for long term payoffs will ultimately produce the highest dividends.

I will also mention several books which provide a backdrop to my comments, three that I would strongly recommend and four that I would suggest:

Strongly Recommended:

- The Bible. That has provided the theological and philosophical grounding to my thought as a whole; it gives the structure/meta-structure which I fit the other points into. (This is the most important, but it is not necessary to read cover to cover before

beginning anything. Fifteen or thirty minutes a day will add up to a lot if continued for a couple years.) Particularly relevant passages that come to mind are Matthew 5-7 (the Sermon on the Mount), I Cor. 13 (the hymn to love), much of the Johannine writings (esp. John 13-17), and certain areas of Proverbs.

- *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. A classic.
- *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Although much of the influence it deals with is persuasive in character, the same principles apply to the kind of influence necessary to effectively mentor.

Suggested:

- *Listening, A Practical Approach*. Probably one among many books on listening, this deals with an extremely valuable and neglected area of communication.
- *Emotional Intelligence*. We are not pure minds, and we can cripple ourselves terribly if we do not handle our emotions effectively. If we do, they will help us greatly.
- *Code Complete: A Practical Handbook of Software Construction*. In computer science, most of the programming materials talk about how to effectively use computers, taking advantage of their strengths and dealing with their weaknesses, to get a computer to do something. This book talks about how to effectively use your mind, taking advantage of its strengths and dealing with its weaknesses, to get a computer to do something. The kind of thinking involved is applicable far beyond computer science.

- Gandhi's writings. I could mention specific chapters in what I've read, but I will say that there is a general theme of spiritual force instead of physical force, and the spiritual force which he advocates (which helped him to turn bitter enemies into warm friends) has tremendous relevance to mentorship. In *Autobiographical Reflections*, in a chapter entitled "Ahimse or the way of nonviolence", he comments that when a parent slaps a child, what affects the child is not so much the sting of the slap, as the offended love which lies behind that slap.

An Orthodox Looks at a Calvinist Looking at Orthodoxy

Jack Kinneer, an Orthodox Presbyterian minister and a D.Min. graduate of an Eastern Orthodox seminary, wrote a series of dense responses to his time at that seminary. The responses are generally concise, clear, and make the kind of observations that I like to make. My suspicion is that if Dr. Kinneer is looking at things this way, there are a lot of other people who are looking at things the same way—but may not be able to put their finger on it. And he may have given voice to some things that Orthodox may wish to respond to.

Orthodoxy is difficult to understand, and I wrote a list of responses to some (not all) of the points he raises. I asked New Horizons, which printed his article, and they offered gracious permission to post with attribution, which is much appreciated. I believe that Dr. Kinneer's words open a good conversation, and I am trying to worthily follow up on his lead.

A Calvinist Looks at Orthodoxy

Jack D. Kinneer

During my studies at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, I was often asked by students, "Are you Orthodox?" It always felt awkward to be asked such a question. I thought of myself as doctrinally orthodox. I was a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. So I thought I could claim the word *orthodox*.

But I did not belong to the communion of churches often called Eastern Orthodox, but more properly called simply Orthodox. I was not Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, or Antiochian Orthodox. As far as the Orthodox at St. Vladimir's were concerned, I was not Orthodox, regardless of my agreement with them on various doctrines.

My studies at St. Vladimir's allowed me to become acquainted with Orthodoxy and to become friends with a number of Orthodox professors, priests, and seminarians. My diploma was even signed by Metropolitan Theodosius, the head of the Orthodox Church in America. From the Metropolitan to the seminarians, I was received kindly and treated with respect and friendliness.

I am not the only Calvinist to have become acquainted with Orthodoxy in recent years. Sadly, a number have not only made the acquaintance, but also left the Reformed faith for Orthodoxy. What is Orthodoxy and what is its appeal to some in the Reformed churches?

The Appeal of Orthodoxy

Since the days of the apostles, there have been Christian communities in such ancient cities as Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Syria, and Corinth in Greece. In such places, the Christian church grew, endured the tribulation of Roman persecution, and ultimately prevailed when the Roman Empire was officially converted to Christianity. But, unlike Christians in the western half of the Roman Empire, the eastern Christians did not submit to the claims of the bishop of Rome to be the earthly head of the entire church. And why should they have done so? The centers of Orthodox Christianity were as old as, or even older than, the church in Rome. All the great ecumenical councils took place in the East and were attended overwhelmingly by Christian leaders from the East, with only a smattering of representatives from the West. Indeed, most of the great theologians and writers of the ancient church (commonly called the Church Fathers) were Greek-speaking Christians in the East.

The Orthodox churches have descended in an unbroken succession of generations from these ancient roots. As the Orthodox see it, the Western church followed the bishop of Rome into schism (in part by adding a phrase to the Nicene Creed). So, from their perspective, we Protestants are the product of a schism off a schism. The Orthodox believe that they have continued unbroken the churches founded by the apostles. They allow that we Reformed may be Christians, but our churches are not part of the true church, our ordinations are not valid, and our sacraments are no sacraments at all.

The apparently apostolic roots of Orthodoxy provide much of its appeal for some evangelical Protestants. Furthermore, it is not burdened with such

later Roman Catholic developments as the Papacy, purgatory, indulgences, the immaculate conception of Mary, and her assumption into heaven. Orthodoxy is ancient; it is unified in a way that Protestantism is not; it lacks most of the medieval doctrines and practices that gave rise to the Reformation. This gives it for many a fascinating appeal.

Part of that appeal is the rich liturgical heritage of Orthodoxy, with its elaborate liturgies, its glorious garbing of the clergy, and its gestures, symbols, and icons. If it is true that the distinctive mark of Reformed worship is simplicity, then even more so is glory the distinctive mark of Orthodox worship. Another appealing aspect of Orthodox worship is its otherness. It is mysterious, sensual, and, as the Orthodox see it, heavenly. Orthodox worship at its best makes you feel like you have been transported into one of the worship scenes in the book of Revelation. Of course, if the priest chants off-key or the choir sings poorly, it is not quite so wonderful.

There are many other things that could be mentioned, but I've mentioned the things that have particularly struck me. These are also the things that converts from Protestantism say attracted them.

The Shortcomings of Orthodoxy

So then, is this Orthodox Presbyterian about to drop the "Presbyterian" and become simply Orthodox? No! In my estimation, the shortcomings of Orthodoxy outweigh its many fascinations. A comparison of the Reformed faith with the Orthodox faith would be a massive undertaking, made all the more difficult because Orthodoxy has no doctrinal statement comparable to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Orthodoxy is the consensus of faith arising from the ancient Fathers and the ecumenical councils. This

includes the forty-nine volumes of the Ante- and Post-Nicene Fathers, plus the writings of the hermits and monastics known collectively as the Desert Fathers! It would take an entire issue of *New Horizons* just to outline the topics to be covered in a comparison of Orthodoxy and Reformed Christianity. So the following comments are selective rather than systematic.

First, in my experience, the Orthodox do not understand justification by faith. Some reject it. Others tolerate it, but no one I met or read seemed to really understand it. Just as Protestants can make justification the whole (rather than the beginning) of the gospel, so the Orthodox tend to make sanctification (which they call "theosis" or deification) the whole gospel. In my estimation, this is a serious defect. It weakens the Orthodox understanding of the nature of saving faith.

Orthodoxy also has a real problem with nominal members. Many Orthodox Christians have a very inadequate understanding of the gospel as Orthodoxy understands it. Their religion is often so intertwined with their ethnicity that being Russian or Greek becomes almost synonymous with being Orthodox. This is, by the way, a critique I heard from the lips of Orthodox leaders themselves. This is not nearly as serious a problem in Reformed churches because our preaching continually stresses the necessity for a personal, intimate trusting, receiving, and resting upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Such an emphasis is blurred among the Orthodox.

Second, the Orthodox have a very inadequate understanding of sovereign grace. It is not fair to say that they are Pelagians. (Pelagius was a Western Christian who denied original sin and taught that man's will is free to choose good.) But they are definitely not Augustinians (Calvinists) on sin and

grace. In a conversation with professors and doctoral students about the nature of salvation, I quoted Ezekiel 36:26-27 as showing that there is a grace of God that precedes faith and enables that human response. One professor said in response, "I never thought of that verse in that way before." The Orthodox have not thought a lot about sin, regeneration, election, and so forth. Their view of original sin (a term which they avoid) falls far short of the teaching of Paul. Correspondingly, their understanding of Christ's atonement and God's calling is weak as well. Their views could best be described as undeveloped. If you want to see this for yourself, read Chrysostom on John 6:44-45, and then read Calvin on the same passage.

Third, the Orthodox are passionately committed to the use of icons (flat images of Christ, Mary, or a saint) in worship. Indeed, the annual Feast of Orthodoxy celebrates the restoration of icons to the churches at the end of the Iconoclast controversy (in a.d. 843). For the Orthodox, the making and venerating of icons is the mark of Orthodoxy—showing that one really believes that God the Son, who is consubstantial with the Father, became also truly human. Since I did not venerate icons, I was repeatedly asked whether or not I really believed in the Incarnation. The Orthodox are deeply offended at the suggestion that their veneration of icons is a violation of the second commandment. But after listening patiently to their justifications, I am convinced that whatever their intentions may be, their practice is not biblical. However, our dialogue on the subject sent me back to the Bible to study the issue in a way that I had not done before. The critique I would offer now is considerably different than the traditional Reformed critique of the practice.

Finally, many of the Orthodox tend to have a lower view of the Bible than the ancient Fathers had. At least

at St. Vladimir's, Orthodox scholars have been significantly influenced by higher-critical views of Scripture, especially as such views have developed in contemporary Roman Catholic scholarship. This is, however, a point of controversy among the Orthodox, just as it is among Catholics and Protestants. Orthodoxy also has its divisions between liberals and conservatives. But even those who are untainted by higher-critical views rarely accord to Scripture the authority that it claims for itself or which was accorded to it by the Fathers. The voice of Scripture is largely limited to the interpretations of Scripture found in the Fathers.

There is much else to be said. Orthodoxy is passionately committed to monasticism. Its liturgy includes prayers to Mary. And the Divine Liturgy, for all its antiquity, is the product of a long historical process. If you want to follow the "liturgy" that is unquestionably apostolic, then partake of the Lord's Supper, pray the Lord's Prayer, sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," and say "amen," "hallelujah," and "maranatha." Almost everything else in any liturgy is a later adaptation and development.

A Concluding Assessment

But these criticisms do not mean that we have nothing to learn from Orthodoxy. Just as the Orthodox have not thought a lot about matters that have consumed us (such as justification, the nature of Scripture, sovereign grace, and Christ's work on the cross), so we have not thought a lot about what have been their consuming passions: the Incarnation, the meaning of worship, the soul's perfection in the communicable attributes of God (which they call the energies of God), and the disciplines by which we grow in grace. Let us have the maturity to keep the faith as

we know it, and to learn from others where we need to learn.

Orthodoxy in many ways fascinates me, but it does not claim my heart nor stir my soul as does the Reformed faith. My firsthand exposure to Orthodoxy has left me all the more convinced that on the essential matters of human sin, divine forgiveness, and Christ's atoning sacrifice, the Reformed faith is the biblical faith. I would love to see my Orthodox friends embrace a more biblical understanding of these matters. And I am grieved when Reformed friends sacrifice this greater good for the considerable but lesser goods of Orthodox liturgy and piety.

Dr. Kinneer is the director of Echo Hill Christian Study Center in Indian Head, Pa.

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I wrote the following reply:

Dear Dr. Kinneer;

First, on an Orthodox mailing list, I saw a copy of your "A Calvinist Looks at Orthodoxy." I would like to write a somewhat measured response that you might find of interest; please quote me if you like, preferably with attribution and a link to my website (**cjshayward.com**). I am a convert Orthodox and a graduate of Calvin College, for which I have fond memories, although I was never a Calvinist, merely a non-Calvinist Evangelical welcomed in the warm embrace of the community. I am presently a Ph.D. student in theology and went to church for some time

at St. Vladimir's Seminary and have friends there. I hope that you may find something of interest in my comments here.

Second, you talk about discussion of being Eastern Orthodox versus being orthodox. I would take this as a linguistically confusing matter of the English language, where even in spoken English the context clarifies whether (o)rthodox or (O)rthodox is the meaning intended by the speaker.

Third, I will be focusing mostly on matters I where I would at least suggest some further nuance, but your summary headed "The Appeal of Orthodoxy," among other things in the article, is a good sort of thing and the sort of thing I might find convenient to quote.

Fourth, the Orthodox consensus of faith is not a much longer and less manageable collection of texts than the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, combined with the even more massive *Patrologia Graecae*, and other patristic sources. I have said elsewhere that Western and particularly Protestant and Evangelical culture are at their core written cultures, and Orthodoxy is at its core an oral culture that makes use of writing—I could suggest that it was precisely the Reformation that is at the root of what we now know as literate culture. This means that Orthodoxy does not have, as its closest equivalent to the Westminster Confession, a backbreaking load of books that even patristic scholars can't read cover to cover; it means that *the closest Orthodox equivalent to Westminster Confession is not anything printed but something alive in the life and culture of the community*. (At very least this is true if you exclude the Nicene Creed, which is often considered "what Orthodox are supposed to believe.")

Fifth, regarding the words, "First, in my experience, the Orthodox do not understand justification by faith:" are you contending that former Evangelicals, who had an Evangelical understanding of justification by faith, were probably fairly devout Evangelicals, and are well-

represented at St. Vladimir's Seminary, do not understand justification by faith?

There seems to be something going on here that is a mirror image of what you say below about icons: there, you complain about people assuming that if you don't hold the Orthodox position on icons, you don't understand the Christian doctrine of the incarnation; here, you seem in a mirror image to assume that if people don't have a Reformation-compatible understanding of justification by faith, you don't understand the Biblical teaching.

I wrote, for a novella I'm working on, *The Sign of the Grail*, a passage where the main character, an Evangelical, goes to an Orthodox liturgy, hears amidst the mysterious-sounding phrases a reading including "The just shall walk by faith," before the homily:

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

One of the surprises in the *Divine Comedy*—to a few people at least—is that the Pope is in Hell. Or at least it's a surprise to people who know Dante was a devoted Catholic but don't recognize how good Patriarch John Paul and Patriarch Benedict have been; there have been some moments Catholics aren't proud of, and while Luther doesn't speak for Catholics today, he did put his finger on a lot of things that bothered people then. Now I remember an exasperated Catholic friend asking, "Don't some Protestants know anything else about the Catholic Church *besides* the problems we had in the sixteenth century?" And when Luther made a centerpiece out of what the Bible said about "The righteous shall walk by faith," which was in the Bible's readings today, he changed it, chiefly by using it as a battle axe to attack his opponents and even things he didn't like in Scripture.

It's a little hard to see how Luther changed Paul, since in Paul the words are also a battle axe against

legalistic opponents. Or at least it's hard to see directly. Paul, too, is quoting, and I'd like to say exactly what Paul is quoting.

In one of the minor prophets, Habakkuk, the prophet calls out to the Lord and decries the wickedness of those who should be worshiping the Lord. The Lord's response is to say that he's sending in the Babylonians to conquer, and if you want to see some really gruesome archaeological findings, look up what it meant for the Babylonians or Chaldeans to conquer a people. I'm not saying what they did to the people they conquered because I don't want to leave people here trying to get disturbing images out of people's minds, but this was a terrible doomsday prophecy.

The prophet answered the Lord in anguish and asked how a God whose eyes were too pure to look on evil could possibly punish his wicked people by the much more wicked Babylonians. And the Lord's response is very mysterious: "The righteous shall walk by faith."

Let me ask you a question: How is this an answer to what the prophet asked the Lord? Answer: It isn't. It's a refusal to answer. The same thing could have been said by saying, "I AM the Lord, and my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are my ways your ways. I AM WHO I AM and *I will do what I will do*, and I am sovereign in this. I choose not to tell you how, in my righteousness, I choose to let my wicked children be punished by the gruesomely wicked Babylonians. Only know this: even in these conditions, the righteous shall walk by faith."

The words "The righteous shall walk by faith" are an enigma, a shroud, and a protecting veil. To use them as Paul did is a legitimate use of authority, an authority that can only be understood from the inside, but these words remain a protecting veil even as they

take on a more active role in the New Testament. The New Testament assumes the Old Testament even as the New Testament unlocks the Old Testament.

Paul does not say, "The righteous will walk by sight," even as he invokes the words, "The righteous shall walk by faith."

Here's something to ponder: The righteous shall walk by faith even in their understanding of the words, "The righteous shall walk by faith."

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

When I showed this to one Reformation scholar to check my treatment of the Reformation, he said that I didn't explain what "The righteous shall walk by faith," but my entire point was to show what the Old Testament quotation could mean *besides* a shibboleth that one is sanctified in entirety in response to faith without one iota being earned by good works. The Reformation teaching, as I understand it, reflects a subtle adaptation of the Pauline usage—and here I might underscore that Paul and Luther had different opponents—and a profound adaptation of the Old Testament usage. And it may be possible to properly understand the Biblical text without interpreting it along Reformation lines.

Sixth, you write that Orthodox tend to have a poor understanding of sovereign grace. I remember how offended my spiritual Father was when I shared that a self-proclaimed non-ordained Reformed minister—the one person who harassed me when I became Orthodox—said that Orthodox didn't believe in grace. He wasn't offended at me, but I cannot ever recall seeing him be more offended. (Note: that harassment was a bitter experience, but I'd really like to think I'm not bitter towards Calvinists; I have a lot of fond memories from my time at Calvin and some excellent memories of friends who tended to be born and bred Calvinists.)

I would suggest that if you can say that Orthodox do not understand sovereign grace shortly after talking about a heavy emphasis on theosis, you are thinking about Orthodox doctrine through a Western grid and are missing partly some details and partly the big picture of how things fit together.

Seventh, I am slightly surprised that you describe original sin as simply being in the Bible and something Orthodox do not teach. Rom 5:12 as translated in the Vulgate ("...in quo omnes peccaverunt") has a Greek ambiguity translated out, so that a Greek text that could quite justifiably be rendered that death came into the world "because all sinned" (NIV) is unambiguously rendered as saying about Adam, "in whom all have sinned," which in turn fed into Augustine's shaping of the Western doctrine of original sin. It's a little surprising to me that you present this reading of an ambiguity as simply being what the Bible says, so that the Orthodox are deficiently presenting the Bible by not sharing the reading.

Eighth, I too was puzzled by the belief that the Incarnation immediately justifies icons, and I find it less puzzling to hold a more nuanced understanding of the Orthodox teaching that if you understand the Incarnation on patristic terms—instead of by a Reformation definition—its inner logic flows out to the point of an embrace of creation that has room for icons. I won't develop proof-texts here; what I will say is that the kind of logical inference that is made is similar to a kind of logical inference I see in your report, i.e. that "The righteous shall walk by faith" means the Reformation doctrine that we are justified by faith alone and not by works.

I believe that this kind of reasoning is neither automatically right nor automatically wrong, but something that needs to be judged in each case.

Ninth, you write, "Finally, many of the Orthodox tend to have a lower view of the Bible than the ancient Fathers had." When I was about to be received into the Orthodox

Church, I told my father that I had been devoted in my reading of the Bible and I would switch to being devoted in my reading of the Fathers. My spiritual father, who is a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary, emphatically asked me to back up a bit, saying that the Bible was the core text and the Fathers were a commentary. He's said that he would consider himself very fortunate if his parishioners would spend half an hour a day reading the Bible. On an Orthodox mailing list, one cradle Orthodox believer among mostly converts quoted as emphatic an Orthodox clergyman saying, "If you don't read your Bible each day, you're not a Christian." Which I would take as exaggeration, perhaps, but exaggeration as a means of emphasizing something important.

Tenth, regarding higher-critical views at St. Vladimir's Seminary: I agree that it is a problem, but I would remind you of how St. Vladimir's Seminary and St. Tikhon's Seminary compare. St. Vladimir's Seminary is more liberal, and it is an excellent academic environment that gives degrees including an Orthodox M.Min. St. Tikhon's Seminary is academically much looser but it is considered an excellent preparation for ministry. If you saw some degree of liberal academic theology at St. Vladimir's, you are seeing the fruits of your (legitimate) selection. Not that St. Vladimir's Seminary is the only Orthodox seminary which is not completely perfect, but if you want to see preparation for pastoral ministry placed ahead of academic study at an Orthodox institution, St. Tikhon's might interest you.

Eleventh, after I was at Calvin, I remembered one friend, tongue-in-cheek, talking about "the person who led me to Calvin." I also remember that when I was at Calvin, I heard more talk about being "disciples of John Calvin" than being "disciples of Jesus Christ," and talk more about bearing the name of "Calvinist" than "Christian," although this time it wasn't tongue-in-cheek. I notice that you speak of how, "sadly," people "left the Reformed *faith* for

Orthodoxy." One response might be one that Reformers like Calvin might share: "Was John Calvin crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of John Calvin?" (Cf I Cor. 1:13)

I left this out at first because it's not as "nice" as some of the others, but I would like to invite you to perhaps leave the "faith" (as you call it) that aims for John Calvin, and embrace the faith that Calvin was trying to re-create in response to abuses in the Western Church. It's still alive, and we still have an open door for you.

A Postmodern-Influenced Conclusion

When I studied early modern era Orthodox Patriarch Cyril Lucaris, I compared the Eucharistic teaching in his profession of faith to the Eucharistic teaching in Calvin's Institutes...

...and concluded that Calvin was more Orthodox. Calvin, among other things, concerned himself with the question of what John Chrysostom taught.

I really don't think I was trying to be a pest. But what I did not develop is that Calvin tried to understand what the Greek Fathers taught, always as an answer to Protestant questions about what, in metaphysical terms, happens to the Holy Gifts. The Orthodox question is less about the transformation of the Holy Gifts than the transformation of those who receive it, and Calvin essentially let the Fathers say whatever they wanted... as long as they answered a question on terms set by the Reformation.

When I read Francis Schaeffer's *How Should We Then Live?*, my immediate reaction was that I wished the book had been "expanded to six times its present length." I have some reservations about the fruitfulness of presuppositional apologetics now. What I do not have reservations about is

saying that there is a valid insight in Schaeffer's approach, and more specifically there is distortion introduced by letting Orthodoxy say whatever it wants... as an answer to Calvinist questions.

To assert, without perceived need for justification, that the Orthodox have very little understanding of sovereign grace and follow this claim by saying that there is a preoccupation with divinization comes across to Orthodox much like saying, "_____ have very little concept of 'medicine' or 'health' and are always frequenting doctor's offices, pharmacies, and exercise clubs." It's a sign that Orthodox are allowed to fill in the details of sin, incarnation, justification, or (in this case) grace, but on condition that they are filling out the Reformation's unquestioned framework.

But the way to understand this is less analysis than worship.

Orthodoxy, Contraception, and Spin Doctoring: A Look at an Influential but Disturbing Article

The reason for writing: "Buried treasure?"

Computer programmers often need to understand why programs behave as they do, and there are times when one is trying to explain a puzzle by understanding the source, and meets an arresting surprise. Programmer slang for this is "buried treasure," politely defined as,

A surprising piece of code found in some program. While usually not wrong, it tends to vary from cruffy to bletcherous, and has lain undiscovered only because it was functionally correct, however horrible it is. Used sarcastically, because what is found is anything *but* treasure. Buried treasure almost always needs to be

dug up and removed. 'I just found that the scheduler sorts its queue using [the *mind-bogglingly* slow] bubble sort! Buried treasure!'"

What I have found has me wondering if I've discovered theological "buried treasure," that may actually be wrong. Although my analysis is not exhaustive, I have tried to provide two documents that relate to the (possible) "buried treasure:" one treating the specific issue, contraception, in patristic and modern times, and one commentary on the document I have found that may qualify as "buried treasure."

How to use this document

This document is broken into two parts besides this summary page.

The first part is taken from a paper written by an Orthodox grad student, with reference to Orthodoxy in patristic times and today. It sets a broad theological background, and provides the overall argument. One major conclusion is that one paper (Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90) is important in a troubling shift in Orthodox theology.

The second part, motivated by the understanding that Zaphiris's paper is worth studying *in toto*, is a relatively brief commentary on Zaphiris's paper. If the initial paper provides good reason to believe that Zaphiris's paper may be worth studying, then it may be valuable to see the actual text of his paper. The commentary can be skipped, but it is intended to allow the reader to know just why the author believes Zaphiris is so much worth studying.

It is anticipated that some readers will want to read the first section without poring over the second, even though the argument in the first section may motivate one to read

the second.

Why the fuss?

The Orthodox Church appears to have begun allowing contraception, after previously condemning it, around the time of an article (Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90) which may have given rise to the "new consensus." This article raises extremely serious concerns of questionable doctrine, questionable argument, and/or sophistry, and may be worth further studying.

A broader picture is portrayed in the earlier article about contraception as it appears in both patristic and modern views, which are profoundly different from each other.

Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward –
christos.hayward@gmail.com - cjsheyward.com

Patristic and Current Orthodoxy: on Contraception

Introduction

Patristic and contemporary Orthodoxy do not say exactly the same things about contraception. Any differences in what acts are permitted are less interesting than the contexts which are much more different than the differences that would show on a chart made to classify what acts are and are not formally permissible.

Much of what I attempt below looks at what is unquestionable today and asks, "How else could it be?"

After two sections comparing the Patristic and modern circumstances, one will be able to appreciate that one would need to cross several lines to want contraception in Patristic Christianity while today some find it hard to understand why the Orthodox Church is being so picky about contraception, I look at how these considerations may influence positions regarding contraception.

How are the Fathers valuable to us?

I assume that even when one criticizes Patristic sources, one is criticizing people who understand Christianity much better than we do, and I may provocatively say that the Fathers are most interesting, not when they eloquently give voice to our views, but precisely when they shock us. My interest in what seems shocking today is an interest in a cue to something big that we may be missing. This is for much the same reason scientists may say that the most exciting sound in science is not "Eureka," "I've found it," but "That's funny..." The reason for this enigmatic quote is that "Eureka" only announces the discovery of something one already knew to look for. "That's funny" is the hint that we may have tripped over something big that we didn't even know to look for, and may be so far outside of what we know we need that we try to explain it away. Such an intrusion—and it ordinarily feels like an *intrusion*—is difficult to welcome: hence the quotation attributed to Winston Churchill, "Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on."

Understanding Church Fathers on contraception can provide a moment of, "That's funny..."

The Patristic era

My aim in this section is not so much to suggest what views should be held, than help the reader see how certain things do not follow from other things self-evidently. I would point out that in the Patristic world, not only were there condemnations of contraception as such, but more deeply, I would suggest that there was a mindset where the idea of freeing the goodness of sexual pleasure from any onerous fecundity would seem to represent a fundamental confusion of ideas.

We may be selling both the Fathers and ourselves short if we say that neo-Platonic distrust of the body made them misconstrue sex as evil except as a necessary evil excused as a means to something else, the generation of children. The sword of this kind of dismissal can cut two ways: one could make a reductive argument saying that the ambient neo-Gnosticism of our own day follows classical forms of Gnosticism in hostility to bodily goods that values sex precisely as an experience and despite unwanted capacity to generate children, and so due to our Gnostic influence we cannot value sex except as a way of getting pleasure that is unfortunately encumbered by the possibility of generating children whether they are wanted or not. This kind of dismissal is easy to make, difficult to refute, and not the most helpful way of advancing discussion.

In the Patristic era, some things that many today experience as the only way to understand the goodness of creation do not follow quite so straightforwardly, in particular that goodness to sex has its center of gravity in the experience rather than the fecundity. To Patristic Christians, it was far from self-evident that sex as it exists after the Fall is good without ambivalence, and it is even further from self-evident that the goodness of sex (if its fallen form is considered unambiguously good) centers around the experience of pleasure in coitus. Some contemporaries did hold that sexual experience was good.

The goodness of sex consisted in the experience itself. Any generative consequences of the experience were evil, to be distanced from the experience. Gnostics in Irenaeus's day (John Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatments by Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, 57, 64. *Unfortunately, not only is there no recent work of Orthodox scholarship that is comparable to Noonan, but there is little to no good Orthodox scholarship on the topic at all!*), Manichees in the days of Augustine (Noonan 1986, 124.), and for that matter medieval Cathars (Noonan 1986, 181-3.) would hold to the goodness of sex precisely as an experience, combined with holding to the evil of procreation. (I will not analyze the similarities and differences to wanting pleasure unencumbered by children today.) Notwithstanding those heretics' positions, Christianity held a stance, fierce by today's standards, in which children were desirable for those who were married but "marriage" would almost strike many people today as celibacy with shockingly little interaction between the sexes (*including* husband and wife), interrupted by just enough sex to generate children (For a treatment of this phenomenon as it continued in the Middle Ages, see Philip Grace, *Aspects of Fatherhood in Thirteenth-Century Encyclopedias*, Western Michigan University master's thesis, 2005, chapter 3, "Genealogy of Ideas," 35-6.). Men and women, including husbands and wives, lived in largely separate worlds, and the framing of love antedated both the exaltations of courtly and companionate love without which many Westerners today have any frame by which to understand goodness in marriage (See Stephen Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*, Ann Arbor: Servant 1980, Chapter 18, for a contrast between traditional and technological society.).

I would like to look at two quotations, the first from Augustine writing against the Manichees, and the second as

an author today writes in reference to the first:

Is it not you who used to counsel us to observe as much as possible the time when a woman, after her purification, is most likely to conceive, and to abstain from cohabitation at that time, lest the soul should be entangled in flesh? This proves that you approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children. Therefore whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage, and makes the woman not a wife, but a mistress, who for some gifts presented to her is joined to the man to gratify his passion. Where there is a wife there must be marriage. But there is no marriage where motherhood is not in view; therefore neither is there a wife. In this way you forbid marriage. Nor can you defend yourselves successfully from this charge, long ago brought against you prophetically by the Holy Spirit (source; the Blessed Augustine is referring to I Tim 4:1-3).

There is irony here. "Natural family planning" is today sometimes presented as a fundamental opposite to artificial contraception. (The term refers to a calculated abstinence precisely at the point where a wife is naturally capable of the greatest desire, pleasure, and response.) Augustine here described natural family planning, as such, and condemns it in harsh terms. (I will discuss "natural family planning" in the next section. I would prefer to call it contraceptive timing for a couple of reasons.)

Note: There is some irony in calling "'Natural' Family Planning" making a set of mathematical calculations and deliberately avoiding intercourse at the times when a woman is naturally endowed with the greatest capacity for

desire, pleasure, and response.

Besides the immediate irony of Augustine criticizing the *form* of contraception to be heralded as "'Natural' Family Planning," (remember that "natural" family planning is a calculated abstinence when a wife is capable, naturally, of the greatest desire, pleasure, and response), Augustine's words are particularly significant because the method of contraception being discussed raised no question of contraception through recourse to the occult ("medicine man" *pharmakeia* potions) even in the Patristic world. There are various issues surrounding contraception: in the Patristic world, contraceptive and abortifascient potions were difficult to distinguish and were made by *pharmakoi* in whom magic and drugs were not sharply distinguished (Noonan 1986, 25.). But it would be an irresponsible reading to conclude from this that Patristic condemnations of contraceptive potions were only condemning them for magic, for much the same reason as it would be irresponsible to conclude that recent papal documents condemning the contraceptive mindset are only condemning selfishness and not making any statement about contraception as such. Patristic condemnations of contraception could be quite forceful (Noonan 1986, 91.), although what I want to explore is not so much the condemnations as the environment which partly gave rise to them:

[L]et us sketch a marriage in every way most happy; illustrious birth, competent means, suitable ages, the very flower of the prime of life, deep affection, the very best that each can think of the other, that sweet rivalry of each wishing to surpass the other in loving; in addition, popularity, power, wide reputation, and everything else But observe that even beneath this array of blessings the fire of an inevitable pain is smouldering... They are human all the time,

things weak and perishing; they have to look upon the tombs of their progenitors; and so pain is inseparably bound up with their existence, if they have the least power of reflection. This continued expectancy of death, realized by no sure tokens, but hanging over them the terrible uncertainty of the future, disturbs their present joy, clouding it over with the fear of what is coming... Whenever the husband looks at the beloved face, that moment the fear of separation accompanies the look. If he listens to the sweet voice, the thought comes into his mind that some day he will not hear it. Whenever he is glad with gazing on her beauty, then he shudders most with the presentiment of mourning her loss. When he marks all those charms which to youth are so precious and which the thoughtless seek for, the bright eyes beneath the lids, the arching eyebrows, the cheek with its sweet and dimpling smile, the natural red that blooms upon the lips, the gold-bound hair shining in many-twisted masses on the head, and all that transient grace, then, though he may be little given to reflection, he must have this thought also in his inmost soul that some day all this beauty will melt away and become as nothing, turned after all this show into noisome and unsightly bones, which wear no trace, no memorial, no remnant of that living bloom. Can he live delighted when he thinks of that? (source)

Let no one think however that herein we depreciate marriage as an institution. We are well aware that it is not a stranger to God's blessing. But since the common instincts of mankind can plead sufficiently on its behalf, instincts which prompt by a spontaneous bias to take the high road of marriage for the procreation of children, whereas Virginitiy in a way thwarts this natural impulse, it is a superfluous task to compose formally an Exhortation to marriage. We put forward the pleasure of it instead, as a most doughty

champion on its behalf... But our view of marriage is this; that, while the pursuit of heavenly things should be a man's first care, yet if he can use the advantages of marriage with sobriety and moderation, he need not despise this way of serving the state. An example might be found in the patriarch Isaac. He married Rebecca when he was past the flower of his age and his prime was well-nigh spent, so that his marriage was not the deed of passion, but because of God's blessing that should be upon his seed. He cohabited with her till the birth of her only children, and then, closing the channels of the senses, lived wholly for the Unseen...

This picture of a "moderate" view of marriage that does not "depreciate marriage as an institution" comes from St. Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On Virginity*, and allowances must be made for the fact that St. Gregory of Nyssa is contrasting virginity, not with an easy opposite today, namely promiscuity or lust, but marriage, which he bitterly attacks in the context of this passage. The piece is not an attractive one today. However, that does not mean that what he says is not part of the picture. This bitter attack is part of a picture in which contraception could look very different from today, but that way of looking at contraception is not purely the cause of a rhetoric attacking marriage to praise virginity. I present this not to analyze St. Gregory's exact view on marriage, but to give a taste of an answer to "How else could it be?" in comparison to what is unquestionable today.

Some attitudes today (arguably the basic assumption that motivates offense at the idea that one is condemning the goodness of the created order in treating sex as rightly ordered towards procreation) could be paraphrased, "We affirm the body as good, and we affirm sex in all its goodness. It is a source of pleasure; it is a way to bond; it is powerful as few other things are. But it has a downside, and that is a certain biological survival: unless countermeasures

are taken, along with its good features unwanted pregnancy can come. And properly affirming the goodness of sex means freeing it from the biological holdover that gives the good of sexual pleasure the side effect of potentially resulting in pregnancy even if it is pursued for another reason." To the Patristic Christian, this may well come across as saying something like, "Major surgery can be a wonderful thing. It is occasion for the skillful art of doctors, in many instances it is surrounded by an outflow of love by the patient's community, and the difficulties associated with the process can build a thicker spine and provide a powerful process of spiritual discipline. But it would be really nice if we could undergo surgery without attendant risks of unwanted improvements to our health."

It seems so natural today to affirm the goodness of the body or sex, and see as the only possible translation of that affirmation "the goodness of the pleasure in sexual experience," that different views are not even thinkable; I would like to mention briefly some other answers to the question, "How else could it be?" The ancient world, in many places, looked beyond the few minutes of treasure and found the basis for the maxim, "*Post coitum omne animal triste*" (after sex, every animal [including humans] is sad), and feared that sex could, among other things, fundamentally deplete virile energy (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, New York: Random House 1985, 137): its goodness might be seen as a costly goodness involving the whole person, rather than simply being the goodness of "one more pleasure, only a very intense one, that is especially good because it is especially intense" or self-evidently being at the core of even a good marriage (Noonan 1986, 47-8).

This is not to suggest that Christians merely copied the surrounding views. Contraception, abortion, and infanticide were quite prevalent in the Roman world (Noonan 1986, 10-29). Whatever else Patristic Christianity can be criticized for in its strong stance on contraception, abortion, and

infanticide, it is not an uncritical acceptance of whatever their neighbors would happen to be doing. And if St. Gregory of Nyssa holds up an example which he alleges is procreation that minimizes pleasure, it might be better not to simply say that neo-Platonism tainted many of the Fathers with a dualistic view in which the body was evil, or some other form of, "His environment made him do it."

Modernity and "natural" family planning

In the discussion which follows, I will use the term "contraceptive timing" in lieu of the somewhat euphemistic "natural family planning" or "the rhythm method." In my own experience, I have noticed Catholics consistently needing to explain why "natural family planning" is an opposite to contraception; invariably newcomers have difficulties seeing why decreasing the odds of conception through mathematical timing is a fundamentally different matter from decreasing the odds of conception through biological and chemical expedients. I would draw an analogy to firing a rifle down a rifle range, or walking down a rifle range to retrieve a target: either action, appropriately timed, is licit; changing the timing of an otherwise licit action by firing a rifle while others are retrieving their targets and walk in front of that gun is a use of timing that greatly affects the moral significance of an otherwise licit act. I will hereafter use the phrase "contraceptive timing."

Orthodox implications

As Orthodox, I have somewhat grave concerns about my own Church, which condemned contraception before 1970 but in recent decades appears to have developed a "new consensus" more liberal than the Catholic position: abortifascient methods are excluded, there must be some

openness to children, and it must be agreed with by a couple's spiritual father. This "new consensus," or at least what is called a new consensus in an article that acknowledges it as surrounded by controversy that has "various groups accusing each other of Western influence," which is, in Orthodox circles, a good cue that there is something interesting going on.

The one article I found on the topic was "lobbyist" scholarship that seemed to *avoid* giving a fuller picture (Zaphiris 1974.). This one article I found in the ATLA religion database matching the keywords "Orthodox" and "contraception" was an article that took a "new consensus" view and, most immediately, did not provide what I was hoping a "new consensus" article would provide: an explanation that can say, "We understand that the Fathers had grave reservations about contraception, but here is why it can be permissible." The article in fact made no reference to relevant information that can (at least today) be easily obtained from conservative Catholic analyses. There was no discussion of relevant but ambiguous matter such as Onan's sin (Noonan 1986, 34-6.) and New Testament condemnations of "medicine man" *pharmakeia* which would have included some contraception (Noonan 1986, 44-5.). There was not even the faintest passing mention of forceful denunciations of contraception by both Greek and Latin Fathers. John Chrysostom was mentioned, but only as support for distinguishing the good of sex from procreation: "The moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers, St. John Chrysostom, also does not stress the procreation of children as the goal of marriage." (Zaphiris 1974, 680) Possibly; St. Chrysostom may not have written anything like the incendiary material from St. Gregory above. But "the moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers" *did* write:

The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers has at times a legendary bias against Rome (let alone against the Eastern Church), and renders Chrysostom as talking about

abortion and infanticide but not obviously contraception. This is deliberate mistranslation. To pick out one example, In *Patrologia Graecae* 60.626 (the quotation spans PG 60.626-7), "*enqa polla ta atokia*," rendered "*ubi multae sunt herbae in sterilitatem?*" in the PG's Latin and "Where are the medicines of sterility?" by Noonan, appears in the NPNF as "where are there many efforts at abortion?" This is a deliberate under-translation.

[St. John Chrysostom:] *Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit? Where are the medicines of sterility? Where is there murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. Do you see that from drunkenness comes fornication, from fornication adultery, from adultery murder? Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God, and fight with his laws? What is a curse, do you seek as though it were a blessing?... Do you teach the woman who is given to you for the procreation of offspring to perpetrate killing?... In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife. (Homilies on Romans XXIV, Rom 13:14, as translated in Noonan 1986, 98.)*

St. Chrysostom is not so quick as we are today to distinguish contraception from murder. Possibly, as Zaphiris writes, "there is not a defined statement on the morality of contraception within Orthodoxy." But this is a treacherous use of words.

Let me give an analogy to explain why. People consume both food and drink, by eating and drinking. But it is somewhat strange to point out that a person has never

drunk a roast beef sandwich, particularly in an attempt to lead a third party to believe, incorrectly, that a person has never consumed that food item. The Church has "defined" statements relating to Trinitarian and Christological, and other doctrines, and formulated morally significant canon law. But she has never "defined" a statement in morals; that would be like drinking a roast beef sandwich. And so for Zaphiris to point out that the Orthodox Church has never "defined" a statement about contraception—a point that would be obvious to someone knowing what sorts of things the Church does not "define;" "defining" a position against murder would, for some definitions of "define," be like drinking a sandwich—and lead the reader to believe that the Church has never issued a highly authoritative statement about contraception. The Orthodox Church has issued such statements more than once.

Saying that the Orthodox Church has never "defined" a position on a moral question is as silly and as pointless as saying that a man has never drunk a roast beef sandwich: it is technically true, but sheds no light on whether a person has consumed such a sandwich—or taken a stand on the moral question at hand. Zaphiris's "observation" is beginning to smell a lot like spin doctoring.

I have grave reservations about an article that gives the impression of covering relevant Patristic material to the question of contraception without hinting at the fact that it was condemned. Needless to say, the article did not go beyond the immediate condemnation to try to have a sympathetic understanding of why someone would find it sensible to make such condemnations. If I were trying to marshal Orthodox theological resources in the support of some use of contraception, I doubt if I could do better than Zaphiris. However, if the question is what Orthodox should believe in reading the Bible through the Fathers, submitting to the tradition in seeking what is licit, then this version of a "new consensus" theological treatment gives me even graver doubts about the faithfulness of the "new consensus" to

Orthodox tradition. The Zaphiris article, if anything, seems to be an Orthodox document with influence, and red flags, that are comparable to *Humanae Vitae*.

There have been times before where the Orthodox Church has accepted something alien and come to purify herself in succeeding centuries. In that sense there would be a precedent for a change that would be later undone, and that provides one ready Orthodox classification. The Orthodox Wiki provides no history of the change in Orthodoxy, and a formal statement by the Orthodox Church in America (source), without specifically *praising* any form of contraception, attests to the newer position and allows some use of reproductive technologies, but does not explain the change. I would be interested in seeing why the Orthodox Church in particular has brought itself into sudden agreement with cultural forces beyond what the Catholic Church has.

The Orthodox Church both affirms that Christ taught marriage to be indissoluble—excluding both divorce and remarriage after divorce—and allows by way of oikonomia (a concession or leniency in observing a rule) a second and third remarriage after divorce, not counting marriages before full reception into the Orthodox Church. However, there is a difference between observing a rule with oikonomia and saying that the rule does not apply. If a rule is observed with oikonomia, the rule is recognized even as it is not followed literally, much like choosing "the next best thing to being there," in lieu of personal presence, when one is invited to an occasion but cannot easily attend. By contrast, saying that the rule does not apply is a deeper rejection, like refusing a friend's invitation in a way that denies any duty or moral claim for that friend. There is a fundamental difference between sending a gift to a friend's wedding with regrets that one cannot attend, and treating the invitation itself with contempt. The rites for a second and third marriage are genuine observations of the fact that one is observing a rule with leniency: the rite for a second

marriage is penitential, the rite for a third marriage even more so, and a firm line is drawn that rules out a fourth marriage: *oikonomia* has limits. If a second and third marriage is allowed, the concession recognizes the rule and, one might argue, the reality the rule recognizes. If one looks at jokes as an anthropologist would, as revealing profound assumptions about a culture, snipes about "A wife is only temporary; an ex-wife is forever" and "When two divorced people sleep together, four people are in the bed" are often told by people who would scoff at the idea of marriage as a sacred, permanent union... but the jokes themselves testify that there is something about a marriage that divorce cannot simply erase: a spouse can become an ex-spouse, but the marriage is too permanent to simply be dropped as something revocable that has no intrinsically permanent effects. And in that sense, an ex-spouse is closer to a spouse than to a friend that has never had romance. Which is to say that marriage bears witness both to an absolute and *oikonomia* in how that absolute is observed.

Even with noted exceptions, the Gospels give the indissolubility of marriage a forceful dominical saying backed by quotation from the heart of the Old Testament Scriptures. If something that forcefully put may legitimately be observed with *oikonomia*, then it would seem strange to me to say that what I have observed as Patristic attitudes, where thinking of contraception as desirable would appear seriously disturbed, dictate not only a suspicion towards contraception but a criterion that admits no *oikonomia* in its observation. Presumably some degree *oikonomia* is allowable, and perhaps one could not rule out the *oikonomia* could take the form of a new consensus's criterion allowing non-abortifascient contraception, in consultation with one's spiritual father, on condition of allowing children at some point during a marriage. *However*, even if that is the legitimate *oikonomia*, it is legitimate as the lenient observation of grave moral principles. And, in that sense, unless one is prepared to say

that the Patristic consensus is wrong in viewing contraception with great suspicion, the *oikonomia*, like the rites for a second and third marriage, should be appropriate for an *oikonomia* in observing a moral concern that remains a necessary moral concern even as it is *observed* with leniency.

Conclusion

I am left with a puzzle: why is it that Orthodox have adopted the current "new consensus"? My guess is that Zaphiris's quite provocative article was taken as simply giving a straight account of Orthodoxy and Patristic teaching as it relates to contraception. The OCA document more or less applies both his analysis and prescriptions. But, while I hesitate to say that no one could explain both why the Fathers would regard contraception as abhorrent and we should permit it in some cases, I will say that I have not yet encountered such an explanation. And I would present, if not anything like a last word, at least important information which should probably be considered in judging the rule and what is appropriate *oikonomia*. If Orthodoxy regards Patristic culture and philosophy as how Christ has become incarnate in the Orthodox Church, then neither condemnations of contraception, nor the reasons why those condemnations would be made in the first place, concern only antiquarians.

Would it be possible for there to be *another* "new consensus?"

"Morality of Contraception: An Orthodox Opinion:" A commentary

The article published by Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90, seems *extremely* significant. **It seems a lobbyist article, and in both content and timing the 1970's "new consensus" as articulated by the Orthodox Church in America is consistent with taking Zaphiris in good faith as simply stating the Orthodox position on contraception.** (This was the one article I found in an ATLA search for keywords "Orthodox" and "contraception" anywhere, on 13 May, 2007. A search for "Orthodoxy" and "contraception" on 14 May, 2007 turned up one additional result which seemed to be connected to queer theory.) I perceive in this faulty—or, more properly, deceptively *incomplete* data, questionable argument, and seductive sophistry which I wish to comment on.

I believe that Zaphiris's text is worth at least an informal commentary to draw arguments and certain features to the reader's attention. In this commentary, all footnotes will be Zaphiris's own; where I draw on other sources I will allude to the discussion above or add parenthetical references. I follow his footnote numbering, note page breaks by inserting the new page number, and reproduce some typographical features.

Footnote from Zaphiris's text

Chrysostom Zaphiris (Orthodox) is a graduate of the Patriarchal Theological School of Halki, Turkey, and holds a doctorate with highest honors from the University of Strasbourg, where

he studied with the Roman Catholic faculty. His 1970 thesis dealt with the "Text of the Gospel according to St. Matthew in Accordance with the Citations in Clement of Alexandria compared with Citations in the Greek Fathers and Theologians of the Second to Fifth Centuries." Dr. Zaphiris taught canon law and New Testament courses at Holy Cross School of Theology (at Hellenic College), Brookline, MA, 1970-72. From 1972 to 1974, he was Vice Rector at the Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Studies, Tantur, Jerusalem.

* This paper was originally presented during the discussion held for doctors of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the surrounding area hosted by theologians of the Ecumenical Institute at Tantur on the question of the morality of contraception. At this point, I would like also to thank Br. James Hanson, C.S.C., for his help editing my English text.

THE MORALITY OF CONTRACEPTION: AN
EASTERN ORTHODOX OPINION*

by

CHRYSOSTOM ZAPHIRIS

PRECIS

This discussion of the morality of contraception includes four basic points: the purpose of marriage as viewed scripturally and patristically, the official teachings of Orthodoxy concerning contraception, the moral issue from an Orthodox perspective, and "the

Orthodox notion of synergism and its implications for the moral question of contraception."

It is possible through inference to determine that the Scriptures and the early Christian writers considered that, within marriage, sexual activity and procreation were not the same entity and that sexuality was to be practiced within marriage. These assertions are illustrated.

The official teaching of the Orthodox Church on contraception includes five points: a denunciation of intentional refusal to procreate within marriage, a condemnation of both abortion and infanticide, an absence of any commitment against contraception, and a reliance upon the medical profession to supply further information on the issue. The author offers a theological opinion on the question of contraception allowing for contraception under certain circumstances.

Synergism is the final issue discussed. Synergism is defined as cooperation, co-creation, and co-legislation between humans and God. When people use their talents and faculties morally and creatively, they are acting in combination with God and expressing God's will. The Orthodox view of contraception is perceived within the dimensions of synergistic activity and serves as a contrast to the Roman Catholic view.

The essay concludes with some comments about contraception as a moral issue as perceived within the Eastern Orthodox Church. Allowing for individual freedom and responsibility, and in light of synergism, Orthodoxy avoids definitive pronouncements on such moral issues as contraception.

I. INTRODUCTION.

Contraception is one of the most important

aspects of human behavior and family life, and thus it is a part of life which cannot be ignored by theology itself. There can be no question of treating this moral question, but only of outlining the aspects which must be considered according to the Orthodox tradition.

I don't know an exact rule for "what must be considered for the Orthodox tradition," but besides of Biblical witness, the Patriarch of New Rome and one of three "hierarchy and ecumenical teachers" of the Orthodox Church, St. John Chrysostom, homilectically treating something as an abomination and calling it "worse than murder" would tend to be something I would include under "aspects which must be considered according to the Orthodox tradition."

One reaction which I would like to address in many readers, even though it is not properly commentary is, "Contraception is comparable to *homicide*? It's called "worse than *murder*"? Is this translated correctly? Is this gross exaggeration? Is it cultural weirdness, or some odd influence of Platonic thought that the Church has recovered from? Why on earth would anybody say that?" This is a natural reaction, partly because the Fathers are articulating a position that is inconceivable today. So the temptation is to assume that this has some cause, perhaps historical, despite moral claims that cannot be taken seriously today.

I would like to provide a loose analogy, intended less to convince than convey how someone really could find a continuity between contraception and murder. Suppose that destroying a painting is always objectionable. Now consider the process of painting: a painting germinates in an artist's mind, is physically created and explored, and finally becomes something one hangs on a wall.

Now let me ask a question: if one tries to interrupt the process of artistic creation, perhaps by disrupting the creator's state of mind and scattering the paints, does that qualify as "destroying a painting"?

The answer to that question depends on what qualifies as "destroying a painting." If one disrupts the artist who is thinking about painting a painting, or scatters the paints and half-painted canvas, then in neither case has one destroyed a finished painting. You cannot point to a completed painting that was there before the interruption began, and say, "See? That is the painting that was destroyed." *However*, someone who is not being legalistic has good reason to pause before saying "This simply does not qualify as destroying a painting" A *completed* painting was not destroyed, but the process of artistic creation that produces a completed painting was destroyed. And in that sense, someone who interrupted Van Gogh and stopped him from painting "Starry Night" is doing the same sort of thing as someone today who would burn up the completed painting. The two acts are cut from the same cloth.

Now my intent is not to provide a precise and detailed allegory about what detail of the creation process represents conception, birth, etc. That is not the intent of the general illustration. My point is that talk about "destroying paintings" need not be construed only as destroying a completed painting in its final form. There is also the possibility of destroying a painting in the sense of willfully disrupting the process of an artist in the process of making a painting. And, perhaps, there is room for St. John Chrysostom's horrified, "*Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation.*" Now is this rhetorical exaggeration? Quite possibly; Noonan studies various penitentials, all from before the Great Schism, and although there is not always a penance assigned for contraception by potion, two assign a lighter penance than for homicide, one assigns the same penance, and one actually assigns a penance of four years for homicide and *seven* for contraception. Contraception could bear a heavier penance than murder.

It is somewhat beside the point to work out if we *really*

have to take St. John Chrysostom literally in saying that contraception is worse than homicide. I don't think that is necessary. But it is not beside the point that the Fathers seem to treat a great deal of continuity between contraception, abortion, and infanticide, and seem not to draw terribly sharp oppositions between them. Whether or not one assigns heavy-handed penalties from contraception, I can't think of a way to read the Fathers responsibly and categorically deny that contraception is cut from the same cloth as abortion and infanticide. The point is not exactly an exact calculus to measure the relative gravity of the sins. The point is that they are all connected in patristic writing.

First, we need to study the purpose of marriage as we find it in the Scriptures and in the writings of the Greek Fathers. Second, we will reflect on the official teaching authority of the Orthodox Church on this question of contraception. Third, we will offer a moral opinion as to the legitimacy of the practice of contraception from an Orthodox viewpoint. And finally, we will discuss the Orthodox notion of synergism and its implications for the moral question of contraception.

II. THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE.

Although the purpose of marriage is never treated systematically in the Scriptures or in the Fathers according to our contemporary viewpoint and questions, it is possible to infer the thoughts of these classical authors on the purpose of marriage. In general, what we find is that there is the presupposition that human sexual activity within marriage and the procreation of children are not seen as completely the same reality. And furthermore, both Scripture and the Fathers consistently counsel the faithful to live in such a way that human sexuality can be expressed within marriage.

The claim in the last sentence is true; more has been argued from St. John Chrysostom. But Orthodoxy does view celibacy and marriage as more compatible than some assume today. At least by the letter of the law, Orthodox are expected to be continent on fasting days and on days where the Eucharist is received, meaning a minimum of almost half days of the year, including one period approaching two months. I don't know what degree of *oikonomia* is common in pastoral application, but an Orthodox might want to drop another shoe besides saying "both Scripture and the Fathers consistently counsel the faithful to live in such a way that sexuality can be expressed in marriage."

The Scriptures present us with a Christian doctrine of marriage most clearly in Genesis and in the writings of St. Paul. In Genesis 2:18, God said that it was not good for man to be alone, but that he should have a helpmate which he then gave to Adam in the person of his wife, Eve. Is this help meant by God to be only social and religious?

Apparently the possibility that marriage could, as in the patristic world, be not only an affective matter of what people but a union of pragmatic *help* encompassing even the economic is not considered.

For a detailed answer to "How else could that be?" in terms of a relationship including quite significant pragmatic *help*, see Stephen Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*, Ann Arbor: Servant 1980. To someone who has read and digested that book, there seem to be an awful lot of assumptions going into what marriage is allowed to be for the husband and wife.

Or is it also intended by God to be a physical help provided to a man in terms of sexual complementarity?

Does "physical help" simply mean "sex," which Zaphiris seems to mean? Are there no other possibilities? Or is it possible that "physical help" might also include assistance with errands, or provision, or getting work done as part of a working household? Besides Stephen Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor: Servant 1980), Proverbs 31:10-31 describes the ideal helpmate who perhaps has children but is not praised as a siren: she is praised, among other things, as a powerful and effective helpmeet. In the praises, physical beauty is mentioned only in order to deprecate its significance.

In reading Clark, it seems a natural thing to offer a wife the praises of the end of Proverbs. Zaphiris's presuppositions make that kind of thing look strange. But the defect is with Zaphiris.

However we answer these questions, one thing is certain: the question of procreation as such is not raised by the author. Yet, procreation itself is encouraged by the author of Genesis 1:28, when God orders human beings to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Just as the author of the Pentateuch never makes an explicit connection between the creation of Eve and the practice of human procreation, so likewise St. Paul in the New Testament never makes this connection.

In the case of St. Paul, it is a question of sexual relations of continence within marriage or of marriage as opposed to virginity, but never exactly the question of procreation in any of these cases. Paul considers marriage and virginity as charisms within the life of the Church. He exhorts believers to the practice of virginity if they have this charism; if not, he encourages them to marry. This raises a subsequent question: "Does St. Paul encourage marriage first of all to promote the procreation of children or rather make

up for human weakness which is experienced in sexual passion?" While I acknowledge that procreation of children is one of the reasons for marriage which Christian theology has consistently taught, it has never been the *only* reason for Christian marriage.

If we follow St. Paul closely, it is apparent that he encourages a man to marry, not simply to procreate children, but for other reasons, the most prominent of which 679 would be to avoid fornication (cf. I Cor. 7:2). It is because human persons have the right

I would like to make a comment that sounds, at first, like nitpicking about word choice:

Rights-based moral calculus is prevalent in the modern world, sometimes so that people don't see how to do moral reasoning without seeing things in terms of rights. But the modern concept of a "right" is alien to Orthodoxy.

See Kenneth Himes (ed.) *et al.*, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington: Georgetown University Press 2005), chapter 2 (41-71) for an historical discussion including how the concept of rights became incorporated into Catholic moral reasoning from the outside. The change was vigorously resisted as recently as Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), today the subject of embarrassed explanations, but what Catholics apologetically explain is often closer to Orthodoxy than the modern Catholic explanation of what Catholicism really teaches. Even in modern Catholicism, officially approved "rights" language is a relatively recent development, and there are attempts to use the concept differently from the secular West.

Armenian Orthodox author Vigen Guorian's *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1987, page number not available) briefly complains about the modern idea of placing human dignity on no deeper basis than rights; I would refer the

reader to my homily "Do we have rights?" (http://cishayward.com/no_rights/) for moral-ascetical reasoning that rejects the innovation.

The reason why I am "nitpicking" here is that there is a subtle difference, but a profound one, between saying that sex is good within marriage (or at least permissible), and saying that husband and wife have a right to sexual pleasure, and this entitlement is deep enough that if the sexual generation of children would be undesirable, the entitlement remains, along with a necessity of modifying sex so that the entitled sexual pleasure is delivered even if the sexual generation of children is stopped cold.

Zaphiris never develops the consequences of rights-based moral reasoning at length or makes it the explicit basis for arguing for an entitlement to sexual pleasure even if that means frustrating sexual generation. However, after asserting a married right to sex, he not only fails to discourage this reasoning, but reaches a conclusion identical with the one this reasoning would reach.

to be married and to perform sexual activity within that specific context that Jesus Christ and St. Paul have condemned explicitly the practice of fornication (cf. Mt 5:32, 19:9; Acts 15:20; I Cor. 5:1, 6, 13, 18). Thus, in our study of the Christian tradition on marriage and the possibility of contraceptive practices within marriage, we must keep clearly in view this particular function of marriage as an antidote to fornication.

We find a similar sensitivity in the writings of Paul to the human need for sexual gratification in marriage when he counsels Christian couples on the practice of continence within marriage. "The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husbands. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order

to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwards, you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan" (I Cor. 7:4-5). In this passage, there is no question of procreation, but only of the social union between husband and wife within Christian marriage. While, on the positive side, Paul affirms that Christian marriage is a sign of the union between Jesus Christ and the Church and that the married couple participates in the unity and holiness of this union, more negatively he also sees in marriage an antidote or outlet for the normal human sexual passions. In this context, St. Paul always counsels marriage as preferable to any possibility of falling into fornication.

In saying this, St. Paul is obviously not opposed to procreation as the end of marriage. The bearing of children was naturally expected to result from the practice of sexual intercourse within marriage as he counseled it. Abstinence from regular sexual intercourse was encouraged only to deepen the life of prayer for a given period of time. This limiting of abstinence to a specific period of time shows well Paul's sensitivity to the demands of human sexual passions and his elasticity of judgment in giving moral counsel. Thus, from the exegesis of Genesis of St. Paul, the whole contemporary question of the explicit connection between sexual intercourse within marriage and the procreation of children was simply not raised in the same form in which it is today.

I would like to take a moment to look at the story of Onan before posing a suggestion about exegesis.

I suggest that in the Bible, especially in portraying something meant to horrify the reader, there are often multiple elements to the horror. The story of Sodom portrays same-sex intercourse, gang rape, and extreme inhospitality. There is a profoundly naive assumption

behind the question, "Of same-sex intercourse, gang rape, and extreme inhospitality, which *one* are we *really* supposed to think is the problem?" In this case, it seems all three contributed to something presented as superlatively horrifying, and it is the combined effect that precedes Sodom's judgment in fire and sulfur and subsequently becoming the Old Testament prophet's "poster city" for every single vice from idolatry and adultery to pride and cruelty to the poor. The story of Sodom is *written* to have multiple elements of horror.

There is one story where contraception is mentioned in the Bible, and it is one of few where Onan joins the company of Uzzah, Ananias, Sapphira, Herod (the one in Acts), and perhaps others in being the only people named in the Bible as being struck dead by God for their sins. This is not an august company. Certainly Onan's story is not the story of a couple saying, "Let's iust focus on the children we have," but a story *that* forceful in condemning Onan's sin, *whatever* the sin properly consisted in, has *prima facie* good claim to be included a Biblical text that factors into a Biblical view of contraception. The story is relevant, even if it is ambiguous for the concerns of this question.

Likewise, in something that is not translated clearly in most English translations, the New Testament (Gal 5:20, Rev 9:21) *pharmakoi* refers to "medicine men" who made, among other things, contraceptive and abortifascient potions, in a world that seemed not to really separate drugs from magic. English translations ordinarily follow the KJV in translating this only with reference to the occult sin, so that it does not come across clearly that the Bible is condemning the people you would go to for contraceptives. This is ambiguous evidence for this discussion: it is not clear whether it is only condemning the occult practices, condemning what the occult practices were used for, or condemning both at the same time, but the question is significant.

Granted, not every Biblical text touching marriage is

evidence against contraception. There are other relevant passages like Gal 5:21-33 which discuss the love in marriage with no reference to fecundity, but if one wants to understand the Bible as it relates to contraception, it is surprising not to mention passages that directly impinge on it, ambiguously but raising the question of whether contraception is a grave sin.

Zaphiris's footnote:

1. Cf. *Stromata*, III, 82, 4.

Turning from the writings of Paul to those of the Greek Fathers, we will see that there is a continuity of Orthodox tradition in this understanding of the purpose of marriage. First, let us consider the statement of Clement of Alexandria who raises this problem as a theologian and as a pastor of the faithful. When he comments on I Cor. 7:2, he uses neither the allegorical nor the spiritual method of exegesis, but rather the literal interpretation of this Pauline text. Through this methodology, Clement, in spite of his usual idealism, recommends marriage over fornication and counsels sexual intercourse within marriage over the possibility of serving the temptor through fornication.[1]

Zaphiris's footnote

2. See H. Crouzel, *Virginité et mariage selon Origène* (Paris-Bruges, 1963), pp. 80-133.

679 We find a similar line of thought in his successor, Origen. Although Origen accepts procreation as the end of marriage, he also sees in marriage the legitimate concession to human

weakness in its sexual passions.[2]

Likewise Methodius of Olympus continues this interpretation of St. Paul in a very clear statement on the subject: "... The apostle did not grant these things unconditionally to all, but first laid down the reason on account of which he has led to this. For, having set forth that 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman' (I Cor. VII, 1) he added immediately 'nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife' (I Cor. VII, 2)—that is 'on account of the fornication which would arise from your being unable to restrain your passions.'..." Afterwards the author notes that Paul speaks "by permission" and "not of command," so that Methodius comments: "For he receives command respecting chastity and not touching of a woman, but permission respecting those who are unable to chasten their appetites."

Zaphiris's footnote

3. Cf. *The Banquet of the Virgins*, III, 12.

Methodius applies similar logic to the possibility of the second marriage, in that he permits the second marriage, not specifically for the procreation of children, but "on account of the strength of animal passion, he [Paul] allows one who is in such condition may, 'by permission' contract a second marriage; not as though he expressed the opinion that a second marriage was in itself good, but judging it better than burning . . ." According to Methodius, the apostle speaks here, first saying that he wished all were healthy and continent, as he also was, but afterwards allowing a second marriage to those who are burdened with the weaknesses of the passions, goaded on by the uncontrolled desires of the organs of generations for promiscuous intercourse, considering such a second

marriage far preferable to burning and indecency.[3]
 4. See A. Moulard, *Saint Jean Chrysostome, le défenseur du mariage et l'apôtre de la virginité* (Paris, 1923), pp. 72ff.

The moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers, St. John Chrysostom, also does not stress the procreation of children as the goal of marriage. On the contrary, he adheres to the Pauline texts and to the apologists for virginity and concludes that marriage does not have any other goal than that of hindering fornication.

"The moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers" wrote the passage cited in the paper above:

"Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit? Where are the medicines of sterility? Where is there murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. Do you see that from drunkenness comes fornication, from fornication adultery, from adultery murder? Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God, and fight with his laws? What is a curse, do you seek as though it were a blessing?... Do you teach the woman who is given to you for the procreation of offspring to perpetrate killing?... In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife."

There is arguably a degree of ambiguity in the Church Fathers. However, the ambiguity is of a far lesser degree. The Fathers argued most vehemently against opponents

who believed the procreation of *any* children was morally wrong; contraception was seen as a duty in all intercourse, and not a personal choice for one's convenience. See Augustine as cited on page 6 above. Acknowledging that the Fathers addressed a different situation, this does not mean that, since the Fathers did not address the situation of a couple not wishing to be burdened by more children for now, the patristic arguments are inapplicable. An injunction against suicide may say something about self-mutilation even if, in the initial discussion, there was no question of mutilations that were nonlethal in character.

There is some element of something in the Fathers that can be used to support almost anything: hence Sarah Coakley's *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell 2002) teams up St. Gregory of Nyssa with Judith Butler, who is a lesbian deconstructionist and "bad writing" award winner, in pursuing the "gender fluidity" that is greatly sought after by queer theory and feminism (157-61). For that matter, I think there is a stronger case for Arianism, from the Bible, than Zapyiris makes from the Church Fathers on contraception, and it involves less "crossing fingers." For the record, I believe the conclusions of both arguments I have brought up are heresy, but there is a reason I brought them up. We are in trouble if we only expect the truth to be able to pull arguments from the Scripture and the Fathers, or believe that an argument that draws on the Scripture and the Fathers is therefore trustworthy. My point is not so much whether Zaphiris is right or wrong as the fact that there's something that can be pulled from the Fathers in support of everything, either right *or* wrong. His argument needs to be weighed on its merits. (Or demerits.)

There is some more complexity to the discussion; I have left many things out of the shorter article, but the much even of what I have left out would make the point more strongly. Hence Noonan discusses a view that sex during pregnancy is not licit because it will not be fruitful,

discusses the Stoic protest of "even animals don't do this," mentions a third-century dissenter from this view (Lactantius) who allowed sex during pregnancy only as an ambivalent concession, and then the well-read researcher writes, "This... is the only opinion I have encountered in any Christian theologian before 1500 explicitly upholding the lawfulness of intercourse in pregnancy" (Noonan 1986, 78.). Properly taken in context, this would support a much stronger position than I have argued, and one less attractive today.

Is the issue complex? There's a lot here to understand. Granted. But in this case, "complex" does not mean "nothing but shades of grey," and I am at a loss for a good, honest reason to claim to provide an overview Patristic theology as relevant to contraception, while at the same time failing to mention how it condemned contraception.

III. THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ON CONTRACEPTION

While there is not a defined statement on the morality of contraception within Orthodoxy,

To modify what I wrote above: I am not sure exactly what Zaphiris means by "defined." The Church is not considered to have "defined" *any* position on morals in the sense of infallibly pronounced doctrines. In Orthodoxy, the Seven Ecumenical Councils may create canons that are morally binding, but irreversible doctrinal declarations are mostly connected to Christology. Under that definition of "defined", the Orthodox Church would not have "defined" a ruling against contraception, *regardless* of its moral status. Neither would she have "defined" a ruling against rape, murder, or any other heinous offenses, even as she unambiguously condemns them.

This is one of several passages that raises questions of slippery rhetoric, perhaps of sophistry. Assuming that the

above understanding of "defined" applies (a question which I am unsure of even if it seems that an affirmative answer would be consistent with the rest of the document), his claim is technically true. But it is presented so as to be interpreted as stating that the Orthodox Church has no real position on the matter, unlike other moral questions where the Orthodox Church would presumably have defined a position. This understandable inference is false. The Patristic witness, and arguably the Biblical witness, in fact do treat contraception as suspicious at best. If so, this is a case of Zaphiris saying something technically true in order to create an impression that is the opposite of the truth. That is very well-done sophistry.

Zaphiris continues with a small, but telling, remark:

there is a body of moral tradition which has a bearing on this question.

This short claim is also true. More specifically, there is a body of moral tradition which has a bearing on this question and tends to view contraception negatively.

First, the Church vigorously denounces any obvious case of pure egotism as the motivating force in Christian sexuality within marriage. Any married couple within the Orthodox Church who want absolutely no children sins grievously against both the Christian dispensation and against the primordial purpose of human life which includes the procreation or, as the Greek Fathers prefer, the "immortality" of the human species.

It seems that Zaphiris may be, for reasons of rhetoric and persuasion, providing a limit to how much he claims, so as to be more readily accepted. Zaphiris provides no footnotes or reference to sources more specific than the "Greek Fathers" to buttress this claim, and does not provide

an explanation for certain questions. One such question is why, if marriage is not morally required and celibates are *never* obligated to provide that specific support for the "immortality" of the human species, such obligation is binding on *all* married couples. Are all celibates exempt from "the primordial purpose of human life," and if so, why is it permissible to fail to meet such a foundational purpose of human life? I do not see why Zaphiris's logic justifies his making the more palatable claim that some openness towards children is mandatory.

This raises the question of whether he has a consistent position arising from his reading, or whether he is simply inventing a position and claiming he got it from the Greek Fathers.

According to the Greek Fathers, to refuse to transmit life to others is a grievous sin of pride in which the couple prefers to keep human life for themselves instead of sharing it with possible offspring.

Zaphiris's footnotes:

5. See, e.g., *Didache*, II, i-3, V, 2, VI, 1-2; Pseudo-Barnabas, *Epist.*, XIX, 4-6, Saint Justin, 1 *Apolog.*, XXVII, 1-XXIX,1; Athenagoras, *Supplic.*, XXXV; *Epist. Ad Diogn.*, 5,6; Tertullian, *Apolog*, IX, 6-8; *Ad Nationes*, I, 15; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, XXX, 2; Lactance, *Divinarum Institutionum*, VI, 20.

6. In this regard, we should stress the fact that the Greek Fathers forbid every induced abortion of a human fetus because abortion involves tampering with a human soul. In fact, the soul is not the product of the sexual act of the parents, but is rather the manifestation of the love of God or the result of a special direct or indirect action of God (cf. Clement of

Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI. 135, et *Eclogae propheticae*, 50, 1-3). A study of the means of the transmission of the soul is beyond the scope of the present paper so that we do not try to explain it here. What is important is to emphasize that the parents cannot destroy any human life—even embryonic—because the embryo carries the soul which is transmitted by God.

7. We must stress the fact that a few non-Christian philosophers took issue with the pro-abortion majority and condemned abortion. Cf. Seneca, *De Consolatione ad Helviani*, XVI, 3; R. Musunius, p. 77; Desimus Junius Juvenalis, *Satire*, VI, 595f.; Philon of Alexandria, *Hypothetia*, VII, 7 (apud Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VIII, 7, 7).

8. Among other Greek Fathers, see Clement of Alexandria, *Eclogae propheticae*, 50, 1-3.

Secondly, the Orthodox Church, following the teachings of the Fathers,[5] is totally opposed to any form of the abortion of unborn children. Human life belongs exclusively to God and neither the mother nor the father of the fetus has the right to destroy that life. [6] When the Fathers of the Church debated against the non-Christian philosophers[7] of the first centuries, they considered abortion as murder because the life of the fetus is animate being.[8]

(Note, for the closing claim, that the reason Zaphiris provides is articulated in a fashion which does not apply to contraception, at least not directly: destroying a painting is wrong precisely because an existing and completed painting is a work of art. What the rhetoric says, avoids saying, and leaves the reader to infer, seems to be exquisitely crafted sophistry.)

Thirdly, the Orthodox Church has universally condemned infanticide as immoral, following the same line of theological reasoning.

Zaphiris's footnote:

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Fourthly, it is important to stress that the Orthodox Church has not promulgated any solemn statements through its highest synods on the whole contemporary question of contraception. In general, I think it is accurate to say that, as long as a married couple is living in fidelity to one another and not allowing an immoral egotism to dominate their sexual relations, the particularities of their sexual life are left to the freedom of the spouses to decide.

Finally, it is important to note that the Orthodox Church looks to the medical profession itself to come to some unanimity in its biological research on the effects of contraception for human health. At the moment, the world of science does not furnish the world of theology such a unanimous body of opinion

as would allow the Church prudently to formulate unchangeable moral teaching on this point. 682

There is probably a higher class academic way of making this point, but there is a classic anecdote, rightly or wrongly attributed:

Winston Churchill to unknown woman: "Would you sleep with me for a million pounds?"

Unknown woman: "Would I!"

Winston Churchill: "Would you sleep with me for five pounds?"

Unknown woman: "Exactly what kind of woman do you think I am?"

Winston Churchill: "We've already established that. We're just negotiating over the price."

This claim is not a claim that the theological status of contraception is to be determined by the medical profession. The paragraph quoted above means that the theological status of contraception has already been established, with the "price" left to the medical profession to work out.

IV. A THEOLOGICAL OPINION ON THE QUESTION OF CONTRACEPTION

Zaphiris's footnote:

10. Clement of Alexandria, e.g., probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy, defines marriage as "gamos oun esti synodos andros kai gynaikos e prote kata nomon epi gnesion teknon sporai," i.e. marriage is primarily the union of a man and a woman according to the law in order to procreate legitimate children (cf. *Stromata*, II, 137, 1).

From the material we have surveyed above, it should be obvious that there can be no question of entering into marriage without the intention of procreating children as part of the marriage and still remain faithful to the Orthodox moral tradition.[10]

Pay very, *very* close attention to footnote 10, immediately above. When a Church Father says that marriage is for the procreation of legitimate children, Zaphiris mentions this only in a footnote and immediately *apologizes* for it, explaining it away as "probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy." Are we really talking about the same "Greek philosophy" as Zaphiris describes above as only rarely having people speak out against abortion?

Zaphiris's footnote:

11. When the patristic theologians comment on the Pauline doctrine of I Cor. 7:4-5, they consistently stress the temporary character of the sexual abstinence which was permitted by St. Paul to the marriage partners. This temporary period would be all that a husband and wife should agree to in order to avoid the temptation to evil (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 79, 1).

However, it seems to me that a different question is raised when we consider the case of a couple who already have three or four children and cannot realistically face the possibility of begetting more children and providing adequately for their upbringing and education. Either they can act fairly irresponsibly and beget more children or they can abstain from sexual intercourse with the constant threat that Satan may tempt the couple to some form of adultery.

I see plenty of precedent for this kind of heart-rending plea in Margaret Sanger's wake. Ordinarily when I see such a line of argument, it is to some degree connected with one of the causes Margaret Sanger worked to advance. I am more nebulous on whether the Fathers would have seen such "compassion" as how compassion is most truly understood; they were compassionate, but the framework that gave their compassion concrete shape is different from this model.

I might comment that it is almost invariably first-world people enjoying a first-world income who find that they cannot afford any more children. Are they really that much less able than people in the third-world to feed children, or is it simply that they cannot afford more children *and* keep up their present standard of living? If this choice is interpreted to mean that more children are out of the question, then what that means is, with apologies to St. John Chrysostom, a decision that luxuries and inherited wealth make a better legacy for one's children than brothers and sisters.

If the first practice of continued sexual intercourse is pursued, there is the likelihood of an unwanted pregnancy in which case the child ceases to be a sign of their shared love, but risks being a burden which causes only anxiety and even hostility. It is not common that people in this situation of despondency opt for the clearly immoral act of abortion. If this radical action is avoided, and the parents go through with the birth of an unwanted child, there is still the danger that they will subsequently seek a divorce.

Apart from economic or possible emotional problems which accompany economic pressures in family life, there is the equally concrete problem that the health of one of the parents or the health of the possible child might be jeopardized should conception occur.

To limit as far as possible the moral, religious, social, economic, cultural, and psychological problems which arise with the arrival of an unwanted child—both for the parents and for the larger community—I believe that the use of contraceptives would be, if not the best solution, at least the only solution we have at our disposal today. I cannot distinguish between natural and artificial means because the morality of both is the same. If someone uses either a natural or an artificial means of birth control, the intention is the same, i.e., to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. The use of contraceptives can facilitate a sexual life which enjoys a minimum of anxiety.

With these reflections on the current situation of family life and based on the above understanding of St. Paul and the Fathers, I ask myself what is better: to practice abstinence from the act of sexual intercourse, an act made holy by the blessing of God, or to practice a controlled sexual life within marriage and avoid the temptation of Satan? As we know, sexual intimacy within marriage is a very important aspect of the relationship between husband and wife. With the use of contraceptives this sexual intimacy can be practiced without fear of unwanted pregnancy or without the danger of adultery which may result from the practice of abstinence.

Here contraceptives appear to "save the day" in terms of marital intimacy, and the question of whether they have drawbacks is not brought to the reader's attention. Zaphiris is interested, apparently, in answering the question, "What can be made attractive about contraception?" There are other ways of looking at it.

There was one time I met Fr. Richard John Neuhaus; it was a pleasure, and very different from the stereotypes I keep hearing about neoconservatives here at my more liberal Catholic school, Fordham.

At that evening, over beer and (for the others) cigars I asked about the idea that I had been mulling over. The insight is that concepts ideas and positions having practical conclusions that may not be stated in any form. I asked Fr. Neuhaus for his response to the suggestion that the practice of ordaining women is a fundamental step that may ripple out and have other consequences. I said, "It would be an interesting matter to make a chart, for mainline Protestant denominations, of the date they accepted the ordination of women and the date when they accepted same-sex unions. My suspicion is that it would not be too many years."

He responded by suggesting that I push the observation further back: it would be interesting to make a chart for American denominations of the date when they allowed contraception, and the more nebulous date when they started to allow divorce.

Fr. Neuhaus's response raises an interesting question for this discussion. There might be greater value than Zaphiris provides in answering the question, "What are the practical effects, both positive and negative, for sexual intimacy that happen when a couple uses contraception?" There is room to argue that intimacy premised on shutting down that aspect of sharing may have some rather unpleasant effects surfacing in odd places. Fr. Neuhaus seemed to think before suggesting a connection between contraception and divorce. But this is *not* the question Zaphiris is answering; the question he seems to be answering is, "How can we present contraception as potentially a savior to some couples' marital intimacy?" This is fundamentally the wrong question to ask.

Zaphiris's foonote:

12. This spiritual union and the physical union are not opposed to one another, but are complementary. As an Orthodox theologian, I cannot treat physical union and spiritual union as dialectically opposed realities,

which would result from an opposition between matter and spirit. Rather than getting trapped in this typically Western problem, I follow the theological stress of Orthodoxy; this opposition between matter and spirit is resolved through the Logis, and matter and spirit are affirmed to be in extraordinary accord and synergy.

The use of contraceptives can contribute to the possibility of a couple's having a permanent physical and spiritual union. The practice of contraception can contribute to the harmony between the man and wife which is the *sine qua non* of their union. Furthermore, the practice of contraception can facilitate a balance between demographic expansion on our planet and cultivation of its natural resources. This is absolutely essential if we are to prevent future misery and human degradation for future generations. Furthermore, the church itself, which always desires to promote the economic, social, educational, psychological, and religious well-being of its members and of all persons, should permit the practice of contraception among its faithful if it is to be true to its own task.

There was one webpage I saw long ago, comparing the 1950's and 1990's and asking whether it was still possible to make ends meet. The author, after comparing one or two of other rules of thumb, compared what was in a 1950's kitchen with what was in a 1990's kitchen, and concluded, "We're not keeping up with the Joneses any more.... We're keeping up with the Trumps."

St. John Chrysostom was cited in an academic presentation I heard, as presenting an interesting argument for almsgiving: in response to the objection of "I have many children and cannot afford too much almsgiving," said that having more children was a reason to give *more* alms, because almsgiving has salvific power, and more children

have more need for the spiritual benefit of parental almsgiving.

Besides finding the argument interesting, there is something that I would like to underscore, and it is *not* simply because this would be a family size with contraception forbidden. This is in the context of what would today be considered a third world economy—what we know as first world economy did not exist until the West discovered unprecedentedly productive ways of framing an economy. An hour's work would not buy a burger and fries; a day's work might buy a reasonable amount of bread, and meat was a rarity. Those whom St. Chrysostom was advising to give more alms since they had more children, were living in what would be considered squalor today. Or in the West the year of Zaphiris' publication, or perhaps before that.

Why is it that today, in such a historically productive economy, we have suddenly been faced with the difficulty of providing for a large family? Why does the first world present us with the (new?) issue of providing for as many children as a couple generates? My suspicion is that it is because we have an expected baseline that would appear to others as "keeping up with the Trumps." The question in Zaphiris is apparently not so much whether children can be fed, whether with a first world diet or with straight bread, as whether they can be given a college education, because, in a variation of Socrates' maxim, a life without letters after one's name is not worth living.

I would raise rather sharply the conception of what is good for human beings: as Luke 12:15 says, a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. The Orthodox ascetical tradition has any number of resources for a well-lived life. There are more resources than most of us will ever succeed in using. The Orthodox ascetical tradition is not only for people who consider themselves rich. Is contraception *really* justified just because the average middle-class family cannot afford to bring up more than a few children in the lifestyle of keeping up with the

Trumps?

This personal theological-moral opinion which I have outlined and which suggests that we take active human measures regarding family life and the future of society does not at all imply that I reject the full importance of the action of divine providence as important—it is probably the most important factor in the human future. On the contrary, I want to suggest the cooperation of human reason with divine providence; for the Greek Fathers, human reason itself is a participation in the divine revelation. The discoveries and inventions of humankind are themselves permitted by God who governs the human spirit through the Logos without suppressing human freedom.

Furthermore, we must not forget that the physiology of the woman is itself a kind of preventative to the occurrence of pregnancy. During her menstrual cycle, as is well known, she is fertile only part of the time. On the side of the male physiology, it is only by chance, and certainly not the result of every ejaculation of semen, that one of the millions of sperm swims to the ovum with final success so that conception occurs. I believe that the physical make-up of the reproductive system of both female and male shows that God did not intend that every act of human sexual intercourse should result in a pregnancy. Consequently, I believe that the contraceptive pill does not produce an abnormal state in woman, but rather prolongs the non-fecund period which comes from God.

Having arrived at this moral opinion which would allow the use of contraceptives by Orthodox couples, it is important to conclude by underscoring several basic points. First, as an Orthodox theologian, I feel that I must respect the freedom of a married couple to

ultimately make the decision themselves after I have done my best to school them in the sacredness of marriage, the importance of their union within the saving Mystery of Jesus Christ, and their role in peopling the communion of saints.

684 Secondly, it is important, from an Orthodox point of view, to recognize in the practice of sexual continence a primarily spiritual reality. That is, sexual continence should be practiced only when a couple feels that this is being asked of them by God as a moment within their mutual growth in holiness and spirituality. Any imposition of continence as a physical discipline entered into for baser motives such as fear is not the kind of continence which is counseled to us by the Gospel.

This makes an amusing, if perhaps ironic, contrast to *Humanae Vitae*. Here Zaphiris more or less says that "continence" for the sake of having sexual pleasure unencumbered by children is not *really* continence. Which I would agree with. Zaphiris says that the pill (abortifascient, incidentally, on some accounts today) is merely regulating a natural cycle, while crying "foul!" at the Catholic claim that contraceptive timing is a spiritually commendable "continence." The Catholic position is the mirror image of this, rejecting the idea that the pill (even if it were not abortifascient) is merely regulating a natural cycle, and classifying the pill among what Catholic canon law calls "poisons of sterility." Both *Humanae Vitae* and Zaphiris make a shoddy argument for one of these two methods of contraception and cry "Foul!" about shoddy argument on the other side.

Despite the fact that Zaphiris presents himself as hostile to *Humanae Vitae* and rising above its faults, the two documents seem to be almost mirror images, more similar than different.

Zaphiris's footnotes:

13. As we know, the Encratites (e.g. Tatian, Cassien, and Carpocrates) condemned marriage because they considered every act of sexual intercourse as sinful. It was sinful because it did not come from God (cf. Epiphanius of Salamine, *Adv. Haer.*, I, III, 46). For them, sexuality was also condemned because of its supposed relationship to original sin. The fleshly union allowed by marriage only further propagated this original sin in the offspring. Thus, because sexuality was not divine, Jesus Christ came to suppress it (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 91, 1; 92, 1). In their doctrine, through the suppression of the fleshly union, Jesus Christ opposed the Gospel of the New Testament to the Law of the Old Testament which had allowed sexual intercourse in marriage. The followers of the encratic movement said that they did not accept sexuality, marriage, or procreation because they did not feel that they should introduce other human beings into the world and in their stead as their immediate successors in the human race since they would only endure suffering and provide food for death (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 45, 1).

14. Cf. Joseph Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility, Situation Ethics at Work*, (London, 1967), especially pp. 34ff.

Thirdly, I want to make it quite clear that I am not proposing a complete and unqualified endorsement of the practice of contraception. Rather I am trying to find that same kind of middle ground which the ancient church followed in condemning both the extremes of sexual puritanism among the Encratites, [13] who found in sex something contrary to the holiness of God, and the opposite extreme of pagan

debauchery which sought to find all human meaning in the practices of sexual excess. Within this Christian context, I exhort doctors to be faithful to the individual holiness of every Christian man and woman and to shun any irresponsible practice of automatically counseling the use of contraceptives in every situation for the sake of mere convenience and dehumanizing utilitarianism. Also, I want to make it quite clear that I in no way support the "new morality" with its ethic of sexual activity outside the bounds of matrimony, which is sometimes facilitated by doctors who furnish contraceptives quite freely to the young and uninstructed.

V. THE QUESTION OF CONTRACEPTION IN RELATION TO HUMANS' ROLE AS CO-LEGISLATORS WITH GOD IN THE WORLD

The roots of the Orthodox teaching on marriage are to be found in St. Paul's statement about the love between Christ and the church, and St. John Chrysostom's view that marriage should be likened to a small church which, like the great church of 684 God, is "one, holy, universal and apostolic." The relationship between husband and wife parallels the earthly church and the eternal church, or the relationship between the visible and the invisible church. These are not two different churches; on the contrary, there is one church with two dimensions: earthly or terrestrial, and eternal or celestial. The two are inextricably linked. Similarly, marriage constitutes for the Orthodox faith both a terrestrial and a celestial reality, for marriage is both a work of human love and a sacramental means of salvation. Moreover, insofar as every divinely created being, including man and woman, is created according to the Logos, marriage reflects the Divine Logos.

For Paul, marriage is a striking manifestation (exteriorization) of the union between Jesus Christ and his church (Eph. 5:21-33). The Old Testament prophets saw marriage as a dimension of God's covenant with the people. A husband's relationship with his wife is the same as the creature's relationship with the Creator; faithfulness in one is faithfulness in the other and, as with the faithfulness (cf. Hos. 1:1-3, 5; Jer. 3:1ff.; Ezek. 16:1ff., 23:1ff.; Isa. 50:1ff., 54:1ff.), so too Paul, in the New Testament, pronounced marriage a holy means (*mysterion* or sacrament) of Christ's grace. The marriage of man and woman participates in the marriage of Christ and the church.

Eastern Orthodox theologians view the relationship between God and human beings as a creative collaboration. It is our freedom that makes us co-creators with God in the world, and co-legislators with God in the moral order. As creatures, we are obliged to obey the law set down by the Creator, but insofar as our obedience is an expression of our freedom, we are not passive objects of God's law, but rather creative agents of it. Our reason is joined to God through the Logos (the Divine Reason). When we choose to exercise our reason in the moral life, we cooperate with God's creative work on earth. This cooperation or collaboration the Greek Fathers spoke of as synergism (*synergeia*). The person and work of Jesus Christ is the fullest embodiment of this synergistic union of God and humanity.

It is in the light of the synergistic union between God and humanity that the Eastern church understands and resolves the problems of contraceptives, especially the use of the pill.

I could interrupt more to ask many more questions like, "Is this what the Eastern Church should teach to be faithful to her tradition, or what Zaphiris wants the framing metaphor

for the Eastern teaching to be as a change to its prior tradition?"

The question we should ask now is: Does our freedom to devise and employ contraceptives, including the pill, violate "natural law" as Roman Catholic teaching states? We are compelled to answer that the encyclical of Pope Paul VI (*Humanae vitae*) is lacking because it does not acknowledge the role of man and woman as God's co-creators and co-legislators on earth. The Eastern Orthodox view of contraception, unlike that of the Latin church, is that our capacity to control procreation is an expression of our powers of freedom and reason to collaborate with God in the moral order. A human being is viewed not only as a subject which receives passively the "natural law," but also as a person who plays an active role in its formulation. Thus the natural law, according to Eastern Orthodox thinkers, is not a code imposed by God on human beings, but rather a rule of life set forth by divine inspiration and by our responses to it in freedom and reason. This view does not permit the Eastern Orthodox Church to conclude that the pill, and artificial contraceptives generally, are in violation of natural law.

There are a couple of things that are significant here.

First the argument being made about being co-legislators is a point of cardinal importance and one that should *ideally* be supported by at least *one* footnote. There is an *absolute* lack of footnotes or even mention of names of authors or titles of text in this section's quite significant assertions about the Eastern Church. (This raises to me some questions about the refereeing here. My teachers usually complain and lower my grade when I make sweeping claims without adding footnotes.)

Second, to employ a Western image, Christian freedom is comparable to a sonnet: total freedom within boundaries.

Hence, in a slightly paraphrased version of one of the sayings of the Desert Fathers, "A brother asked an old monk, 'What is a good thing to do, that I may do it and live?' The old monk said, 'God alone knows what is good. Yet I have heard that someone questioned a great monk, and asked, "What good work shall I do?" And he answered, "There is no single good work. The Bible says that Abraham was hospitable, and God was with him. And Elijah loved quiet, and God was with him. And David was humble, and God was with him. Therefore, find the desire God has placed in your heart, and do that, and guard your heart.'""

(
http://jonathanscorner.com/christmas_tales/christmas_tales10.html , as seen on 14 May, 2007) There is great freedom in Orthodoxy, but freedom within bounds. Things such as "Do not murder," "Do not commit adultery," and "Do not steal," are boundaries absolutely consistent with the Desert Fathers saying above. There is great freedom within boundaries, and in fact the boundaries *increase* our freedom.

What Zaphiris presents is a great, stirring, poetic hymn to our cooperation with the Creator as co-creators, presented as a reason not to require a certain bound. (It is my experience that sophistry is often presented more poetically than honest arguments.) Perhaps this would be a valid move if there were no serious issues surrounding contraception, but as it is, it follows the logical fallacy of "begging the question": in technical usage, "begging the question" is not about *raising* a question, but improperly taking something for granted: more specifically, presenting an argument that assumes the very point that it is supposed to prove. It is begging the question to answer the question, "Why is contraception permissible?" by eloquently proclaiming, "Contraception is a *magnificent* exercise of Orthodox freedom, because Orthodox freedom is magnificent and contraception is permissible within the bounds of that freedom." The whole point at issue is

whether contraception is permissible; to argue this way as a way of answering that question is sophistry.

(I might suggest that it is an "interesting" exercise of our status as co-creators with God to try hard to shut down the creative powers God built into sex. Perhaps the suggestion is not indefensible, but it is in *need* of being defended, and Zaphiris never acknowledges that *this* interpretation of our status as co-creators needs to be defended, or buttress his specific interpretation.)

686 The conception of natural law in *Humanae vitae* contains a deterministic understanding of human marital and sexual life. According to this understanding, any and every human (or artificial) intervention into the biological processes of human being constitutes a violation of God's law for humanity. Hence, contraception as an artificial interruption or prevention of the natural event of procreation is inherently a violation of God's law. *Humanae vitae*, moreover, goes on to state that each act of coitus is, according to the law of nature, an "actus per se aptus ad generation."

While the Eastern Orthodox Church fully acknowledges the role of procreation in the marital sexual act, it does not share the deterministic understanding of this act as expressed by *Humanae vitae*, which ignores love as a dimension of great value in sexual intercourse between husband and wife. Indeed, this love is viewed by the Eastern church as the marriage partners' own response to the love of God for human beings, a human love as the marriage partners' own response to the love of God for human beings, a human love which is also a paradigm of Christ's love for the church. Finally, one must say that the deterministic Roman Catholic conception of marital sexuality, rooted as it is in scholastic medieval

teaching, cannot very well deal with crucial contemporary problems such as over-population, food shortage, poverty, and insufficient medical resources.

The Roman Catholic position on human sexuality and procreation is based on the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, and these in turn are decisively influenced by Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle's view was that every object in the physical universe possesses an intelligible structure, a form which is composed of an intrinsic end and the means or "drive" to realize that end. When a thing is behaving, or being used, according to its end—as a frying pan used to fry fish—then that thing is acting properly or "naturally"; however, when a thing is not acting, or being used, according to its intrinsic end—as when a frying pan is used to prop open a faulty window—then that object is acting, or being used, improperly or "unnaturally."

There is a much bigger problem than a singularly unflattering illustration of the distinction between natural and unnatural use.

Unless one counts Zaphiris's example above of a theologian saying that marriage is intended for procreation, with footnoted clarification that this is "probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy," the surrounding passage (about Thomas Aquinas's discussion of whether contraception is unnatural) is the first time that Zaphiris mentions a theologian presenting an argument against contraception. And it is a Latin after the Great Schism interpreted in terms of Scholastic influence.

The following inference is not stated in so many words, but the trusting reader who is trying to be sympathetic will naturally draw an understandably wrong conclusion: "Arguments that contraception enter the picture when Aquinas as a Latin Scholastic imported Aristotelian philosophy." Again, this is not stated explicitly, but much of sophistry, including this, is the impression that is created

without technically saying anything false. (This is how sophistry works.)

This will lead the trusting reader to expect another further conclusion: since (so it appears) arguments against contraception, and especially the idea of contraception being unnatural, *enter* the picture with Latin Scholasticism, any Orthodox who brings such argument against contraception is under Western influence. People who have fallen under Western influence should perhaps be answered gently and charitably, but the Western influence is not something one should listen to and accept. Again, this is *not* stated in so many words, but it is precise the rhetoric appears to be aimed at.

Incidentally, whatever Aquinas may have gotten from Aristotle, the Greek Fathers had ideas of unnatural vice *without* the help of Latin Scholasticism. There is a firmly embedded concept of unnatural vices, including witchcraft as well as "unnatural vice." Jude 7 charges the men of Sodom with unnatural lust (*sarkos heteras*). The salient question is not whether the Greek Fathers have an understanding of *some* sins as unnatural, but whether contraception is a sin and, if so, whether it is among the sins classified as unnatural. But it is *not* automatically due to Western influence for an Orthodox to make claims about unnatural sin.

St. Thomas attempted to synthesize Aristotle's logic of means-ends with the biblical story of the divine creator of the universe. For Aquinas, God is the author of the intelligible structure present in each finite or earthly object. When a finite being behaves according to its intrinsic end, it acts "naturally" as Aristotle thought, but according to Aquinas it also acts in accord with the divine will for that creaturely being. So it is with human sexuality and procreation. Aquinas believed that the intrinsic end of all sexuality (human and non-human) is procreation. Procreation may not

necessarily result from each act of coitus, but this does not mean that the sexual (human) partners have disobeyed God for, if their aim in sexual union was procreation, they have behaved in accord with the divine will governing this creaturely reality. But if that intrinsic aim of sexuality-procreation is subverted, either by substituting pleasure for procreation as the aim, or by introducing artificial devices or means to inhibit or prevent procreation, then sexuality is practiced "unnaturally" or sinfully, and God is disobeyed.

The wedding of Aristotle's means-ends logic to the biblical Creator meant for Aquinas that sexuality, as every other earthly vitality, is governed by laws setting forth God's intention for each creaturely being, which are knowable to every creature for 686 the proper conduct of its life on earth. When the law governing sexuality and procreation is disobeyed, then, according to Aquinas' theology, the Creation itself is undermined and God's own creative will is defied.

* * *

If a fuller anthropological understanding of human beings is advanced, such that people are viewed as free, rationally and spiritually, as well as biologically, a different judgment on contraception must then be made, one certainly different from that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Zaphiris is driving his persuasive effect further. He is driving home further the impression that if a misguided fellow Orthodox tells you that contraception is sin, he is presumably one of those poor saps, an Orthodox who has fallen under Western influence, and if this misguided fellow Orthodox perhaps specifies that this is because contraception frustrates the purpose of sex, this is someone

under the spell of the Roman Church, who is to be dealt with as one ordinarily deals with the pseudomorphosis of Western influence yet again corrupting Orthodoxy.

It is the belief of Eastern Orthodox theology that only such an anthropology is consistent with the dignity the Bible bestows on humans as *imago Dei*.

Note that earlier some of what Zaphiris said *earlier* was presented as a "theological opinion," not necessarily binding on the consciences of other Orthodox Christians even if he was trying to make a case for it. But here we seem to have shifted to something that is binding on all Orthodox Christians: "It is the belief of Eastern Orthodox theology that only such an anthropology," apparently meaning the anthropology implied in the last section which makes at least one sweeping claim without footnotes or even the name of an author or text, that is binding on the consciences of Orthodox Christians. Earlier, perhaps the view of St. John Chrysostom might have been acceptable, at least as a theological opinion. Here it begins to look like a blunt declaration implying that Chrysostom's position is heretical. Is the implication, "If anybody disagrees with this, let him be anathema?"

This dignity is revealed afresh by Jesus Christ who, as both divine and human in freedom, reason, spirit, and flesh, incarnates the complex anthropology of all human beings.

Speaking from this anthropological conception of humanity, we should distinguish three principle aspects in the use of contraceptives—the psychological, the medical, and the moral. From the psychological point of view, contraceptives are permissible only when their use is the result of a common decision reached by both partners. The imposition of contraceptives by one partner in the sexual act must

be regarded as immoral inasmuch as it abridges the freedom and possibly violates the conscience of the other partner. Any use of contraceptives which does not respect the psychological condition of both partners and of the sexual act itself must be judged immoral. What should guide sexual partners in the use or non-use of contraceptives is their freedom and reason, their spiritual dignity as creatures of God.

Zaphiris's footnote:

15. [Footnote not recorded in my copy.]

From the medical point of view, we have mentioned above the conditions under which contraceptives are permissible. It is important to emphasize here that moral questions are not part of the technical judgments made by medical doctors about the use or non-use of contraceptives.[15] As we have said, the use of the pill is not a permanent sterilization but a temporary state of sterility induced for reasons that may be social or economic or psychological or demographic or physiological.

Contrary to Roman Catholic teaching, the pill does not violate natural law. Its function is not to bring about a permanent state of sterilization but rather a temporary suspension of fertility. And this decision to suspend fertility, when made by both marital partners with reason and freedom and spirit, is a decision made perfectly consistent with God's will for human beings on earth.

* * *

688 There is an authentic moral question in the use and non-use of contraceptives. It is no less true that marriage as a sacramental mystery contains a powerful moral dimension. When marital partners engage in contraception, the Orthodox Church

believes that they must do so with the full understanding that the goal God assigns to marriage is both the creation of new life and the expression of deeply felt love.

Note: Love is something you deeply *feel*. I do not find this notion in the Bible nearly so much as in the literature of courtly love. This conception of love is (one infers from Zaphiris) not only permissible but mandatory.

Moreover, the Orthodox Church believes that the relationship of man and woman in marriage is essentially a relationship of persons. This means that sexual life must be guided by the meaning of relationship and personhood.

Though it is obvious that procreation is a physical phenomenon, the Eastern church understands the decision of the married couple to have a child to be a moral, even more, a spiritual decision. The Pope's encyclical, *Humanae vitae*, in our judgment, committed a significant error. The authors of the encyclical sought to distinguish our procreative power from all other powers that make us human but, in fact, they isolate our procreateness and set it apart from the human personality. Such an isolation does little justice to the complexity. If conjugality has as its goal *per se aptitude for procreation*, then this is a virtual denial that sexual is permissible during a woman's unfertile periods. We have said, and now repeat, that conjugality can and should[sic] continue, whether or not procreation is a practical possibility. In contrast to *Humanae vitae*, Orthodox thinkers do not believe that human beings are subjects bound by "natural law" in the deterministic Roman Catholic sense, but rather persons living and acting freely in the natural world.

It now appears, at least to the uninitiate or those liable

to misconstrue things, that existentialist personalism is the teaching of the Orthodox Church. And apparently not just a theological opinion: one is bound to subscribe to it.

* * *

Zaphiris's footnote:

16. For one Orthodox discussion of the question of insemination, see the excellent book of Prof. Chrysostomos Constantinidis, *Technete Gonipoesis kai Theologia in Orthodoxia*, XXXIII (1958), 66-79, 174-90, 329-335, 451-468; XXXIV (1959), 36-52, 212-230.

Eastern Orthodoxy recognizes that men and women can only truly be God's co-creators on earth through the responsible use of freedom and reason. The question of responsibility becomes crucial in such cases as permanent sterilization, artificial insemination,[16] and euthanasia. The Eastern Orthodox Church cannot and will not legislate vis-à-vis the enormously important and complicated questions raised by these cases.

I'm at this point imagining the Battle Hymn of the Republic playing in the background: "Glory, glory, Hallelujah! His truth goes marching on!" This is very stirring rhetoric, but sits ill with some of my sources and seems to be something he doesn't document well.

These questions are regarded by the Orthodox Church as *theologoumena*, that is, theologically discussable issues. The Eastern church seeks always to respect one's freedom of decision, but it also seeks through its own ethical inquiry to guide people in

making responsible decisions.

There is a lot of great rhetoric for this perspective in Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*. I am suspicious of this rhetorical version of growing to autonomous adult responsibility in its Catholic forms, and I don't see why it needs to be incorporated into Orthodoxy.

The Eastern church's refusal to provide specific answers to some concrete moral questions is based on a fundamental theological principle—the belief that no one can specify where human freedom ends and divine will begins.

Notwithstanding that Zaphiris has done *precisely* that, *not* by forbidding contraception altogether, but by specifying multiple lines which contraception may not pass. And, apparently, specified a line where Orthodox condemnation of contraception may not pass. But this is impressive rhetoric none the less.

Synergism means the collaboration of human beings with God in the continuing creation of the world. We must struggle to understand the right and wrong uses of our freedom, guided by the divine spirit. Our freedom is a mystery of God's own will and freedom. Therefore, no theologian—Eastern Orthodox 689 or otherwise—can specify what finally constitutes the divine-human collaboration. Practically speaking, we can know when any given act, having taken place we can never be certain of the responsible and creative use of our freedom. We cannot determine *a priori* the movement of the human spirit any more than we can determine *a priori* the movement of the divine spirit. It is certain that, unless we recognize continually the Lordship of God in the world—the Creator judging all the actions of the creatures, we cannot speak truly of a

divine-human synergism.

The church is an instrument of the work of the Holy Spirit on earth, and must seek to relate the scriptural revelation of God to the moral situation in life which we constantly confront. When the church accepts this responsibility, it enables the participation of human beings in the on-going history of salvation. In this fashion, the church witnesses simultaneously to the sacred will of God and to the urgency of human moral life. Thereby the church avoids both antinomianism on the one side and the moral reductionism of "situation ethics" on the other side.

Many ethical approaches are presented as meant to steer a middle course between problematic extremes, including ones we might like and ones we might not. See an attempted middle road between forcing queer positions onto the Biblical text and forcing conservative positions onto the Biblical text in Patricia Beattie Jung, "The Promise of Postmodern Hermeneutics for the Biblical Renewal of Moral Theology," in Patricia Beattie Jung (ed.), *Sexual Diversity and Catholicism: Toward the Development of Moral Theology*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2001. I haven't seen this phenomenon before in Orthodoxy, but it is common in the liberal Catholic dissent I've read. The dissenter adopts a rhetorical pose of being eager to seek a measured middle course that doesn't do something extreme, and does not give unfair advantage to any position. But this is done in the course of agitating for change on a point where the Catholic teaching is unambiguous. Jung, for instance hopes for a versions Catholic ethics more congenial to lesbian wishes, but she always takes the rhetoric of moderate and reasonable efforts that will respect Scripture and Catholic Tradition. (Again, I am comparing Zaphiris to Catholic dissent because I have not seen what he is doing here in Orthodoxy before, but have seen it *repeatedly* in liberal Catholic dissent.)

Zaphiris's footnote:

17. This is an expression used by Nicholas Cabasilas, an Eastern Orthodox theologian of the Byzantine era. The notion of God's *maniakos eros* is discussed by Paul Evdokimov, *L'amour fou de Dieu* (Paris, 1973).

We must conclude here by saying that God's fantastic love for human beings—*maniakos eros*[17]—has divinised all creation. With this divinisation, God achieves the purpose of bringing all beings to God's own self. We play a role in this great work of salvation through the creativeness and freedom which God has bestowed on us. These dynamic capacities of our being cannot finally be identified and understood outside the scope of the Christian doctrines of humanity (anthropology), of Christ (Christology), and of salvation (soteriology). The ultimate purpose of our synergistic relation to God is our own regeneration, as the New Testament states (cf. Rom. 8:28; Phil. 2:13; I Cor. 3:9).

Zaphiris's footnotes:

18 I Cor 2:7.

19 Rom 12:2.

Moreover, synergism has an ecclesiological dimension, and secondarily a moral dimension. Our role as co-legislators on earth with God can only fully be exercised in relationship to the church, which is the instrument of the communication of the Holy Spirit to humans in their creativeness. This means for Eastern Orthodoxy that the legislative and creative actions of

men and women are a liturgy of the church itself. When we live in relation to the church's body, we live within "God's wisdom: a mysterious and hidden wisdom framed from the very beginning to bring us to our full glory." [18] The ecclesio-anthropo-soteriological value of this human liturgy is contained in the relation which exists between God's revelation and our activity. The harmonious cooperation between God and humans makes it possible for our legislative and creative acts to be "what is good, acceptable, and perfect." [19]

We have offered these remarks in the hope that they can contribute to a common basis for an ecumenical discussion on the contemporary human problem of contraception.

Orthodox who are concerned with ecumenism may wish to take note of this statement of authorial intent.

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Study and discussion questions

1. What view concerning marriage and sexuality do we find in the Scriptures? In the early Christian writers?
2. Discuss the author's interpretation of the biblical and patristic views of marriage, sexuality, and procreation.
3. What implication concerning contraception can be derived from biblical and patristic concepts of marriage, sexuality, and procreation?
4. What are the official teachings of the Orthodox

Church on contraception?

5. How do these teachings compare with Protestant and Roman Catholic teachings?
6. Under what circumstances does the author believe contraception to be theologically permissible? Discuss.
7. What is synergism?
8. How is contraception linked with synergism?
9. How is the resulting view of contraception within Orthodoxy a contrast to the Roman Catholic view?
10. Why does the Eastern Orthodox Church avoid concrete and decisive answers to problems such as contraception?

I have never seen Bible study / book discussion / *The Secret* questions posed like this in a refereed journal before. I suspect that these will lead people to say things that will help cement the belief that the truth is more or less what has been presented in this account. This seems in keeping with other red flags that this is doing more than just providing a scholarly account of what Orthodox believe. Perhaps this is part of why this paper's label as a "theological opinion"—about as close as Orthodoxy gets to the idea of "agreeing to disagree" on spiritual matters—has been accepted as a statement of what the Orthodox Church believes, period.

I believe this document has problems, and if as I expect it is a major influence in the "new consensus" allowing some contraception in the Orthodox Church, this constitutes

major reason to re-evaluate the "new consensus."

There could conceivably be good reasons to change the ancient tradition of the Orthodox Church from time immemorial to almost the present day. *Maybe*. But this is not it. (And if these are the best reasons Zaphiris found to change the immemorial tradition of the Church, perhaps it would be better not to do so.)

Un-man's Tales:

C.S. Lewis's Perelandra, Fairy Tales, and Feminism

The two C.S. Lewis scholars cited and discussed below are two of the greatest around. One of them I know. But as Lewis said, "A small man may avoid the error of a great one."

A first clue to something big, tucked into a choice of children's books

I was once part of a group dedicated to reading children's stories (primarily fantasy) aloud. At one point the group decided to read Patricia Wrede's *Dealing with Dragons*. I had a visceral reaction to the book as something warped, but when I tried to explain it to the group by saying that it was like the Un-man in *Perelandra*. I was met with severe resistance from two men in the group. Despite this, and after lengthy further discussions, I was able to persuade them that the analogy was at least the best I could manage

in a tight time slot.

I was puzzled at some mysterious slippage that had intelligent Christians who appreciated good literature magnetized by works that were, well... *warped*. And that mysterious slippage seemed to keep cropping up at other times and circumstances.

Why the big deal? I will get to the Un-man's message in a moment, but for now let me say that little girls are sexist *way* too romantic. And this being sexist *way* too romantic motivates girls to want fairy tales, to want some knight in shining armor or some prince to sweep them off their feet. And seeing how this sexist deeply romantic desire cannot easily be ground out of them, feminists have written their own fairy tales, but...

To speak from my own experience, I never realized how straight traditional fairy tales were until I met feminist fairy tales. And by 'straight' I am not exactly meaning the opposite of queer (though that is close at hand), but the opposite of twisted and warped, like "Do You Want to Date My Avatar?" (I never knew how witchcraft could be considered unnatural vice until I read the witches' apologetic in Terry Pratchett's incredibly warped *The Wee Free Men*.) There is something warped in these tales that is not covered by saying that *Dealing with Dragons* has a heroine who delights only in what is forbidden, rejects marriage for the company of dragons, and ridicules every time its pariahs say something just isn't *done*. (And—and I don't see this as insignificant—the book uses, just once, the word 'magicked', a spelling of 'magic' reserved mostly for real occult practice in life and not metaphorical magic.) Seeing as how the desire for fairy tales is too hard to pull out, authors have presented warped anti-fairy tales.

Ella Enchanted makes it plain: for a girl or woman to be under obedience is an unmixed curse. There is no place for "love, honor, and obey."

The commercials for *Tangled* leave some doubt about whether the heroine sings a Snow White-style "Some day my prince will come."

The Un-man's own tales

One question that can be fairly raised is how far this might just be Lewis's creative imagining for one story—and it would be a brave soul who would deny Lewis can be imaginative. Whether *this* point is just imagination, or something Lewis would say in a nonfiction essay, can in fact be seen from a nonfiction essay, "Priestesses in the Church?"

Perelandra has a protagonist who visits Venus or Perelandra, where an unfallen Eve is joined first by him and then by the antagonist, called the Un-man because he moves from prelest or spiritual illusion to calling demons or the Devil into himself and then letting his body be used as a demonic puppet.

How does the Un-man try to tempt this story's Eve?

[The Lady said:] "I will think more of this. I will get the King to make me older about it."

[The Un-man answered:] "How greatly I desire to meet this King of yours! But in the matter of Stories he may be no older than you himself."

"That saying of yours is like a tree with no fruit. The King is always older than I, and about all things."...

[The Lady said,] "What are [women on earth] like?"

[The Un-man answered,] "They are of great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for

Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does..."

...The Lady seemed to be saying very little. [The Un-man]'s voice was speaking gently and continuously. It was not talking about the Fixed Land nor even about Maleldil. It appeared to be telling, with extreme beauty and pathos, a number of stories, and at first Ransom could not perceive any connecting link between them. They were all about women, but women who had apparently lived at different periods of the world's history and in quiet differences. From the Lady's replies it appeared that the stories contained much that she did not understand; but oddly enough the Un-man did not mind. If the questions aroused by any one story proved at all difficult to answer, the speaker simply dropped that story and instantly began another. The heroines of the stories seemed all to have suffered a great deal—they had been oppressed by their fathers, cast off by husbands, deserted by lovers. Their children had risen up against them and society had driven them out. But the stories all ended, in a sense, happily: sometimes with honours and praises to a heroine still living, more often by tardy acknowledgment and unavailing tears after her death. As the endless speech proceeded, the Lady's questions grew always fewer...

The expression on [the Lady's] face, revealed in the sudden light, was one that [Ransom] had not seen there before. Her eyes were not fixed on the narrator; as far as that went, her thoughts might have been a thousand miles away. Her lips were shut and a little pursed. Her eyebrows were slightly raised. He had not yet seen her look so like a woman of our own race; and yet her expression was one he had not very often met on earth—except, as he realized with a shock, on the stage. "Like a tragedy queen" was the disgusting comparison that arose in his mind. Of course it was a

gross exaggeration. It was an insult for which he could not forgive himself. And yet... and yet... the tableau revealed by the lightning had photographed itself on his brain. Do what he would, he found it impossible not to think of that new look in her face. A very *good* tragedy queen, no doubt, very nobly played by an actress who was a good woman in real life...

A moment later [the Un-man] was explaining that men like Ransom in his own world—men of that intensely male and backward-looking type who always shrank away from the new good—had continuously laboured to keep women down to mere childbearing and to ignore the high destiny for which Maleldil had actually created her...

The external and, as it were, dramatic conception of the self was the enemy's true aim. He was making her mind a theatre in which that phantom self should hold the stage. He had already written the play.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the Lady is complementarian to the point where one wonders if the label 'complementarian' is sufficient, and the demon or Devil using the Un-man's body is doing his treacherous worst to convert her to feminism. Hooper says he is trying to make her fall by transgressing one commandment, and that is true, but the entire substance of the attack to make her fall is by seducing her to feminism.

A strange silence in the criticism

Quoting a friend, "Also, just a side note and not about your writing, but I find the criticism of Lewis rather comical since Sarah is represented as a model of discernment, which is above intellectual virtue and includes it. This idea is part of what sparks the 'huh?' response from me at any rate."

Walter Hooper's *C.S. Lewis: Companion and Guide* treats

this dialogue in detail but without the faintest passing reference to feminism, men and women, sex roles, or anything else in that nexus. It does, however, treat the next and final book in the trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*, and defend Lewis from "anti-feminism" in a character who was a woman trying to do a dissertation on Milton: Lewis, it is revealed, had originally intended her to be doing a dissertation on biochemistry, but found that he was not in a position to make that part of the story compelling, and so set a character whose interests more closely paralleled his own. So the issue of feminism was on his radar, possibly looming large. But, and this is a common thread with other examples, he exhibits a mysterious slippage. His account gets too many things right to be dismissed on the ground that he doesn't know how to read such literature, but it also leaves too much out, mysteriously, to conclude that he gave anything like such a scholar's disinterested best in explaining the text. (It is my own opinion that Hooper in fact *does* know how to read; he just mysteriously sets this ability aside when Lewis counters feminism.) And this slippage keeps happening in other places and context, always mysterious on the hypothesis that the errors are just errors of disinterested, honest scholarship.

Jerry Root, in his own treatment in *C.S. Lewis and a Problem of Evil: An Investigation of a Pervasive Theme*, treats subjectivism as spiritual poison and problem of evil Lewis attacks in his different works: Root argues it to be the prime unifying theme in Lewis). But with slight irony, Root seems to turn subjectivistic, or at least disturbing, precisely where his book touches gender roles and egalitarianism. In his comments on *The Great Divorce's* greatest saint-figure, a woman, Susan Smith, is slighted: among other remarks, he quotes someone as saying that women in C.S. Lewis's stories are "he neglects any intellectual virtue in his female characters," and this is particularly applied to Sarah Smith. When he defends Lewis, after a fashion, Root volunteers, "a

book written in the 1940s will lack some accommodations to the culture of the twenty-first century." But this section is among the goofiest logic in Root's entire text, speaking with a quasi-psychoanalytic Freudian or Jungian outlook of "a kind of fertile mother-image and nature-goddess," that is without other parallel and certainly does not infect the discussion of Lewis's parents, who well enough loom large at points, but not in any psychoanalytic fashion. Root's entire treatment at this point has an "*I can't put my finger on it, but—*" resemblance to feminists disarming and neutralizing any claim that the Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary could in any way, shape, or form contribute to the well-standing of women: one author, pointing out the difficulty of a woman today being both a virgin and a mother, used that as a pretext to entirely dismiss the idea that She could be a model for woman or a token of woman's good estate, thus throwing out the baby, the bathwater, and indeed the tub. The Mother of God is She who answered, "Be it unto me according to thy word," an answer that may be echoed whether or not one is a virgin, a mother, or for that matter a woman.

The critique Root repeats, on reflection, may meet an Orthodox response of "Huh?", or more devastatingly, "Yes, but what's your point?", not because Lewis portrays a saint as "no model of intellectual virtue," but because Orthodox sainthood is not a matter of intellectual virtue. Among its rich collection of many saints there are very *few* models of intellectual virtue, admittedly mostly men, and usually having received their formation *outside* the Orthodox Church: St. John Chrysostom was called "Chrysostom" or "Golden-Mouth" because of his formation and mastery of pagan rhetoric. But intellectual virtue as a whole is not a central force in the saints, and Bertrand Russell's observation that in the Gospels not one word is put in praise of intelligence might be accepted, not as a weakness of the Gospel, but as a clarification of what is and is not central to

Christian faith. And in terms of what is truly important, we would do well to recall the story of St. Zosima and St. Mary of Egypt. If Lewis's image of sainthood is a woman who is not an academic, this is not an embarrassment to explain away, but a finger on the pulse of what does and does not matter for sainthood.

Humankind, *n.* Mankind, as pronounced by people who are offended at "man" ever being inclusive language.

Hayward's Unabridged Dictionary

Root mentions the Un-man briefly, and gives heavy attention to the man who would become the Un-man as he appears in the prior book in the trilogy, but does not reference or suggest a connection between the Un-man and feminism. Root became an egalitarian, and shifts in his book from speaking of "men" to saying "humankind". And this is far from one scholar's idiosyncrasy; a look at the World Evangelical Alliance's online bookstore as I was involved with it showed this mysterious slippage not as something you find a little here, a little there, but as endemic and without any effective opposition.

Un-man's Tales for Grown-Ups

During my time as webmaster to the World Evangelical Alliance, the one truly depressing part of my work was getting the bookstore online. Something like eighty to ninety percent of the work was titles like *Women as Risk-Takers for God* which were Un-man's Tales for adults. I was depressed that the World Evangelical Alliance didn't seem to have anything else to say on its bookshelves: not only was there a dearth of complementarian "opposing views" works like *Man and Woman in Christ*, but there was a dearth of anything besides Unman's Tales. The same mysterious phenomenon was not limited to a ragtag group of friends, or

individual scholars; it was dominant at the highest level in one of the most important parachurch organizations around, and not one that, like Christians for Biblical Equality, had a charter of egalitarian or feminist concerns and priorities.

Conclusion

G.K. Chesterton said, "Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed." That might hold for Chesterton's day, and classics like Grimm and MacDonald today, but today's fairy tales, or rather Unman's tales, do not tell children the dragons can be killed. Children already know that deep down inside. They tell children dragons can be befriended and that dragons may make excellent company. For another title of the myriad represented by *Dealing with Dragons*, look at the tale of cross-cultural friendship one may look for in *The Dragon and the George*. When first published, *Dealing with Dragons* might have been provocative. Now *Tangled* is not. And reading *Perelandra* leaves one with an uncomfortable sense that C.S. Lewis apparently plagiarized, in the Unman's tales, works written decades after his death.

This issue is substantial, and Lewis's sensitivity to it is almost prophetic: sensibilities may have changed, but only in the direction of our needing to hear the warning more. And it is one Christians seem to be blind to: complementarianism seems less wrong than petty, making a mountain out of a molehill. But the core issue is already a mountain, not a molehill.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there

be any praise, think on these things. Aim for something better than Unman's Tales.

What the West Doesn't Get About Islam

English translation needed

Muslims who say "Islam is peaceful" are neither insincere nor sloppy in what they claim, but you do not understand the claim "Islam is peaceful" until you understand what peace **means** in Islam.

"Islam" means "surrender," and the peace Islam seeks is also surrender. Some have said, "surrender at the point of a gun." If you would describe yourself as not religious but spiritual, demanding your forced conversion at the point of a gun would be fitting and appropriate in the peacefulness of Islam. And if you refused, *pulling the trigger to blow your brains out would be a proper act of peace*. The peace offered by Islam is forever incomplete if there are still people who have not surrendered in Islam, and the one world religion founded in violence, Islam, offers a peace that was rightly and properly advanced in this initial violent conquest. "Islam is peaceful" is quite an honest claim but what it is **not** is proof that Islam, just much as you, wishes so dearly that we could all ☪️⊕⊙⊚⊛⊜⊝⊞⊟⊠⊡⊢⊣⊤⊥⊦⊧⊨⊩⊪⊫⊬⊭⊮⊯⊰⊱⊲⊳⊴⊵⊶⊷⊸⊹⊺⊻⊼⊽⊾⊿⊿/coexist.

An Indian woman asks, "Anybody home? Hello?"

An Indian woman, trying to get through to Westerners who are thick-skulled about getting Islam, explained that when Muslim invaders were conquering in India, many Hindu women committed suicide because they knew "Muslim men would rape them in front of their husbands' eyes, kill their husbands, and [forcibly] take them for wives." Not, perhaps, that Islam has a monopoly on soldiers raping: in World War II, after D-Day, U.S. military courts hanged dozens of soldiers for rape, and some of both the court members and the soldiers tried had to be Christian. Rape in war happens, is recognized to happen, and in better moments is treated as a clear atrocity. But, unless you are very anti-Christian, a Christian who rapes under *any* circumstance is acting in an un-Christian way. At least in the Indian women's perspective that was articulated, it may not be acting in a clearly un-Muslim way to rape an Indian woman in front of her husband's eyes, murder her husband, and forcibly marry her.

Western stupidity about Christian fundamentalists as nut jobs and Muslims as much more attractive?

One roommate I had talked about hearing something that scared him silly, about the younger George Bush. He didn't present this as 100% certain, but he claimed that George Bush, in a meeting with several Muslims, had shown the staggering insensitivity to Islam of saying that God had told him to do X. Apparently only one of the Muslim leaders remembered this striking claim, and that one leader didn't understand what was such a big deal, but then-President Bush had shown a most appalling insensitivity to Islam and Muslims that scared him silly.

I pointed out to him, or tried to, that on his account:

- President Bush had done something in the presence of several influential Muslims that was patently offensive to Muslims,
- Only one such Muslim remembered it and didn't see what the big deal was.

And these two do not match.

Really, whatever other things Islam may be accused of, we cannot accuse them of going off in a corner, quietly sulking, and leaving the rest of us to play impenetrable guessing games about why they're upset and what they want us to do to make amends. But I tried quite in vain to point this out.

Whether in fact George Bush ever told Muslims that God told him something I do not know. But there is a bit of illogic going on. It may scare an academic liberal silly for someone in power to believe there is a God who makes such claims on us. But *it is not offensive to Muslims to believe there may be a God and this God could make such claims on us*; the basic implication need offend Muslims scarcely more than it need offend scientists to say that it is helpful to test our theories by experiment, or that it need offend coaches to say that athletes should train before they go to competitions.

There is a sense among the people I have known that "Bible-believing Christians" are really not enlightened, and are really nut jobs, but with due charity we should pay Muslims the common courtesy of recognizing that they are basically enlightened and *not* like Christian fundamentalist nut jobs, and that unlike stupid and dangerous types like John McCain and Sarah Palin, Muslims want to ☺☻☼☽☿♁♂ and unlike those weird Christian fundamentalists, they will ☺☻☼☽☿♁♂ quite nicely. Maybe this is changing; South Park

can obscenely mock every religious founder but one, as far as Comedy Central allows after Muslim response, and people in the West are starting to act like saying something vile about Mohammed will get a bit different of a response from those nut job Christians (you know, those dunces who just don't get that we should $\text{C} \oplus \in \star \uparrow \odot \ddagger$). But the way it has changed in the West may not be for the best.

If you find something objectionable about conservative Christianity, fine, but understand that Islam is further, not nearer, to your outlook than such Christianity. It is a capital mistake to worry about some kinds of Christians in power and assume that Muslims, unlike Christians, will be well-behaved and enlightened people we need to understand, and if we only approach them the right way, they will $\text{C} \oplus \in \star \uparrow \odot \ddagger$ with us flawlessly. If you find such Christians extreme, be ready to experience Islam in power as going out of the frying pan, into the fire... or rather, into the thermite.

Muslims and Marines

Speaking of "Islamic extremism" reflects a fundamental confusion of ideas, like speaking of "extremism in the USMC". In matters of faith, healthy Islam does not do things by halves. The idea of being a Muslim "on your own terms", choosing how far to go and which parts of the tradition to embrace, is like talking about joining the Marines on your own terms, cutting the physical activity to a reasonable level and choosing which orders it makes sense for you to follow. This is fundamentally confused.

It is imposing a foreign understanding on Islam to expect that the vast majority of Muslims are moderate, reasonable by Western standards, drawing spiritual inspiration from the Quran without taking it too literally, and then there is that very rare member of every movement's lunatic fringe, who does things we would find objectionable.

We speak of "extreme" and "moderate." It would be

Why Study Mathematics?

One question which is raised by many people is, "Why should I study mathematics?". The question is usually asked from a perspective that there is probably no good and desirable reason for the speaker to study mathematics, but he will tolerate the minimum required because he has to, and then get on to more valuable and important things.

I readily acknowledge that there are many math classes which are drudgery and a general waste of time, and that many people have had experiences with mathematics which give them good reason to hold a distaste for the discipline. However, it is my hope that I may provide readers with an insight that there is something more to mathematics, and that this something more may be worthwhile.

Let's begin by looking at the reasons that the reader may already have come across for why he should study mathematics:

- There are certain basic computational skills that are needed in life. People should be able to figure out whether a 24-pack of their favorite soda for \$3.89 is a better or worse deal than a 12-pack for \$1.99.
- It builds character. I suffered through mathematics for such-and-such many years. So should you.

Of course, nobody explicitly says the second reason, but it may very well seem that way—like one of the hush-hushed truths that the Adult Conspiracy hides from students the same way it hides the fact that there is no Santa Claus from little children. And the first reason is something that many non-mathematical administrators believe.

But those are not the real reasons that a mathematician will give for why a nonmathematician should study mathematics, and what kind of mathematics a nonmathematician should study.

The first question which should be addressed is, "What is mathematics really about?"

The answer which many nonmathematicians may have is something along the lines of, "Mathematics, at its heart, is about learning and using formulas and things like that. In gradeschool, you learn the formulas and methods to add, subtract, multiply, and divide; then in middle school and high school it is on to bigger and better formulas, like the formula for the slope of a line passing through two points. Then in college, if your discipline unfortunately requires a little mathematics (such as the social sciences requiring statistics), you learn formulas that are even more complicated and harder to remember. The deeper you go into mathematics, the more formulas and rote methods you have to learn, and the worse it gets."

The best response I can think of to that question is to respond by analogy, and my response is along the following lines:

A child in school will be taught various grammatical rules, sentence diagramming, and so on. These will be drilled and studied for quite a long while, and it must be said that this is not the most interesting of areas to study.

An English teacher who is asked, "Is this what your discipline is really about?", will almost certainly answer, "No!". Perhaps the English student is proficient in grammar, but that's not what English is about. English is about literature—about stories, about ideas, about

characters, about plots, about poetic description, about philosophy, about theology, about thinking, about life. Grammar is not studied so that people can suffer through learning more pointless grammar; grammar is studied to provide students with a basic foundation from which they will be able to use the English language. It is a little drudgery which is worked through so that students may behold an object of great beauty.

This is the function of the formulas and rules of mathematics. Not rules and formulas so that the student is prepared for more rules and formulas, but rules and formulas which are studied so that the student can go past them to see what mathematics is really about.

And what is mathematics really about? Before I give a full answer, let me say that it is something like what English is about.

The one real glimpse that someone who has been through high school may have had of mathematics is in the study of geometry. There are a few things about high school geometry that I would like to point out:

- In geometry, one is given certain axioms and postulates (for example, the parallel postulate—given a line and a point not on the line, there is exactly one line through the given point which does not intersect the given line), definitions (a circle is the set of points equidistant (at an equal distance) from a given point), and undefined terms (point, line). From those axioms and postulates, definitions, and undefined terms, one begins to explore what they imply— theorems and lemmas.
- In geometry, rote memorization is not enough—and, in fact, is in and of itself one of the least effective approaches to take. It is necessary to understand—to get an intuitive grasp of the material. Learning comes from the "Aha!" when something clicks and fits

together—then it is the idea that remains in the student's memory.

- Geometry builds upon itself. One starts with fundamentals (axioms, postulates, definitions, and undefined terms), and uses them to prove basic theorems, which are in turn used along with axioms and postulates to prove more elaborate theorems, and so on. It is like a building—once the foundation has been laid, beams and walls may be secured to the foundation, and then one may continue to build up from the foundation and from what has been secured to the foundation. Geometry is an edifice built on its fundamentals with logic, and the structure that is ultimately built is quite impressive.
- Geometry is an abstract and rigorous way of thinking. (More will be made of this later.)
- Geometry is about creative problem solving. The aforespoken edifice—or, more specifically, what is in that edifice—is used by the geometer as tools with which to solve problems. Problem solving—figuring out how to prove a theorem or do a construction (which is a special kind of theorem)—is a creative endeavor, as much as painting, musical improvisation, or writing (and I am writing as one who does mathematics, paints, improvises, and writes).

Imagine a dream where there are many pillars—some low, some high—all of which are too high to step up to, and all of which are wide enough to stand upon.

Now imagine someone dreaming this dream. That person looks at one of the pillars and asks, "Has anyone been on top of that pillar?" Then one of the Inhabitants of

his dream answers, "No, nobody has been on top of that pillar." Then the person looks at another of the pillars, which has a set of stairs next to it, and asks, "Has anyone been on top of that pillar over there?". The answer is, "Yes, someone has, and has left behind a set of steps. You may take those steps and climb up on top of the pillar yourself, if you wish."

And this person continues, and sees more pillars. Some of them stand alone, too high to step up to, and nobody has been to those. Others have had someone on top, and there is always a set of steps which the person left behind, by which he may climb up personally. And the steps go every which way—some go straight up, some go one way and then another, some seem to almost go sideways. Some are very strange. Some pillars have more than one set of steps. But all of them lead up to the top of the pillar.

The person dreaming may well have the impression that one gets atop a pillar by laying down one step, then another, then another, until one has assembled steps that reach to the top of the pillar. And, indeed, it is possible to climb the steps up to the pillars that others have gone to first.

But that impression is wrong.

And the person sees what really happens when the guide becomes very excited and says, "Look over there! There is a great athlete who is going to attempt a pillar that nobody has ever been atop!"

And the athlete runs, and jumps, and sails through the air, and lands on top of the pillar.

And when the athlete lands, there appears a set of stairs around the pillar. The athlete climbs up and down the stairs a few times to tidy them up for other people, but the stairs were produced, not by laying down slabs of stone one atop another, but by jumping.

Then the guide explained to the dreamer that the athlete had learned to jump not only by looking at the steps that others had left, but by jumping to other pillars that already had steps, instead of using the steps.

Then the dreamer woke up.

What does the story mean?

The pillars are mathematical facts, some proven and some unproven.

The pillars that stand alone are mathematical facts that nobody has proven.

The pillars that stand with steps leading up to them are mathematical facts that have been proven.

The steps are the steps of proofs, the little assertions. As some of the steps are bizarre, so are some proofs. As some pillars have more than one path of steps, so some facts have more than one known proof.

The leap is a flash of intuition, by which the mathematician knows which of many steps will take him where he wants to go.

As the steps appeared when the leap was made, so the proof appears when the flash of intuition comes. The athlete then tidied up the steps, as the mathematician writes down and clarifies the proof, but the proof comes from jumping, not from building one step on another.

The athlete was the mathematician.

Finally, the athlete became an athlete not only by climbing up and down existing steps, but also by jumping up to pillars that already had steps—one becomes skilled at making intuitive leaps, not only by learning existing proofs, but also by solving already proven problems as if there were no proof to read.

As one philosophy major commented to me, "Mathematicians *do* proofs, but they don't *use* them."

That flash of insight is the flash of inspiration that artists work under, and in this sense a mathematician is very similar to an artist. (What do a mathematician and an artist have in common? Both are pursuing beauty, to start with...)

This character of mathematics that is captured in geometry is true to geometry, but the actual form that it takes is largely irrelevant. Other branches of mathematics,

properly taught, could accomplish just the same purpose, and for that matter could just as well replace geometry. Two other disciplines which draw heavily on applied mathematics, namely computer science and physics, have essentially the same strong points. I would hold no objections, for that matter, if high school geometry classes were replaced by strategy games like chess and go.

Mathematics is about puzzle solving; I would refer the reader to works such as Raymond Smullyan's *The Lady or the Tiger?* and Colin Adams's *The Knot Book: an Elementary Introduction to the Mathematical theory of Knots*. There are many people to whom mathematics is a recreation, consisting of the pleasure of solving puzzles. If mathematics is approached as memorizing incomprehensible formulas and hoping to have the good luck to guess the right formula at the right time, it will be a chore and a torture. If it is instead approached as puzzle solving, the activity will yield unexpected pleasure.

My father has a doctorate in physics and teaches computer science. He has said, more than once, that he would like for all of his students to take physics before taking his classes. There is a very important and simple reason for this. It is not because he wants his students to program physics simulators, or because there is any direct application of the mathematics in physics to the computer science he teaches. There isn't. It is because of the problem solving, the manner of thinking. It is because someone who has learned how to think in a way that is effective in physics, will be able to think in a way that is effective in computer science.

This applies to other disciplines as well. Ancient Greek philosophers, and medieval European theologians, made the study of geometry a prerequisite to the study of their respective disciplines. It was not because the constructions or theorems would be directly useful in making claims about the nature of God. Like physics and computer science, there was no direct application. But in order to study

geometry, one had to be able to think rigorously, analytically, critically, logically, and abstractly.

Thinking logically and abstractly is an important discipline in life and in other academic disciplines that consist of thinking—it has been said that if you can do mathematics, you can do almost anything. The main reason mathematics is valuable to the non-mathematician is as a form of weight lifting for the mind. Even when the knowledge has no application, the finesse that's learned can be useful.

To the non-mathematician, mathematics is a valuable discipline which offers practice in how to think well—both analytic thought and problem solving. Mathematics classes will most profitably be approached, not as "What is the formula I have to memorize," but with ideas such as those enumerated here. The nonmathematician who approaches a mathematics class as an opportunity for disciplined thought and problem solving will do better, profit more, and maybe, just maybe, enjoy the course.

It is my hope that this essay have provided the nonmathematician with an inkling of why it is profitable for people who aren't going to be mathematicians to still study mathematics.

Why Young Earthers Aren't Completely Crazy

This post was a followup to [The Evolution of a Personal Perspective on Creation and Origins](#), which should be read before this article. It was written for the same mailing list. This post has been edited slightly for clarity and privacy concerns. But I've still left it rather clunky.

When I was talking with some Wheaton science professors about origins questions and Wheaton's hint of an inquisition, in which there are four stated views (two of which are deemed acceptable), and they were complaining about the President thinking that everything fits into four neat pigeonholes: everybody must believe position one, two, three, or four. (So far as I know, *none* of the science faculty believe *any* of those positions — I don't.) Then one of them stated, for the sake of fairness, that Wheaton at least allowed four views, while the media only allowed two: either you're a young earth creationist, or you believe in Darwinian evolution, and that's the end of that. I had hoped that the Megalist at least would be above this misconception, and it was with some sadness that I found this hope disappointed in the posts I've read (I'm offline; most recent post was one about a \$1M donation to a young-

earth museum).

[The following paragraph describes a perspective on Thomas Aquinas. This is *not* my own perspective; it is one I am describing in accounting for other people's beliefs.]

I have stated (or, more properly, implied) that young earth creationism is a marginal position among Evangelical scholars (I will not speak for Catholics or mainline Protestants, beyond to say that I expect them to be less inclined to young earth belief than Evangelicals). Augustine, who is portrayed by some Evangelicals as the good example of a solid Bible-believing pre-Protestant theologian, as contrasted to Aquinas's dilution of Biblical faith with Aristotelian and humanist doctrine, did not have access to scientific inquiry concerning the age of the universe or the origins of life. His beliefs concerning origins were as far in technical detail from a young-earth story as would be a theistic evolutionary perspective. At Darwin's time, Evangelicals were not generally young-earthers; a young earth perspective gained prominence for reasons to be discussed, but the old earth implied by evolutionary theory was not a surprising claim. I believe in an old earth; Johnson believes in an old earth; Behe believes in an old earth; Kenyon believes in an old earth. For that matter, the Scopes monkey trial's Bryan, who was a member of the American Academy for the Advancement of Sciences, was not a Biblical literalist and did not believe in a young earth.

That stated, I would like to give a fair treatment and (in some sense) explanation of young earth creationism, including its popularity among some devout Christians. This is not, and is not intended as, argument concerning origins questions, and readers who are looking for germane material that will inform considerations of origins questions can safely skip this note. It is intended as painting a fuller and fairer picture, of there being something to these people's beliefs besides a vulgar belligerence towards science.

In the following argument, I will make multiple Biblical

references; these references are not here intended as appeal to religious authority, but as historical documents giving insight into how a particular people thought.

Among those cultures that permit eating meat, there can be dietary codes concerning what meat is and is not permitted. The term 'dietary code' is often associated with Judaism, with abstinence from pork holding a symbolic meaning of ethnic and religious identity, but this is neither the only dietary code, nor the only meaning a dietary code can have.

Contemporary American culture has a dietary code, albeit an unwritten one (beyond general health practices, and health code regulations about serving food). To give three examples of these unwritten rules: most Americans will not eat much of anything with a head on it or other visible reminders that the food is in fact the carcass of a slaughtered animal, will not eat much of any of the animals that are used as pets, and will not eat much of anything land-based with an exoskeleton. There are occasional exceptions to these rules — sardines, goldfish swallowing, and chocolate covered ants — but the exceptions are in fact occasional exceptions to general rules.

These dietary restrictions are not thought of consciously, and when an American travelling abroad sees people eating meat in violation of such rules, his first reaction is not likely to be to think about how American he is by abstaining from such food, but more likely disgust that people are eating such sickening food.

The quality of this perspective is representative of the most ancient Jewish attitude towards certain foods. The *Torah* lists a number of animals and tells people that they are to regard these animals as "unclean and detestable", and are not to eat them (and someone who did became temporarily unclean). Uncleanliness was not the same as moral defilement, and there were certain (albeit few) contexts (albeit not munching) in which texts reflect a social and religious permission to make oneself unclean. To eat

unclean food was something you shouldn't be doing, but it wasn't something that had the particular meaning of treachery to Judaism, moreso than stealing — probably less; the injunction against stealing made the big 10.

In Judges, one of the older post-*Torah* books, one that narrates the social and moral chaos before there was a king, the Nazirite Samson eats honey from the carcass of an unclean lion — maybe something a Jew shouldn't be doing in general, but quite particularly something a Nazirite shouldn't be doing at all. This action forms part of the story of a morally flawed, intermittently obedient hero, but it is not interpreted as being particularly goyish, not moreso than the other actions he took that broke God's law.

In Daniel, one of the latter additions to the Jewish canon, three sharp young Jews are brought to the palace of the king and make a big deal of not eating any meat at all, instead of eating the palace's unclean food. On the evidence of the text alone, it is ambiguous whether eating unclean foods has acquired the symbolic meaning of goyishness, or whether it's a matter that these three men were so devout that in a foreign land they would not compromise on even the issue of food.

In IV Maccabees (not canonical to Jews or most Christians, but an ancient Jewish document that sheds light on the community), a Greek persecutor is trying to forcibly convert Jews to Hellenistic life, and inflicts gruesome tortures on Jews who refuse to eat pork. Here abstinence from unclean foods has very clearly become a (perhaps *the*) symbol of Jewish faith, and it holds this crystallized meaning to Jewish martyr and Greek persecutor alike.

The near-total investment of dietary code with symbolic significance was not universal; one Jewish teacher said both "I have come not to abolish but fulfill the *Tanakh*," and "What makes a man unclean is not what goes into him, but what comes out;" his disciples did not perceive any puzzling contradiction, and the movement he ignited from within Judaism is in numerous ways very Jewish to this day, but

does not retain the dietary code.

This has conditioned subsequent history; not all Jews today keep the dietary code, but there are some who are atheistic or agnostic and still keep kosher — which is to say that they are making a symbolic act that means much more than just a choice in food, that means an identity that they do not wish to disappear.

The choices of the Jews in IV Maccabees do not exactly represent a claim that temporary ceremonial uncleanness from eating pork is literally a fate worse than death — a claim which is (at very least) hard to justify from the *Torah*. They rather recognized the literal act as the tip of the iceberg — and dug in, full force.

Young earth creationism is not what it appears to be on the surface, namely a mere benighted refusal to open in the light of science. If it is viewed in isolation, on simply scientific grounds — including the \$1M gift to a young earth museum — it will necessarily appear more than a little looney, as is the choice of being tortured to death instead of eating a few bites of foreign food. *But it's not that at all*. It is a symbolic act, one that is so thoroughly a part of these people that it would not occur to most of them to call it symbolic. They may have chosen the wrong literal point at which to dig in — I believe so, pending scientific support for a young earth besides records of bizarre ways to fool scientific dating techniques — and that is to their discredit. What I am much more hesitant to criticize them on is why they are digging in.

S.J. Gould paints a Pollyana-ish picture of the interaction between science and religion in his claim of non-overlapping magisterial areas — so that no scientific claim need have threatening implications for religion. To give a hint as to why this isn't the case...

Suppose (for the sake of argument) that mathematics is required to hold as axiomatic that pi is equal to $22/7$. It might be possible to pay lip service, claim pi to be $22/7$ in certain circumstances, and otherwise get back to do serious

mathematics. If that option were not taken, then the result would be a contradiction, from which anything would be provable (at least in certain fields of mathematics), from which point mathematics as we know it would be dead. Perhaps it might be possible to find some axiomatic revision of geometry that would produce a very different kind of mathematics in which there was something called a circle with a circumference:diameter ratio always equal to exactly 22:7. The point I'm getting at is that holding pi to be 22/7 might work for some not-seriously-mathematical purposes — you have to use *some* approximation for most numerical calculations — but the change would have far more disruptive implications for mathematics itself than might be obvious to someone looking in from the outside.

Darwinian evolution is not just a theory concerning the origins of life, in the sense of something that has little significant implication to other areas. William B. Provine, historian of science and evolutionary adherent, comments, "prominent evolutionists have joined with equally prominent theologians and religious leaders to sweep under the rug the incompatibilities of evolution and religion." Darwinism is on some accounts the cutting edge of the sword wielded by naturalism, and when young earthers dig in over the ostensible issue of origins, they are digging in out of concern for much larger issues. I will not here argue the case that Darwinism bears the implications it is believed to, but I will say that when these people assert a young earth, they are standing not only against the claim of an old earth but against the naturalism that hides behind "We're just teaching a well-established scientific theory." and its implication of "This is a neutral claim whose truth does not threaten your beliefs at all."

There was one point when I was talking with an astronomy professor at Wheaton, and he mentioned a student who had been threatened by the old universe perspective of the class (until he explained that students were not required to believe in an old universe, although the

class would be taught from that perspective), and I suggested talking on the first day about the grounds on which Darwinian evolution may be challenged — so that the young earth/old earth question is not the fully symbolic question of divine creation versus mindless forces alone, but only the question of whether the universe is thousands or billions of years old. He liked my suggestion.

I have tried to give a sympathetic and respectful account of young earth creationists, not to persuade people that they are correct on the particular point they have chosen to dig in, but to suggest how something besides an insane aversion to listening to science might lie behind their choice. Having stated that, I would also like to state quite specifically that I disagree with their position, and regard it as unfortunate. For those wishing a further account (and something that provides a historical description instead of an analogy designed to convey a basic insight), I would recommend Wheaton College Professor Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, which traces the reactive movement you have encountered. For historical-cultural reasons Noll traces, Evangelicalism does not always share in the Christian tradition's richer mental life, and among those who do not pursue the life of the mind, young-earth creationism seems a good way to assert God's creation against teachings that life is the meaningless by-product of an uncaring universe. Among those Evangelicals and other Christians who do pursue the life of the mind, it is quite rare.

For this reason, I would request that, when I bring up what Kenyon, or Johnson, or Behe, has said, and ask what your justifications for dismissing it are, please don't post a rebuttal to six-day, young earth creationism. A comparable response on my part, to back up a statement that evolution is flawed, would be to post an attack on [very passé] Lamarckian evolution and consider myself to have discredited "evolution". A non sequitur of that magnitude, on my part, could possibly destroy any chances I had of

being taken seriously. Perhaps I am alone in looking at the question this way, but I want to respect my fellow Megalist members in this discussion, and it is awfully hard for me to maintain that respect when I see posts like some of the traffic in the recent past.

-Jonathan

Post Script, May 5, 2003: *Since I posted this some time back, I have learned that leading members of the MegaList have become increasingly involved in the Intelligent Design movement.*

I do not believe I can take more than incidental credit for this; I believe they are persuaded, not by my eloquence in a small number of posts, but because the evidence itself suggests things which aren't well explained by a purely Darwinian account.