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## Why “*Tolle Lege*”?

The title of this journal is taken from an extraordinary moment of conversion in the life of St. Augustine, the great philosopher and theologian of the early medieval period. The story begins with St. Augustine sitting beneath a fig tree, weeping in distress over his inability to leave behind his life of sin and follow God faithfully. Amid his tears he hears the distant voice of a child chanting the words, “*Tolle, lege!*” or “Take up and read!” Aroused from his pitiable state and taking this as a sign from God, he goes to his house, picks up the first book he finds, and reads the first chapter. The book contained the letters of St. Paul, and the verse that Augustine read spoke to his heart with such force that he was convinced beyond any doubt of the truth of God; he was converted on the spot.

This journal of philosophy and theology is meant to embody a spirit of truth-seeking—on the part not only of the contributors but also of you, the reader. Like St. Augustine, we are all faced with the choice between complacency and continual conversion toward truth. We hope that this journal will serve as an aid in the discovery of truth, and thus we exhort you in all earnestness to “Take up and read!”

## Editor's Note

*Tolle, lege.* Take up and read. As Dr. William Collinge explains in his essay below, which was specially included in this volume, this short phrase, spoken by a young child, changed the way that St. Augustine saw the world. In 2007, this same phrase would become the inspiration for this journal. For eleven years, we have highlighted the written works of many talented Mount students in the fields of philosophy and theology in hopes that you, the reader, will be inspired in your own journey toward Truth. As we enter a new year of publication, these two words continue to inspire us in our mission, and we are confident that you will recognize this fidelity as you read the essays in this volume. This year we have eight fantastic essays on a variety of topics, from exploring the virtue of generosity in caregiving to examining the moral implications of tobacco excise taxes. The prizewinning essay, Paul Miller's *Science, Natural Law, and Moral Advance*, investigates the effect of science on human values and moral advance, as addressed by C. S. Lewis. This essay was chosen by our editorial board for its clarity of argument and contemporary relevance after a blind review. In addition, as alluded to above, we are pleased to make available the text of Dr. William Collinge's address to the 2017 gathering of the Mount's chapters of the Phi Sigma Tau and Sigma Tau Delta honor societies.

Publishing this journal would have been impossible without the support of many individuals in the Mount community. We would like to thank the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Dr. Peter Dorsey, and the Office of the Provost for their financial support. Special thanks are due to our faculty advisors, Drs. Thane Naberhaus and Luis Vera, for their continuous guidance and behind-the-scenes support. Thank you to the students on the editorial board who evaluated and chose the essays for this volume, and of course, to all the students who submitted their work. We encourage all students to consider submitting their philosophy and theology essays for next year's publication.

So *tolle, lege*—take up and read! We hope that through this publication, you will be inspired to join a community of seekers in our conversation as we endeavor to discover truth and articulate it to others.

Alaina Owen  
Editor-in-Chief

## Contributors

**William J. Collinge** received his Ph.D. from Yale University and joined the faculty of Mount St. Mary's College in 1980 with a joint appointment in the Theology and Philosophy Departments. He is an expert on St. Augustine and is the author of the *Historical Dictionary of Catholicism*. He served as chair of the Theology Department for eleven years, and became Professor Emeritus in 2015.

**Rev. Mr. Ryan Mattingly** received a B.A. in economics from the University of Illinois in 2012. He is currently completing seminary studies for the Diocese of Peoria at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary, and will receive a Master of Divinity degree in May 2018. Rev. Mr. Mattingly was ordained a deacon in May 2017, and on May 26, 2018, by the grace of God, he will be ordained a priest of Jesus Christ.

**Paul Miller** is a member of the class of 2017, with a B.A. in theology. He is currently working on his M.A. in theology, with a concentration in moral theology, as a lay student at the Mount Seminary. Paul lives locally with his wife Alesha and their two sons, Alexander and Gabriel. Paul wishes to thank all of the members of the Theology and Philosophy Departments for their support and encouragement over the past three years.

**John Owens** is a sophomore biochemistry major, originally from San Jose, California. If he had any free time, he would be swimming laps in the AARC pool or playing volleyball.

**Alyse Spiehler** graduated in 2017 with degrees in philosophy and English. She has spent her year after graduation teaching English in Mexico, and plans to pursue graduate studies in philosophy this upcoming year. There are few things that she loves more in life than the community at the Mount, and she has already begun to enjoy the benefits of her formation within it since graduation.

**Kathryn Tombs** is a December 2017 Mount graduate who double majored in Spanish and theology with a concentration in Hispanic ministry. Kate hopes to spend more time traveling, learning, and engaging in service in Latin America before returning to the United States. She would ultimately love to serve youth through Catholic or Spanish education and the Hispanic population through Church ministry.

**Katherine Wu** graduated from the Mount in 2017 with a B.S. in biology and minors in theology, history, and Latin. She is currently in graduate school studying theology at the University of Notre Dame and hopes one day to teach at a small college like the Mount.

**John Zalesky** graduated from Mount St. Mary's in May 2017 with a Master of Arts in Philosophical Studies. Prior to attending the Mount Seminary, he graduated from The Pennsylvania State University with a bachelor's degree in finance and worked for two years for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Since graduating from the Mount he has moved back to Harrisburg and has become very active in pro-life ministry while working a full-time job for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

## *Tolle, Lege*

William J. Collinge

Most of you will recognize this phrase not only as the title of the Mount's undergraduate essay journal but as part of the central conversion scene in St. Augustine's *Confessions*. When Dr. Miller asked me to give this address<sup>1</sup> to students honored for achievement in literature and philosophy, I thought right away of the *Confessions*, written in 397, the only work in the Western canon that is recognized as a classic at once of literature, of philosophy, and of my primary teaching field, theology.

And the literary quality of the work is integral to its success as a work of philosophy and theology. In my first year of graduate school, back in 1969, I took "Literary Form in Classical Philosophy" from Professor Robert Brumbaugh. Mr. Brumbaugh (all Yale professors were then called "Mr.," except perhaps for an occasional "Ms.") showed how Plato's philosophy of shared inquiry naturally expresses itself in dialogue form and how philosophizing by dialogue inclines you toward Platonism, how Aristotelian philosophy, aiming to lay out the main lines of everything, lends itself to lecture form, and how philosophizing by lecture tends to turn you into an Aristotelian know-it-all. So if Augustine wants to show, as he says in the opening lines, how our hearts are restless until they rest in God, what better way than by autobiography—of which the *Confessions* are the first extended written specimen—telling the story of his own restless heart?

The *tolle, lege* scene appears in Book 8. For those unfamiliar with ancient writing, I should explain that a Book is more or less equivalent to a modern chapter; the *Confessions* spreads out 13 books over around 300 pages. After Augustine's intellectual difficulties with Christian faith have been sufficiently resolved, he remains unable to take the final step. He is held back by his sexual compulsions. A few pages earlier, he has recalled his prayer, "Grant me continence and chastity,

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<sup>1</sup> An address delivered to the Phi Sigma Tau and Sigma Tau Delta honor societies, April 30, 2017.

but not yet,”<sup>2</sup> which one of my students said should be inscribed as the motto of the Terrace. Now, in a garden in Milan, he is in an agony of irresolution, accompanied by his friend Alypius. He hears a child repeating *Tolle, lege*, “Pick up and read.” In response, he picks up St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans and starts reading where he had left off, “Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry or jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.”<sup>3</sup> His hesitations are gone; he will seek baptism. Alypius then picks up the book and is likewise converted. Two features of this story will be my themes in the rest of this talk: reading and friendship

My friend the philosopher Linda Zagzebski is famous for developing “virtue epistemology.”<sup>4</sup> For Linda, knowledge occurs when beliefs are formed in accordance with intellectual virtues, and intellectual virtues are states of character, akin to moral virtues. Now for Aristotle, friendship is a virtue, and in Augustine you find something like a friendship epistemology. Being a friend can lead you to read rightly and learn what is true.

Of course that’s not always the case. In Book Two, Augustine and some friends pull off a stunt like the dumb things that some kids in your high school used to do, but you, of course, didn’t. They steal a farmer’s pears and, not wanting to eat them, throw them at pigs—the famous “pears before swine” incident, scholars call it. None of us would have done it alone, Augustine observes, but all it took was someone saying, “Come on, let’s do it!” “Friendship,” he concludes, “can be a dangerous enemy.”<sup>5</sup>

Now *those* friends probably didn’t read much of anything. But two Books later Augustine eloquently describes a friendship of readers. Undone by grief at the death of a close friend, Augustine finds comfort in the friends who remain:

There were other things which occupied my mind in the company of my friends: to make conversation, to share a joke, to perform mutual acts of kindness, to read together well-written books, to share in trifling and in serious matters, to disagree though without animosity . . . and in the very rarity of disagreement to find the salt of normal harmony, to teach

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<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, 8.7.17. I am using the translation by Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Romans 13:13-14. New American Bible translation.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> *Confessions* 2.9.17.

each other something or to learn from one another, to long with impatience for those absent, to welcome them with gladness on their arrival. These and other signs [act] as fuel to set our minds on fire and out of many to forge unity.<sup>6</sup>

I hope your time at the Mount has afforded you some experiences like the one Augustine describes.

And yet—Augustine concludes that this too was a false friendship. Why? Because it was based on a false system of beliefs, the dualistic Manichaean religion. Having rejected Manichaeism, Augustine makes it look absurd--the world is a battleground between two divine principles, and a diet of colorful vegetables will help to free your soul from evil matter. But Manichaeism helped Augustine deal with his unwanted sexual impulses through a false dualism that taught him that they weren't part of his true self. A parallel today might be a group of young people inspired to intellectual life by another figure who joined philosophy and literature—Ayn Rand. Like Manichaeism, Rand addresses a real problem for young people—the need to take responsibility for their own lives—but through a false individualism that denies God's guidance of our lives and denies our responsibility for one another.

Augustine's false friendship was linked to false reading, a literalistic reading of Manichaean scriptures as true even as science, and a literalistic reading of the Old Testament that made its God seem capricious and immoral. Gradually he sees through the Manichaean scriptures, and when the leading Manichaean teacher of the day, Faustus, can't answer his questions and doesn't seem to be bothered by that fact, his intellectual life as a Manichaean is over.

Faustus is only the second living person to be mentioned by name in the *Confessions*, and the scene with Faustus comes exactly in the middle of the autobiographical books 1 through 9. From there on, names abound. What's happening? Frederick Crosson states that the second half of the autobiography “is not only an ascent toward God but a progressive return to community.”<sup>7</sup> Real names are signs of real community.

Augustine's career takes him to Milan, where he is joined by his old friends Alypius and Nebridius and makes new friends from the circle of Christian Platonists around Bishop, later Saint, Ambrose.

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<sup>6</sup> *Confessions* 4.8.13.

<sup>7</sup> Frederick J. Crosson, “Structure and Meaning in St. Augustine's *Confessions*,” in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 30.

From Ambrose, he learns to read the disedifying parts of the Old Testament not literally but as allegory. And from other Platonists, he is introduced to the philosophy of the neoplatonist Plotinus. Just as the scene with Faustus is the midpoint of the autobiography, the *reading* of Plotinus in book 7 is the midpoint of the entire *Confessions*. From Platonism he learns to think of God and the soul as spiritual rather than material and to see evil not as a thing or divine principle but as a deprivation of goodness. This reading sparks the first of several ascents to God in the latter half of the *Confessions*. Prompted by Plotinus to “return into himself,” Augustine rises to a point where he briefly *sees* God as the light of eternal truth that shines within his mind, but his “weight,” his habitual attachment to the things of the senses, draws him down.

In Book Seven he *sees* the light, but to be fully converted he must also *bear*. Unlike Ambrose but like most people of his day, Augustine read aloud. So for him *reading* combined seeing and hearing. And his conversion comes through reading with true friends. What makes a true community of friends? “True friendship,” Augustine says, “is not possible unless God bonds together those who cleave to one another by the love which ‘is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.’”<sup>8</sup> The words about the Holy Spirit are a quotation from Romans 5:5, which is one of the most important texts for Augustine’s theology of the Church. “The Church, for Augustine, is the community that is bonded together by the true love of God, which comes through the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

In Book Eight the names cluster, naming true friends as a counterpart to the unnamed false friends of Book Two. From Simplicianus, Augustine *bears* of Marius Victorinus, the translator of Plotinus, converted through his *reading* of the Scripture. From Ponticianus, Augustine *bears* of two officials converted through *reading* of St. Antony converted by *bearing* a Gospel *reading*. Then follows the garden scene, with his friend Alypius, in which Augustine, under a fig tree as a counterpart to the pear tree of Book Two, is converted by *bearing* a voice telling him to “Take up and *read*.”

In Book Nine Augustine is baptized, along with his son and Alypius. Augustine describes it thus: “We were baptized.” He spends much more time describing another ascent to God, this time an ascent

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<sup>8</sup> *Confessions* 4.4.7.

<sup>9</sup> William J. Collinge, “Saint Augustine of Hippo—Love, Community, and Politics,” in *The Heart of Catholic Social Teaching: Its Origins and Contemporary Significance*, ed. David Matzko McCarthy (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2009), 76.

*shared* by his mother, St. Monica, who is named in Book 9 for the first time. They rise to *bear* the eternal word of God speaking through creation and then for a moment, directly.

They fall back into the realm of time, Monica dies, and at the beginning of Book Ten we find Augustine writing the *Confessions* ten years later. He meditates on memory, such as he has been using, ascends to God in the depths of it, but then proceeds to reflect on the sinful tendencies that still hold him back. In the very last lines of Book Ten, Augustine stands not alone but in church. “I think upon the price of my redemption, and I eat and drink it, and distribute it [the Eucharist]. In my poverty I desire to be satisfied from it together with those who eat and are satisfied.”<sup>10</sup>

And he is still there at the start of Book 11, conscious of his calling “to preach your word and dispense your sacrament to your people,” as he begins three books of meditation on the creation story in Genesis. Why does an autobiography end in a meditation on Genesis? Well, as Bill Portier might put it, Augustine has finally reached the point where he can truly tell the big story of which his own little story is part.

The moral to the story I am telling might be this: *To seek what your heart desires, read truly with true friends.* Standing within and before the Church, the community of true friends bound together by the love of God in the Holy Spirit, Augustine finds his starting point for a true reading of Holy Scripture. From there, he begins an ascent to God through scripture. In it he finds rest for his restless heart not by reaching the end but by continuing to inquire without ceasing. Thus, the last word of the *Confessions* is *aperietur*, cognate with the English word “aperture” and the Spanish verb *abrir*—not a closing, in other words, but an opening.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Confessions* 10.43.70.

<sup>11</sup> Charles T. Mathewes, “The Liberation of Questioning in Augustine’s *Confessions*,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70, no. 3 (September 2002): 539–60.

# Science, Natural Law, and Moral Advance

*Paul Miller*

Since the early 2000s, the “new atheism” movement has grown in popularity. Some of the more well-known leaders of the movement, such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, the late Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris, have written on a broad range of topics from religion to politics, from science to ethics. A fundamental premise underlying all of their theses is that a positivistic scientific approach to knowledge is the only reliable measure of what is true. In Sam Harris’s 2010 book *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*, Harris extends this positivistic approach to the topic of morality—arguing that science *alone* can determine what actions humans should value and what actions humans should not.

In this essay, I will ask two related questions: *Can science determine human values? If not, can science aid in what C. S. Lewis calls “a real moral advance?”*<sup>1</sup> I will argue from a Natural Law perspective that science *alone* cannot determine human values. I will then argue that science can aid in a clearer understanding of the secondary, particular precepts of Natural Law. I will expand on the idea that Lewis posits in *The Abolition of Man* of a “regenerate science,”<sup>2</sup> that is, a science operating within the Natural Law, or as Lewis calls it, the *Tao*.<sup>3</sup> Science can then *assist* in bringing clarity and real advance to the understanding and application of moral precepts.

## Can Science Determine Human Values?

The central thesis of Harris’s moral landscape is that “questions about values—about meaning, morality, and life’s larger purpose—are really about the well-being of conscious creatures. Values, therefore, can be translated into facts that can be scientifically understood.”<sup>4</sup> Leaving aside the fact that Harris’s conclusion does not explicitly follow from the premises, I will focus on the argument Harris is

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Harper One, 1974), 45–46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>4</sup> Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* (New York: The Free Press, 2010), 1.

implicitly presenting. Harris posits that scientific facts, gathered especially from neuroscience and psychology, will allow us to identify the causes effecting certain states of the brain. These states either enhance or diminish human well-being. He says his premise is simple: “human well-being depends on events in the world and on states of the human brain.”<sup>5</sup> Science can measure states of the human brain. Certain events or actions cause mental states of the human brain. Those states not only cause well-being or suffering for the individual in that mental state, but also influence behavior that can cause suffering or the enhancement of well-being in others: “these mental states translate into behavior.”<sup>6</sup> These behaviors then can be qualified as “right” or “wrong” in proportion to the amount of well-being or suffering they produce in the individual and society.

Elements of Harris’s thesis should sound familiar to anyone who has studied moral philosophy. It is essentially a utilitarian ethical theory. The normative in his system is being measured and determined by scientific data. He is defending a naturalistic moral realism based on science—moral questions have answers, and it is a matter of science what those answers are.<sup>7</sup> The answers, like others from science, are therefore objective and transcend culture. Indeed, he says that if successful we will build “a global civilization based on shared values.”<sup>8</sup>

Basing the determination of what promotes human well-being and what does not on empirical observation is not entirely unreasonable. Harris uses the distinction between a healthy person and dead one as an example. This distinction “is about as clear and consequential a distinction as we ever make in science. The differences between the height of human fulfillment and the depths of human misery are no less clear.”<sup>9</sup> But herein lies a fundamental problem with his thesis: *why ought someone to value human fulfillment?* The data from science might suggest that one ought to value human fulfillment for the propagation and flourishing of life. But that seems to beg the question of why someone ought to value the propagation and flourishing of life. The data from science does not suggest anything about this. It simply provides data. It is the person who interprets the data, *based upon what*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>7</sup> James Lenman, “Science, Ethics, and Observation,” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 72 (2013): 263.

<sup>8</sup> Harris, *Moral Landscape*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 12.

*the person already values.* Harris does just this. He appeals to a moral intuition grounded in utilitarianism.<sup>10</sup>

Lewis addresses this kind of value theory innovation. There is no empirical observation that alone can compel the human person to accept what he or she should be obliged to value. Lewis says, “From propositions about fact alone no *practical* conclusion can ever be drawn. *This will preserve society* cannot lead to *do this* except by the mediation of *society ought to be preserved.*”<sup>11</sup> Some frame of reference will always be informing what one *ought* to do. If this frame of reference does not direct the value of something for its own sake, then it is not obligatory. “If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved. Similarly if nothing is obligatory for its own sake, nothing is obligatory at all.”<sup>12</sup>

Since Harris starts with the assumption that what ought to be valued is what can be scientifically measured in proportion to human well-being, rather than starting with the inherent value of the human person, some serious ethical problems have the potential to arise. Someone will ultimately be the arbiter of how the data is to be interpreted, saying what does and does not promote human well-being. Who will that be? More likely than not, it will be those who are in power, socially and economically. It is possible, then, that the idea of what it is to be human will be reduced to “function and output” at the service of “human well-being,” or a “common good,” as *interpreted* by those in power. That kind of inquiry will look less like moral philosophy and more like economics.<sup>13</sup> Gabriel Marcel says that the individual human being so reduced will be like “an index card that can be sent to a central office and whose entries will determine the further treatment of the individual.”<sup>14</sup>

Science alone cannot determine human value. Science provides data; it says what is. Moral philosophers will bring to that data a hermeneutic of interpretation. That hermeneutic will start with certain presuppositions, whether the philosopher is aware of them or not. Harris presupposes utilitarianism in his naturalistic moral realism. Starting with utility could be degrading to the inherent value of the human person. Starting with the dignity of the human person, building an ethic based on *what it is to be human*, would be a far better foundation for an ethic directed toward *human* well-being. This kind of ethical

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<sup>10</sup> Lenman, “Science, Ethics, and Observation,” 264.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, 31–32.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>13</sup> Lenman, “Science, Ethics, and Observation,” 266.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Man against Mass Society* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2008), 135.

naturalism focuses on the nature of the human being, with certain obligations for its own sake. “It is in the light of the dignity of the human person—a dignity which must be affirmed for its own sake—that reason grasps the specific moral value of certain goods towards which the person is naturally inclined.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Can Science Aid in a Real Moral Advance?**

Where does this leave science in relation to human values? Lewis calls for a “regenerate science,” a science that when speaking of the parts “would remember the whole.”<sup>16</sup> This is a science that keeps in view the dignity of the human person, a science which operates within Natural Law when relating data to morality. Then science can inform and assist in a real moral advance.

Before I demonstrate how science can aid in real moral advance, let me briefly review Natural Law, and the distinction between general precepts and secondary precepts. Natural Law, as defined by Aquinas, “is simply rational creatures’ participation in the eternal law” of God.<sup>17</sup> Natural Law presupposes the Eternal Law. It is in the light of reason by which humanity participates in the Eternal Law. This participation is Natural Law. In the appendix to *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis provides numerous illustrations of Natural Law from a variety of different cultures and different points in human history.<sup>18</sup> This inductively demonstrates that there is a universal law that governs all of humanity which humans come in contact with through their practical reason, regardless of place and time.

Because of our practical reason, human beings have an inclination to what is good. Practical reason is ordered toward action, based on the nature of good. The first precept of Natural Law “is that we should do and seek good, and shun evil.”<sup>19</sup> Being ordered toward the good is then somehow a *perfective* or *completing* of a being, which is dependent on the rational nature of being human.<sup>20</sup> It is debated how one comes to know the fundamental goods. Two theories stand out. One is that we derive from a metaphysical study of human nature that certain

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<sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* [Encyclical Letter Regarding Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church’s Moral Teaching], sec. 48 (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 1993), 76.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, 79.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II.91.2. In *Aquinas: Basic Works*, ed. Jeffery Hause and Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014), 626.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, 83–101.

<sup>19</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II.94.2.

<sup>20</sup> Mark Murphy, “The Natural Law Tradition in Ethics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.). [plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/natural-law-ethics/](http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/natural-law-ethics/).

things are good. A second is that the fundamental goods are implicitly grasped through one's persistent directedness to pursue certain ends.<sup>21</sup>

There are general precepts and secondary precepts of Natural Law. The general precepts are known by everyone based on the light of reason, and the secondary, or particular, precepts are proximate conclusions drawn from the first.<sup>22</sup> Aquinas says that "not all of those with practical rectitude regarding particulars know the truth in equal measure," and "the truth regarding the particular conclusions of theoretical reason is the same for all persons, but some know the truth less than others."<sup>23</sup> It is in the understanding and application of the secondary, particular precepts where I believe real moral advance can occur. The objective truth of the precept does not change, but the clarity with which one understands and applies it can be advanced. And science can assist in that moral advance.

Lewis distinguishes between innovation and real moral advance. Innovation is an alteration that comes from without, such as Harris's moral theory. Real moral advance comes from within. It is organic and a development from within the *Tao*.<sup>24</sup> He uses the example of the Confucian doctrine, "Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you," and the development of the same precept in Christian doctrine, "Do as you would be done by."<sup>25</sup> There is a fundamentally true precept of reciprocity in both statements. Yet the positive iteration of it in its Christian form is a creative step forward in understanding and applying the truth of the precept more clearly.

How then can science assist in bringing about clarity to secondary precepts? Starting within the *Tao*, we bring scientific data to secondary precepts. That data can assist us in understanding and applying those precepts with greater clarity. Harris uses the example of corporal punishment as an outdated religious dictate proven by research to be harmful and not directed toward human well-being. Corporal punishment is an application of a precept within Natural Law regarding the upbringing of children.<sup>26</sup> If the research that Harris provides is accurate, and corporal punishment actually leads to more violence and social pathology,<sup>27</sup> then we can use that data, and further research, to fulfill the obligation to raise children rightly in a more

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II.95.6.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., I-II.94.4.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>26</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II.94.2.

<sup>27</sup> Harris, *Moral Landscape*, 3.

*morally advanced* way, closer to the truth intrinsic to the precept. We therefore gain a more complete understanding of the ancient precept, “Whoever spares the rod hates the child, but whoever loves will apply discipline” (Prov 13:24). We may need to abandon corporal punishment in light of relevant research. The truth of the precept does not change, but its particular application develops, through the application of the data, which leads to the furthering of human well-being and a real moral advance.

## **Conclusion**

On the one hand, I have demonstrated that science *alone* cannot determine human values. It is in the nature of scientific data to be interpreted and applied. The moral philosopher will view scientific data through the hermeneutic of his or her presuppositions, or frame of reference. Data itself cannot compel one to act. One must have some conviction that moves one to act. On the other hand, it is reasonable to say that scientific data can *inform* someone to act in a better way, based on that person’s moral conviction, as the example above illustrates. Based on Natural Law, one has a moral conviction to raise one’s child right. One wants to follow that precept in the best way. Scientific data can be one part of the informing process used to follow that precept in the best way. Operating within the *Tao*, therefore, and regarding secondary precepts, science can aid in a real moral advance.

# “I Did Not Refuse, Did Not Turn Away”: The Imitation of Christ in *Silence*

Katherine Wu

As disciples, Christians are called to live in imitation of Jesus Christ. However, this requires a correct understanding of who Jesus was in order to understand how one should live. In Shusako Endo’s novel *Silence*, the merciless persecution of Japanese Christians prompts reflection on the demands of discipleship in the midst of suffering. Thus, the figure of Jesus as the Suffering Servant, who suffers vicariously and in solidarity with human beings, is emphasized through the lives of the Christians in Japan. While Father Rodrigues is presented after his apostasy as a disciple who lives in the imitation of Christ as a Suffering Servant, this identification is problematic. After closer examination, it is the Japanese Christian peasants in the novel who emerge as the disciples who present the fullest picture of Christ in their lives.

Servant of God, a title which refers to the four “Suffering Servant Songs” in Isaiah, was one of the oldest titles used by early Christians for Christ.<sup>1</sup> The four songs describe a Servant, “formed . . . from the womb”<sup>2</sup> by God to “[establish] justice on the earth,” a mission that he will undertake with gentleness and compassion.<sup>3</sup> The Servant upends conventional expectations, coming with “no beauty to draw us to him,” spurned, despised, and suffering.<sup>4</sup> However, it is precisely in his sufferings that the Servant fulfills his mission, as he is “pierced for our sins . . . he bore the punishment that makes us whole . . . making his life as a reparation offering.”<sup>5</sup> Throughout his suffering, though he is humiliated and deserted by all, the Servant retains his trust in God,

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Suffering Servant” is itself a modern term, but will be used throughout this paper as it captures the important aspects of the role. See Edward T. Oakes, S.J., “The Surface Data: Titles of Jesus,” *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Christology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Is. 49:5. *The Catholic Study Bible: New American Bible, Revised Edition*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Is. 42:4.

<sup>4</sup> Is. 53:2–3.

<sup>5</sup> Is. 52:5, 10.

declaring, “The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced. . . . I will not be put to shame.”<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, although his life seems useless and his mission failed, the Servant accomplishes God’s will through his vicarious suffering and is vindicated.<sup>7</sup> All accounts of the Last Supper show that Jesus understood his own suffering as an act of atonement for sin and as the fulfillment of the Servant Songs.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the Gospel Passion narratives are all deeply influenced and shaped by the Servant Songs.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the title “Suffering Servant” highlights the cross as the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus’ mission, the key to understanding his identity and what he has accomplished. Only by understanding Christ’s vicarious suffering correctly can one truly come to know him and thus follow him as a true disciple.

Rodrigues seems at the first glance to be the character in *Silence* who, in his discipleship, gives the fullest picture of Christ as a Suffering Servant. A priest who “ought to live in imitation of Christ,”<sup>10</sup> Rodrigues has a keen sense of his God-given mission, as he was “born to devote [his] life to the service of man.”<sup>11</sup> His mission sends him to “the ends of the earth”<sup>12</sup> “to seek out and find the lonely and abandoned flock” of the Japanese Church.<sup>13</sup> Like the Servant who bears the pain and suffering of his people,<sup>14</sup> Rodrigues believes that a priest ought to “[take] upon himself the sufferings of others.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, he characterizes his own apostasy as an act of love for the peasants, a sacrifice of his pride as a priest, his standing in the Church, and his own salvation—the things he valued most—in order to save “those miserable peasants” suspended in the pit.<sup>16</sup> Their physical suffering is traded for his anguish and solitude, a solitude that can aptly be described in the words of the Song: “He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain . . . and we held him in no esteem.”<sup>17</sup> Yet he is now able to love even Kichijiro, granting him absolution not out of duty and resentment but out of a genuine sense

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<sup>6</sup> Is. 50:7.

<sup>7</sup> Is. 53:8–12.

<sup>8</sup> Oakes, “Surface Data,” 33, and Roch Kereszty, “The Kingdom and the Death of Jesus,” *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, 2nd ed. (Staten Island: Alba House, 2002), 123.

<sup>9</sup> Oakes, “Surface Data,” 32.

<sup>10</sup> Shusako Endo, *Silence*, trans. William Johnston (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1969), 169.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>12</sup> Is. 49:6

<sup>13</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 30.

<sup>14</sup> Is. 53:4

<sup>15</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 167.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>17</sup> Is. 53:3.

of compassion for his weakness.<sup>18</sup> Rodrigues is confident that in his apostasy he imitates Christ more fully and that his life continues to bear witness to Christ, even if this “Lord is different from the God preached in the churches.”<sup>19</sup>

In his decision to trade moral suffering for the peasants’ physical suffering, Rodrigues does seem to embody the vicarious suffering of Christ, but with two differences: his suffering is oriented toward the cessation of earthly suffering and his sacrifice requires a denial of truth. Throughout the book it is apparent that Rodrigues interprets the expiatory death of Jesus as both an act of solidarity with humanity and an acceptance of responsibility for the suffering of human beings. When he desperately prays to God to intervene for Garrpe and the Christians, he thinks, “There is still time! Do not impute all this to Garrpe and to me. This responsibility you yourself must bear.”<sup>20</sup> If, as Rodrigues implies, Jesus had promised to take away suffering from His servants and bear it as His own, then Rodrigues’s apostasy could indeed be read as an imitation of Christ. However, the language of the Songs and that of the Gospels frames Jesus’ suffering in terms of reconciliation from sin and iniquity, not the relief of pain. In fact, in the Gospels Jesus both expects that His disciples will suffer on his account and in some sense commands it as a condition of discipleship, without promising earthly relief: “You will be hated by all because of my name. . . . Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>21</sup>

An additional problem lies in the act of apostasy, which is a denial of Christ and of truth. Rodrigues himself orders Kichijiro to meditate on Christ’s warning that “he who denies my name before men him also will I deny before my Father who is in heaven.”<sup>22</sup> If discipleship requires the self-giving love and imitation of Christ, then obeying absolute moral norms against intrinsic evils, like apostasy, is a “necessary (but not sufficient) condition of this love,” since living a moral life as a Christian cannot be separable from faith in Christ.<sup>23</sup> In fact, Rodrigues’s choice to apostatize stems from a lack of trust in God and the confusion of his own identity with Christ’s, to the extent that

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<sup>18</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 190.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 191, 175.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>21</sup> Mt. 10:22, 16:24.

<sup>22</sup> Mt. 10:33, qtd. in Endo, *Silence*, 43.

<sup>23</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, “Absolute Moral Norms and Human Suffering: An Apocalyptic Reading of Endo’s *Silence*,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 2, No. 3 (1999):105. See this article for a fuller discussion on the morality of Rodrigues’s choice to apostatize.

he assumes the role of savior proper to Christ alone.<sup>24</sup> Compare the passive nature of the Servant, who submits to ill treatment as God's will and trusts that God will vindicate him,<sup>25</sup> with Rodrigues's despair at the silence of God, who should take away the suffering of His people and yet is "continually silent while those groaning voices go on."<sup>26</sup> Believing that he must take upon himself the sufferings of others and that he alone can fix the situation, Rodrigues decides to "trample on what he has considered the most beautiful thing in his life," committing apostasy out of pride and a mistaken idea of what vicarious suffering entails.<sup>27</sup> The Servant's submission and trust provides a witness to the truth of God's power and mercy, while the priest's action denies both his human limitations and God's omnipotence and goodness.

Upon closer examination, it becomes clear then that Rodrigues is not intended to be an *alter Christus*, but rather a second Peter, perhaps even a Judas. Like Peter in his denials, Rodrigues shrinks before the demands of discipleship, both for others and for himself, to the point where he exchanges Truth for the physical safety of the peasants and the psychological relief of knowing he has done something to save them. He likewise suffers the solitude and regret of the guilty Peter, so much so that he cannot bear to look at his fellow apostate, where "he could find his own deep wound . . . see his own ugly face in the mirror that was Ferreira."<sup>28</sup> Endo even makes the comparison to Peter explicit: "The priest placed his foot on the *fumie*. Dawn broke. And far in the distance the cock crew."<sup>29</sup> Although the voice of Christ—even that perhaps a self-delusion—grants Rodrigues permission to trample, that in no way diminishes his responsibility for his apostasy. Indeed, the moral consequences are immediately apparent, as Rodrigues joins Ferreira in cooperating with the Japanese authorities, and no longer has the strength or the will to refuse actions, such as taking a wife, which would further separate him from his identity as a priest.<sup>30</sup> While the character of Rodrigues is a powerful exploration of the weakness

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>25</sup> Is. 50:5–7.

<sup>26</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 168.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 171. Insofar as pride is self-referential and denies the reality of God's lordship, power, and goodness, Rodrigues's apostasy is an act of pride.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 186. Although the decline may be less serious than it first appears—in the appendix it is implied that Rodrigues experienced several changes of heart that led him to renounce his apostasy, and was forced each time to recant. See Hitoshi Sano, "The Transformation of Father Rodrigues in Shusako Endo's *Silence*," *Christianity and Literature* 48, no. 2 (1999): 165–66.

of human beings, he cannot be considered a faithful imitator of the Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ.

Instead, the silently suffering peasants who form the backdrop of Rodrigues's narrative provide the fullest picture of discipleship. In their lowliness, poverty, and oppression, persecuted and scorned by the authorities and regarded with mixed feelings by Rodrigues himself, there are clear parallels between the peasants and Christ, born into a lowly estate, "thought of . . . as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted."<sup>31</sup> Although Father Rodrigues and Father Garrpe rightly identify the importance of priests for the Japanese Church, both Rodrigues and the authorities overlook the strength and vigor of the villagers' faith, mistaking the priesthood for the Church as a whole. Yet the Church continues to live on in the absence of priests, as the peasants "secretly made their own organization for the administration of the sacraments," baptizing the children, teaching the Christians, and leading the community in prayer.<sup>32</sup> Uneducated and without power, the peasants can do nothing other than accept their sufferings and try to carry on as best they can, trusting in "a God who shares in their suffering" and grants it meaning, even if He does not take it away.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the villagers answer the authorities' demands with silence, refusing to hand the priests over to the authorities even though they know that this might result in the destruction of the village.<sup>34</sup> In the silence of their lives and of their suffering, the peasants bear witness to and imitate the humility and sufferings of Christ. They, not Rodrigues, bear the flame of faith in Japan.

This is expressed the most clearly in the martyrdom of Mokichi and Ichizo. Both Christians volunteer themselves as hostages to save the village, knowing full well that they may never return.<sup>35</sup> Following Rodrigues's advice, the two peasants trample on the *fumie* at the magistrate's office in order to protect the village, but ultimately they cannot deny the truth of their identity as Christians when asked to commit sacrilege against the suffering Christ on the crucifix and blasphemy against the Virgin Mary.<sup>36</sup> Instead of assuming the roles of saviors for the village, Mokichi and Ichizo realize that they cannot disown their identities as Christians and that they can only trust in

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<sup>31</sup> Is. 53:4.

<sup>32</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 28–29.

<sup>33</sup> Cavanaugh, "Absolute Moral Norms," 111.

<sup>34</sup> Endo, *Silence*, 51.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–66.

God's will and divine providence. Their trust in God and disavowal of the Suffering Servant's unique role paradoxically makes them better imitators of the Servant than Rodrigues in his arrogation of the Servant's mission. The two peasants continue to imitate Christ in their sufferings and deaths. They are killed through a form of crucifixion, and in the rain it becomes "impossible to distinguish between the stakes and the men. Mokichi and Ichizo adhered to the stakes in such a way that they became part of them." In their suffering witness to the truth of Jesus, Mokichi and Ichizo so conform to Him that Jesus Himself becomes present.<sup>37</sup> Once dead, the two men are cremated and cast into the sea, leaving no trace of their existence behind.<sup>38</sup> Only the song of Mokichi remains to express their trust in God and their hope for vindication as faithful servants.<sup>39</sup>

Although Rodrigues portrays himself as a suffering servant in imitation of Christ, his misunderstanding of the nature of Christ's vicarious suffering, his lack of trust in God, and his mistaken moral calculations all preclude him from serving as an example of true discipleship. "Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise,"<sup>40</sup> as the learned Rodrigues is brought low before the humble faith of the peasants. Even though the peasants may not have grasped the full picture of Christianity, their understanding of Christ's suffering far outweighs that of Rodrigues, and enables them to truly follow Christ in his trust and submission to the will of God. Thus, the face of Christ is revealed in the members of his suffering Church, crying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor. 1:27.

<sup>41</sup> Acts 9:4.

# Because We Care: The Activity of Caregiving and the Inculcation of Just Generosity

*Alyse Spiehler*

At the start of his *Dependent Rational Animals*, Alasdair MacIntyre argues that there are two key questions that have received “insufficient attention in moral philosophy.”<sup>1</sup> The second of these questions—“What makes attention to human vulnerability and disability important for moral philosophers?”—is particularly under-explored, and to devastating effect.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, moral agents inevitably find themselves in a world community where they will be called upon to approach vulnerability and disability both in common conversation, and in their own and others’ lives. One of the most common ways that an individual is called upon to respond to vulnerability, disability, and, I now add, dependency, is by taking up the role of caregiver. Sandra Timmermann notes that twenty-nine percent of the United States population are “family caregivers,” individuals who care for an adult family member.<sup>3</sup> While this percentage is itself a significant portion of the population, which alone should prompt a MacIntyrean investigation into the activity of caregiving, this number does not reflect the portion of the population who are caregivers of other groups of seriously dependent individuals—parents and guardians of young children, caregivers of mentally or physically handicapped individuals, certain health care professionals, etc. Moral philosophers should, then, turn their attention to caregiving and to the flourishing of the caregiver, if only because this activity affects so many individuals. I intend to examine this question in relation to the activity of caregiving for the severely dependent, and to the caregiver’s cultivation of just generosity. By examining character virtues generally, just generosity specifically, and the nature and structure of the activity

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<sup>1</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Sandra Timmermann, “Making Decisions about Care, Living Arrangements, and Finances,” *Journal of Financial Service Professionals* 69, 3 (2015): 35.

of caregiving, the following becomes clear: the activity of caregiving for the seriously dependent is particularly effective at enabling the agent to cultivate the virtue of just generosity. Further, because just generosity is a virtue of character that results from habituation, and the caregiver has more opportunities to respond to the urgent and immediate needs of others than non-caregivers, caregivers have received better preparation to act just-generously than non-caregivers.

This paper will be divided into five sections: a discussion of virtue of character, a description of just generosity, an analysis of the nature and structure of caregiving, objections to the above-mentioned thesis, and reflection on this investigation. Throughout, it will become evident why a response to MacIntyre's question as posed in *Dependent Rational Animals* is of such consequence. Indeed, potential and actual caregivers are everywhere, and these individuals are tasked with understanding their own path to flourishing while they are presented with the difficulties of caring for another. Timmermann's remark that caregivers "often feel a sense of reward as well as a burden" may be unsurprising, but it is not unimportant.<sup>4</sup> This burden may be very heavy indeed. How should an individual respond if she is tasked with becoming a caregiver for a severely dependent individual? Let us turn to the question at hand to gain the insight that may help to resolve actual and potential caregivers' dilemmas.

There are three key components of virtue acquisition that are particularly relevant to this discussion: the role of habituation, the necessity that an action be done in a right state, and the distinction between full and natural virtue. Their relevance consists in each of these components' direct relation to the cultivation of just generosity. In II.1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle's first description of the virtues of character is that these result "from habit."<sup>5</sup> One's state of character "results from [the repetition of] similar activities," the idea being that in order for a person to establish her character, she must engage in the activities that form that character time and time again.<sup>6</sup> Just as a person cannot become a pianist by playing a Mozart piece once through, a moral agent cannot become generous by donating to charity every few years. To establish character virtue and to mold a virtuous character, one must act according to virtue habitually.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 1103a18.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1103b21.

Habit is not the only thing needed, however, to establish a virtue of character; these actions must be done in the right state as well. In II.4, Aristotle outlines three conditions that ensure that the agent is in the right moral state. First, the agent “must know” that she is doing a virtuous action; next, she “must decide” on these actions “for themselves”; finally, she “must do them from a firm and unchanging state,” that is, “from [a] virtue.”<sup>7</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse emphasizes a fourth condition after she considers the way in which a person who “tells a hurtful truth” in a sensitive way seems to have acted better than the one who does so “with zest and enjoyment.”<sup>8</sup> This fourth condition requires that “the agent has the appropriate feeling(s) or attitude(s) when she acts.”<sup>9</sup> Aristotle explains that the truly just person is one who does not simply act from justice—one could think of repaying a debt—but does so “in the way in which just . . . people” would.<sup>10</sup> For the person to repay this debt from a just state, she must realize that she is acting justly in doing so, she must be the one who determines that she will repay this debt, she must be compelled to act from justice, and she must feel appropriately in this situation.<sup>11</sup>

What’s more, for the agent to act virtuously in her indebted situation, she must repay her debt not because she was prone to justice from birth, but because she has the full virtue. Aristotle makes this essential distinction in VI.13, where he notes that while “each of us seems to possess his type of character to some extent by nature . . . we expect to possess these features in another way.”<sup>12</sup> He remarks that even children and beasts may be naturally virtuous, but this does not mean that they are fully virtuous.<sup>13</sup> Even if it does not take as long to acquire character virtue because of one’s natural virtue, this virtue must be acquired through habit and with the aid of intellect. Additionally, for the actions done habitually to be virtuous, they must be done in the right state. Now, let us turn to a specific virtue of character.

MacIntyre develops the notion of just generosity, which he takes to be the central virtue of acknowledged dependence. He recognizes the fundamentally communal nature of human persons and articulates

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1105a32–35.

<sup>8</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 125.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105b9.

<sup>11</sup> The fourth condition is present in Aristotle’s work. However, he does not emphasize its importance in II.4, where he outlines only three conditions.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 1144b5, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 1144b9.

what sort of virtues are needed to maintain healthy relationships among them. In his chapter on the virtues of acknowledged dependence, he writes that “the central virtue required to sustain” the types of giving and receiving relationships that enable one to flourish into an independent practical reasoner “has aspects both of generosity and justice.”<sup>14</sup> The activity of caregiving is situated in precisely this type of giving and receiving relationship. Both the recipient of care and the caregiver do well to understand the virtues of acknowledged dependence, but it is particularly incumbent on the caregiver to learn which virtues are required of her as she tends to the needs of the severely dependent. As we will see, just generosity is the chief virtue among these. It is important to note that it is only in cultivating the virtues of acknowledged dependence that one can fully flourish. So, whether one is a caregiver or not, she ought to seek to cultivate the virtue of just generosity in her own life.

There is a set of requirements built in to the virtue of just generosity as there is in any virtue, as well as a set of dispositions that the agent cultivates in inculcating this virtue. The first of these requirements, as MacIntyre articulates it, is a requirement “to act from and with a certain kind of affectionate regard.”<sup>15</sup> This specification of the virtue of just generosity is situated in the need to perform a virtuous action with the right kind of attitude or disposition—which is the fourth condition for an action to be done in the right state. Further, just generosity is necessarily performed in a community, even though “the scope of” this virtue “extends beyond the boundaries of community.”<sup>16</sup> *Misericordia*, which is built in to the virtue of just generosity, surpasses one’s community’s boundaries, as this requires that the individual have “regard to urgent and extreme need without respect of persons.”<sup>17</sup> To tend to our current investigation, even if an agent learns the virtue of just generosity by caring for a member of her community, in order for her to truly possess this virtue, she will need to act just-generously to those outside of her community as well. Finally, the virtue of just generosity demands that the agent “be uncalculating,” that she not rely on any “strict proportionality of giving and receiving.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 120.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

Already, it is clear why this virtue is at the epicenter of relationships of giving and receiving. Each individual has a responsibility to cultivate the virtue of just generosity, to learn how to act with a degree of affection for those around her, even for those who are not a part of her immediate communities. The moral agent must regard and respond to all persons' most pressing and dire needs, whether they are at home or far away, whether they are her friends or enemies, and whether they are good, vicious, or unlikable. What's more, the just generous person will act in this way without expecting repayment, at least as many people typically understand it, and will often be called upon to care for others who simply cannot return the favor. These requirements, which each person ought to strive to meet, may seem hefty indeed. It does us well to determine how best to cultivate this virtue, but it also does us well to appreciate what just generosity looks like when it is performed as it should be.

MacIntyre articulates some of the dispositions that the just-generous person will possess in her exercise of this virtue. I will discuss one. When an individual comes face to face with a stranger in urgent need, it is a mark of just generosity that the agent is "not only disposed to find in someone's need in such circumstances a sufficient reason for going to her or his aid, but will also be unable to conceive of such a reason as requiring or being open to further justification."<sup>19</sup> That is, the very fact that the other is in need is *itself* a good and sufficient reason to care for that person; one need not ask for any other reason to help that person, as no further justification is necessary. The agent who possesses this virtue "will have learned to act without thought of any justification beyond the need of those given into [her] care" especially, but also, without justification beyond the urgent need of strangers.<sup>20</sup>

Now, to understand how this virtue comes into relationship with the activity of caregiving, let us turn to the nature and structure of this task. There has been much research on the emotional and financial impact of caregiving on caregivers, as well as on the ways to properly tend to those individual's distinct needs. There is good reason for this, as researchers like Timmermann illumine the ways that caregivers are emotionally, physically, logistically, and financially affected by their role.<sup>21</sup> What kind of an activity is this that presents so many challenges and affects so many people? To gain a detailed account of caregiving,

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>21</sup> Timmermann, "Making Decisions," 36.

let us turn to Jean Vanier and the articulation of his work at L'Arche in *From Brokenness to Community*.

Vanier provides a detailed account of his role as caregiver in the community of individuals with severe disabilities at L'Arche. While he does not detail a step-by-step model for the activity of caregiving, it is present indirectly in his work. Specifically, four distinct steps come across when he describes the first community that he founded. Its members were Raphael and Philip, two men he “took from an asylum” and began to care for.<sup>22</sup> The first step in caregiving is encounter, what Vanier describes simply when he says, “we began to live together.”<sup>23</sup> Surely, not all caregivers for the severely dependent live with the person for whom they care, but all must come into communion with them.<sup>24</sup> To care for that person, one must be in proximity to her; caregiving is rooted in encounter.

In his account, Vanier moves from encounter to recognition—which is of two sorts—when he speaks of his discovery of the “immense pain” in Raphael and Philip’s lives.<sup>25</sup> We will come to recognition shortly, as recognition is the third crucial step in the caregiving process, but let us pause in the gap between these. Vanier’s account is a humble one, and perhaps because of this, he does not go into detail about his own service to these men. However, service is the second step in the caregiving process. That is to say, to care for a person at all, one must tend to that individual’s needs. The very definition of the verb “to care for” is bound up with provision—with providing for, looking after, and taking care of the person under one’s charge.<sup>26</sup> As Nel Noddings notes in her account of the activity of caregiving, “to care . . . requires some action in behalf of the cared-for.”<sup>27</sup> While Noddings goes on to say that caring may extend beyond “observable” action, caregiving as I mean it here would not include such unobservable acts as “acts of commitment.”<sup>28</sup> While a tender-hearted person may care *about* a severely dependent individual, unless she provides for that person’s needs, she is not the severely dependent individual’s caregiver. Care for the severely dependent is linked to

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<sup>22</sup> Jean Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> I do not use this term as Vanier does in his work.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> “Care, v. 3,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed 10 December 2016, [www.oed.com/view/Entry/27902?isAdvanced=false&result=4&rskey=Pmn4YH&](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27902?isAdvanced=false&result=4&rskey=Pmn4YH&).

<sup>27</sup> Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 10.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

providing for another's needs, and this is grounded in encounter. Without serving the other in one's encounter with her, there is no caregiving at all. These two components—encounter and service—are necessary for caregiving, and they are sufficient, as we will see shortly, for a truncated form of this activity. The next two steps complete the activity of caregiving as it pertains to care for the severely dependent.

Vanier's account reveals recognition and apprehension of one's individuality as the final two components of the activity of caregiving. Recognition is of two sorts. First, there is a recognition of the other's burden. Vanier explains that once he "had begun living with them"—and we should add serving them—he "soon started to discover the immense pain in [Raphael and Philip's] hearts."<sup>29</sup> He continues that he discovered these men's "deep cry for communion," as he lived with and served them.<sup>30</sup> The recognition of the other's burden is the first form of the caregiver's recognition. This recognition is followed by a recognition of one's own relation to that other. Vanier shares that the fullest flourishing of a caregiving relationship—community—entails "[*being*] with someone" and discovering "that we actually belong together."<sup>31</sup> Whether or not the caregiver comes to this discovery, the caregiver will recognize how she is related to the person for whom she is caring. This recognition may result in the discovery that she and that other have formed a community; it might result in the acknowledgement that she is the provider of that other's needs, for better or worse. The final step of caregiving follows closely on this sub-step. After the caregiver goes through both steps of recognition, she will either apprehend or re-apprehend her individuality, her place in the world as an "I." Vanier shares that in his community, he learned that "you are you and I am I."<sup>32</sup> This apprehension of his own individuality enabled him "to see all the hardness of [his] heart," that is, it enabled him to understand himself more fully.<sup>33</sup> It is in this understanding that one can affirm "I am," and finish this sentence with a truthful affirmation of one's inner state. Recognition and self-apprehension, then, follow the steps of encounter and service in the activity of caregiving.

Now, not all caregivers come to the same types of recognitions and self-apprehensions as Vanier does. But I believe that all caregivers

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<sup>29</sup> Vanier, *Brokenness to Community*, 11.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

are prompted to enter the third and fourth steps of caregiving, and that most do. The caregiver can, like Vanier, recognize the other's burdens with genuine searching and understanding; this is what is entailed by what I term flourishing caregiving. Alternately, though, one can simply acknowledge that the other is severely dependent and needy; these attitudes are symptomatic of what I will call defective caregiving. Janie Butts and Karen Rich discuss a case of defective caregiving in their account of a woman named Beatrice who was married to Murray, a man with Alzheimer's Disease. Beatrice did recognize her husband's burden, but she viewed his "afflictions" with "repugnance" rather than compassion.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, a person can recognize her relationship to the other with spite and disdain rather than with the sense of belonging together, as it seems it was with Beatrice, who responded to her role of caregiver with "anger" and "self-pity."<sup>35</sup> She surely recognized her relationship to Murray, but became embittered because of it. This is true also in the final step of self-apprehension. Like Vanier, one can view oneself with a renewed sense of one's shortcomings and can appreciate this opportunity for growth. Or, one can view oneself as a slave to the other, as an individual forced to act benevolently and required to put one's own goals, desires, and even flourishing on hold while one devotes oneself to the care of the other. Either way, it seems that these elements are the key components of the activity of caregiving. In caregiving, the caregiver encounters the other, serves her, recognizes that other's condition as well as her own relationship to that other, and gains a renewed apprehension of her own identity. Whether the individual will engage in defective or virtuous caregiving is ultimately her responsibility.

While defective and virtuous caregiving seem to be the natural, and I would venture, usual ways of caregiving, it may be possible to engage in the activity of caregiving by completing only the first two of these four steps—this is what I will call truncated caregiving. Indeed, if one only encounters and serves the other, without any of the reflection that is built in to recognition and self-apprehension, the individual is still a caregiver of sorts. However, truncated caregiving seems to be a highly unusual form of the activity, and it is certainly an impoverished one. It is possible to serve the other without reflecting

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<sup>34</sup> Janie B. Butts and Karen L. Rich, "Acknowledging Dependence: A MacIntyrean Perspective on Relationships Involving Alzheimer's Disease," *Nursing Ethics: An International Journal for Health Care Professionals* 11, 4 (2004): 408

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

on how that task affects oneself and one's community. But it seems that even the most distracted of caregivers will, at some point, think about the condition of the individual in her care, will recognize her role in relation to that other, and will consider how her role as caregiver affects her own self. Even the least attentive of all physicians will think something like, "all of the people that I care for are ill, and I am the one who has to serve them because I am a doctor and that is my job." This shallow reflection contains a recognition of the other's burden, of one's relationship to that individual as physician, and an apprehension of her identity as the one who has to help that other. This is a defective form of caregiving, but such brief reflections and self-apprehension indicate that the caregiver has done more than simply encounter and serve the person in her care. Therein lies the distinction between truncated and defective caregiving.

How does the activity of caregiving prepare the caregiver to act just-generously, especially if it can go wrong in two ways? Let us consider the way in which just generosity springs from habitual activity. The just-generous person must learn how to respond to another's need just because it is needed. In the second step of caregiving, the caregiver responds to the individual's need. The caregiver will have to perform this activity repeatedly. Caregivers are consistently placed in situations where they are called upon to respond to the needs of those in their care, including those individuals' most urgent needs. They will learn to serve that severely dependent person over and over again, night and day, because the cared-for is unable to meet those needs herself. Habit, it seems, is the surest way to inculcate an immediate response to another's need just because it is needed, as this may not be a natural response for the agent; even if it is one's natural response, this is not equivalent to a fully virtuous response. The caregiver is given the opportunity to cultivate this aspect of just generosity precisely because her task of giving care is repeated, and so she will be able to learn how to respond to the other's need out of habit.

This is not the only trait that is needed, however, for an individual to be just-generous. That person must also act from affectionate regard for that other, and not be concerned with strict reciprocity, both of which have to do with the state in which the action is done. This is where the third and fourth aspects of caregiving, if conducted virtuously, can aid in the caregiver's cultivation of just generosity. Vanier is a perfect example of an individual who responds with affection and care when he regards the other's burden. He was moved

by their hearts' deep cry, and responded to this supplication. The activity of caregiving places the individual in the prime position to act affectionately because she is made to recognize that person's burden. Surely, individuals who do not encounter people in serious need may be moved by pity, but it is not until they learn to understand the other's actual pain—as the caregiver is well poised to do—that their sorrow can actually be one of regard for that other. Let us “never idealize the poor,” Vanier cautions.<sup>36</sup> He seems to recognize that natural virtue may incline one to sorrow over the seriously dependent individual's need, but he insists that it is only in recognizing the true nature of that person's burden that we may properly identify what she needs most. Caregivers are given this opportunity daily, whereas non-caregivers will have to work more intentionally and much harder to be able to understand the other's need and so act from an authentic regard for that person's wellbeing.

Further, just generosity demands that one not be concerned with strict reciprocity. Here, too, caregivers of the severely dependent are well equipped to develop this trait. This is because many individuals who are severely dependent are unable to reciprocate in the strict sense of the term. The caregiver works through the steps of caregiving over and over, and the person for whom she cares may *do* little more than receive her care. The cared-for may never be able to act for her caregiver in the way that the caregiver has acted for her. What that caregiver may learn, though, as Vanier does and as MacIntyre recognizes is possible, is that the person for whom she cares is able to teach a great deal. MacIntyre describes a widespread view that individuals with severe disabilities are “at most,” “passive objects of benevolence.”<sup>37</sup> He asks, “how can *they* be our teachers?” and proceeds to suggest a number of ways in which such individuals can be precisely that.<sup>38</sup> A person like Vanier's witness answers this question further, by revealing the way in which his life was transformed by his encounter with the seriously dependent. But what I want to argue, and what Vanier does not draw attention to in his own words, is that he adopts this attitude of learning precisely *through* his work as a caregiver. The caregiver is given the repeated opportunity to recognize that she is in the privileged position of learner. So reciprocity, as it is traditionally understood, does not factor in to this relationship. The caregiver can learn to be just generous: not to ask what she will gain in return for

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<sup>36</sup> Vanier, *Brokenness to Community*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 138.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

her service, but rather to be grateful for the tremendous opportunity to learn from those under her care.

The caregiver, then, has undergone the habitual training necessary to respond to the other's needs with immediacy. She has been given the opportunity to truly understand the afflicted's need and so to have a genuine and affectionate regard for that person; here, she has also received the practice that would enable her to come to that same recognition with others, even those to whom she is not giving care. Further, the caregiver has the opportunity to learn from the severely dependent and so to forget about questions of reciprocity, as her focus is not on whether she will be repaid for her service. The non-caregiver, on the other hand, will have to work harder to find a place where she can practice the virtue of just generosity. She will have to learn to respond to others' needs without practicing this response through caregiving, to understand the afflicted's condition without entering into perpetual service of her, and to learn disinterested sacrifice when it is quite likely that such sacrifices are not frequently demanded of her. It seems, then, that the caregiver is truly better prepared than the non-caregiver to cultivate this essential virtue.

There are, of course, objections to this view. I will tend to only one. It would seem that caregivers have not received better preparation to act just-generously than non-caregivers. Indeed, as Butts and Rich suggest, caregivers of people with Alzheimer's Disease "often treat" these individuals "as if they are no longer members of the moral community," that is, as if they are "[pets]."<sup>39</sup> Those caregivers clearly do not act just-generously in their treatment of seriously dependent individuals. Rather, these caregivers treat them like subhuman creatures who are mere burdens. If caregivers were, in fact, better prepared to act just generously than non-caregivers, then caregivers of patients with AD would not care-give defectively, as they often do.

This objection prompts us to make an essential distinction. If some—or even most—caregivers do not act just-generously, this does not mean that caregivers do not receive better preparation than non-caregivers to act just-generously. Indeed, the caregivers that Butts and Rich refer to have not acquired just generosity, but this does not mean that they did not have a better opportunity to acquire it than non-caregivers. As Aristotle explains, it is not as though every person who does the actions of a grammarian becomes a grammarian, as virtue is

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<sup>39</sup> Butts and Rich, "Acknowledging Dependence," 408.

not merely about habitual action.<sup>40</sup> Even so, in order to become a grammarian, it is best to repeatedly engage in grammatical action. Similarly, it is more beneficial to repeatedly engage in the activity of caregiving as one acquires the virtue of just generosity than not to engage in this activity.

If caregiving does in fact enable one to cultivate just generosity and better prepares one to acquire this key virtue than not being a caregiver, it seems that there ought to be a societal shift in the way that we perceive caregiving for the severely dependent. If it is true that caregiving for the severely dependent makes it so that the caregiver's flourishing is stunted, one ought to approach this activity with great trepidation. If caregivers are not able to flourish in their role, they have good cause to become embittered, in the way that people like Beatrice have done, when their lives are profoundly altered by caregiving. The individual may find that she should avoid bringing children with disabilities into the world, or should avoid starting a family altogether; she may rightly conclude that the best place for the elderly is in a nursing home where she will not have to care for that individual, or that a life of full-time service is more burden than opportunity for growth. If it is the case that caregiving harms the caregivers' flourishing, many of the common attitudes toward this activity—repugnance, trepidation, pity, avoidance—are well founded.

Indeed, this discussion intersects directly with a variety of complex real-life scenarios. For instance, this discussion affects the way that moral agents should evaluate their attitude toward the relatively common activity of ending the lives of unborn children with physical and mental handicaps. Parents of such individuals are sure to be profoundly affected by their role as caregivers. Whether or not such a role should be accepted gratefully, joyfully, or at all is undoubtedly linked to whether or not the caregiver can flourish in such a circumstance. Because, however, the activity of caregiving for the severely dependent *does* enable the caregiver to cultivate a central virtue for a moral life, such questions can be answered in a wholly new light. Caregiving for the severely dependent becomes a privileged opportunity for growth, even though it does present many challenges. Of course, the caregiver's burdens should never be disregarded in light of her privileged position to become just-generous, but it also seems that the moral agent should not evaluate the caregiver's role with sheer

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<sup>40</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105a20, 1105a22.

pity—as she should if the caregiver’s flourishing is only stunted by her role.

Caregiving, in some capacity or another, is likely to be expected of us as moral agents in the course of our lifetimes. The effect of this activity, then, is a crucial topic to explore, as it is likely to alter each of us. What the combined work of people like Aristotle, MacIntyre, and Vanier reveals is that this activity is excellent preparation for the agent to inculcate the virtue of just generosity. Indeed, this virtue is of paramount importance in the moral life, especially in a person’s relationships with the others around her. If a caregiver takes the opportunity to care-give virtuously and disposes herself to its potentially transformative effects, as Vanier does, she may find that she is made better through the often tiring, burdensome, expensive, and time-consuming activity of caring for the severely dependent. This flourishing occurs precisely because of the nature of this activity, the process of character formation, and the features of just generosity.

# “For Love Is as Strong as Death”: An Introductory Exegesis on Song of Songs 8:1–6

*John Zalesky*

Song of Songs 8:1–6

<sup>1</sup>O that you were like a brother to me, that nursed at my mother’s breast! If I met you outside, I would kiss you, and none would despise me.

<sup>2</sup>I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranates.

<sup>3</sup>O that his left hand were under my head, and that his right hand embraced me!

<sup>4</sup>I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please.

<sup>5</sup>Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple tree I wakened you. There your mother was in travail with you, there she who bore you was in travail.

<sup>6</sup>Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame.<sup>1</sup>

**T**he female protagonist expresses her desire to be with her lover with poetic language. She proceeds to warn the daughters of Jerusalem to not stir up love before it is time. She describes how passionately she feels by referring to childbearing and death.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless noted otherwise, all biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition.

The Song of Songs may be considered, “a collection of exuberant love poems exulting in the delights of the senses.”<sup>2</sup> Yet it may also have a deeper, allegorical meaning, referring to God and Israel or to Christ and the Church.<sup>3</sup> The Song of Songs is sometimes referred to as The Song of Solomon.<sup>4</sup> This comes from the first verse of the book, “The Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s.”<sup>5</sup> Until modern times a common view among Christians and Jews was that Solomon wrote the book.<sup>6</sup> Many scholars agree that Solomon did not write the Song of Songs and claim that it was likely attributed to him because he was the “wisest and most notorious king in Israel’s history.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, one source claims that the possibility of Solomon as the author “is entirely out of the question.”<sup>8</sup> There are some hints as to who the author might be. The author knew of the finer things associated with the privileged class, such as the woman’s vineyard, a royal wedding procession, fine fruits, spices, and perfumes.<sup>9</sup> Olson proposes that the author may have been “someone (a woman) from an elite class who, at least modestly educated, was familiar with the Hebrew lyrical heritage and aware of prevailing assumptions about the role of women and the prohibitions against marriages crossing class and ethnic lines.”<sup>10</sup> These hints of who the author is can also help determine who the audience is. Within the Song there is a narrative between a man and a woman. The woman also speaks directly to the Daughters of Jerusalem multiple times.<sup>11</sup> The dialogue with the Daughters of Jerusalem is “spoken principally for benefit of the audience.”<sup>12</sup> Although the imagery can be difficult to understand for those from a Western background, the addresses to the Daughters of Jerusalem are for the benefit of the reader.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Alter, *Strong as Death Is Love: The Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Jonah, and Daniel: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Adrianus Van den Born and Louis Francis Hartman, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible: A Translation and Adaptation of A. Van Den Born’s Bijbels Woordenboek*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 316.

<sup>4</sup> H. J. Olson, ed., *The New Interpreter’s Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible, Including the Apocryphal/ Deuterocanonical Books*, vol. V (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 363.

<sup>5</sup> Song 1:1.

<sup>6</sup> Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible*, “Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary” (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Olson, *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 365.

<sup>8</sup> Van den Born and Hartman, *Encyclopedic Dictionary*, 318.

<sup>9</sup> Olson, *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 365.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Song 1:5; 2:7; 3:5,10,11; 5:8,16; 8:4.

<sup>12</sup> Paul J. Griffiths, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), xxxvii.

There are many theories as to when the book was written. Pope gives a number of hypotheses, including during the time of Solomon; that it is a mixture of new and old, with the Song having been altered over time; that it is undatable due to a lack of hints as to date; the post-exilic period; and the fourth century B.C.<sup>13</sup> These theories rest on different reasons, including tradition, linguistic analysis, and lack of evidence pointing one way or the other.<sup>14</sup> However, according to the style and vocabulary it was likely written in the fifth or fourth centuries B.C.<sup>15</sup> Although it was likely written at this time, it may have existed previously. Alter notes that while parts of the Song of Songs may have been in oral form for centuries, the language of the Song “clearly indicates a relatively late date of composition; the fourth century B.C. seems a reasonable guess.”<sup>16</sup>

The Song of Songs can be divided up into a prologue, five poems, and a conclusion.<sup>17</sup> Song 8:1–6 belongs to both the end of the fifth poem (6:4–8:4), The Autumn of the Fruits, and the beginning of the conclusion (8:5–14), The Golden After-Season, according to Fr. Arminjon’s divisions.<sup>18</sup> This passage is at the end of the book and sums up the narrative. While the entire book is love poetry, what immediately precedes the passage is chapter seven, which makes references to royalty<sup>19</sup> followed by imagery and similes relating to vineyards and wine.<sup>20</sup> The selected passage continues with suggestive language and strong emotion, followed by the conclusion of the Song.

## Analysis and Synthesis

### 1. *Formal Analysis*

The Song of Songs’s genre may be considered in a couple of ways. It is difficult to classify it because it is “a remarkable departure from that of other books of the Bible . . . to enter the world of domestic relations, private sentiments, and interpersonal discourse.”<sup>21</sup> It deviates

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<sup>13</sup> Pope, *The Anchor Bible*, 22–33. Pope cites M. H. Segal and Gerleman for a date during the time of Solomon, Julius Bewer for a mixed bag, and Gordis for undatable. All of these theories are based on good reasons, but none of them can be asserted with absolute certainty. Perhaps one day an uncovering of something like the Dead Sea Scrolls will shed some light on the issue, giving us a better idea of when they were written.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Blaise Arminjon, *The Cantata of Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 31.

<sup>16</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Song 7:1, 7:5.

<sup>20</sup> Song 7:9, 7:12.

<sup>21</sup> Olson, *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 363.

from other biblical books since “nowhere in its eight chapters is God mentioned. The book of Esther is the only work that shares this distinction.”<sup>22</sup> One way to classify it is to say that it is a drama. This view is based on the fact that “the book presents speakers and dialogue without introductory statements or transitional directions and that where action or account of speech are given in the third person . . . the narrator appears to be one of the actors.”<sup>23</sup> While this is one theory, another theory considers the work a song, based, in part, on the fact that “the narrative elements of the song . . . are scattered and sporadic . . . and there is no continuity except in the imagination of those who read between the lines.”<sup>24</sup> The work is difficult to read as a drama due to its lack of continuity. It is foreign to Western scholars who expect a play-by-play narrative with a cohesive beginning, middle, and end. In contrast, evidence “suggests that there was a genre of Hebrew love poetry centuries before the Song, but it surfaced only at this late moment, perhaps in part because of the sense of freedom that later Hebrew writers felt to express themselves.”<sup>25</sup> While there are dramatic elements to the work, it is best viewed as a lyric or song and finds itself in the canon with the wisdom literature after Ecclesiastes and before The Wisdom of Solomon.

## 2. *Detailed Analysis*

Verse 1 shows an intense desire on the part of the woman. She wishes her lover to be her brother because “her desire for him is so imperative that she wishes she could have unimpeded access to his embraces even when they are out in the streets.”<sup>26</sup> This might seem peculiar to someone of the Western tradition. One explanation is that “oriental customs do not allow a Bride to give public demonstrations of affection to her bridegroom: such are more easily tolerated between brother and sister.”<sup>27</sup> Such imagery also has a deeper meaning. Arminjon writes that “in these verses of the Song, we have the highest and most beautiful expression in the history of Israel of her ardent and ineradicable expectation of the messiah.”<sup>28</sup> This is not uncommon in the Bible. Pope writes that “the biblical tradition, particularly the post-exilic tradition, conceived the Messiah, Wisdom, and the Angel

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Pope, *Anchor Bible*, 35.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>25</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, xvi.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>27</sup> Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*, 326.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 327.

of Yahweh as visible manifestations of the invisible God.”<sup>29</sup> The reference to nursing at a mother’s breasts is vivid imagery which is “a kind of prolepsis of kissing.”<sup>30</sup> Ambrose looks at this through a Christian lens, asking, “What are the breasts of the church except the sacrament of baptism?”<sup>31</sup>

Verse 2 takes the action out of public sight and into the house of the woman’s mother. The intention is that “she could invite him into her mother’s house and there be instructed by him in the ways of lovemaking.”<sup>32</sup> This makes sense in the cultural context. Alter clarifies, saying that “it is the traditional duty of the mother to instruct her daughter in the art of love.”<sup>33</sup> After this there is an offer of wine, which is a “metaphor for the pleasures of love that she now offers him.”<sup>34</sup> Theodoret of Cyr expounds on this metaphor, saying that “spiced wine” refers to “the teaching redolent of divine grace, as it were spiced and proving to be fragrant,” and that “juice of pomegranates” refers to “the benefit . . . deriving from the fruits of love.”<sup>35</sup> Pope attests to this, commenting that some Christians interpret this as anticipation for the joys of Heaven.<sup>36</sup> Theodoret of Cyr also identifies the mother’s house with the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup> This fits nicely with the spiritual meaning behind the text.

Verse 3 depicts the desire of the bride to be embraced by her lover. It is important to note that “[i]n a book of poetry filled with passionate verses, this is one of the few explicit references to the lovers actually touching each other.”<sup>38</sup> Most of the Song is dedicated to anticipation. Alter notes that “[t]his line, which repeats 2:6, is a discreet expression of the sexual consummation . . . or might even refer to their embrace after the consummation.”<sup>39</sup> This expression of physical intimacy also indicates the satisfied state of the bride’s soul. She is able to rest in the arms of her lover in a completely new way. Arminjon ascribes the attitude of the bride as if she were to say, “such rest is not

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<sup>29</sup> Pope, *Anchor Bible*, 656.

<sup>30</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, 47.

<sup>31</sup> John Robert Wright and Thomas C. Oden, *The Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, vol. 9 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 362.

<sup>32</sup> Olson, *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 428.

<sup>33</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, 48.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Wright and Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 363.

<sup>36</sup> Pope, *Anchor Bible*, 660.

<sup>37</sup> Wright and Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 363.

<sup>38</sup> Olson, *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 429.

<sup>39</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, 48.

as I had been before, that of a still languid soul, but one of beatitude.”<sup>40</sup> Her rest is more than comfort, but that of security and completion.

Verse 4 repeats what the bride has said earlier, but is slightly different. Pope notes that there is a “change from adjuration to prohibition,”<sup>41</sup> which differs from the two previous times this verse was cited in the Song.<sup>42</sup> With this in mind Alter summarizes the verse as follows: “I make you swear not to interfere and not to urge love’s fulfillment before the time is ripe; now I have enjoyed that ripeness in the intimate privacy that is only for me and my lover.”<sup>43</sup> The message has not changed from earlier usage. The bride does now speak with more authority, thanks to her newfound experience. Instead of a strong suggestion, she now asserts that her love is hers and others are prohibited from stirring up love with him or anyone else. This is similar to a chastity talk aimed at teenage girls who need to hear encouragement and guidance from someone who is older and more experienced.

Verse 5 does not seem to continue the flow of the drama. In fact, Alter writes that these “two fragments in immediate sequence here may reflect a quandary of the editor as he came to the end of his collection of poems.”<sup>44</sup> Such an assertion disregards God’s word too easily. Leaning on her beloved “is a moment of joy, to be sure; but it is also, after journeying in the wilderness, the look of post-coital relaxation.”<sup>45</sup> Arminjon shares this sentiment. He writes, “she appears as a Bride softly surrendering to her husband, leaning on him, united and identified with him in the unity of the couple.”<sup>46</sup> She is at rest, enjoying the fruits of finally fulfilling her desire to be with her lover. She is at peace. Yet in the next line she awakens her lover. Alter claims that the verb used “is probably intended in an erotic sense.”<sup>47</sup> In fact, there is a, “connection of the verb with a similar root meaning ‘be

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<sup>40</sup> Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*, 333.

<sup>41</sup> Pope, *Anchor Bible*, 661.

<sup>42</sup> Song 2:7, 3:5

<sup>43</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, 48. Similarly, Olson writes, “Her message to her peers, however, is constant: For everything there is a time and a place. There is a time and place for love(making). And it is best not to hurry or interfere with the natural course of love” (*New Interpreter’s Bible*), 429.

<sup>44</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, 49.

<sup>45</sup> Olson, *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 429.

<sup>46</sup> Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*, 339.

<sup>47</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, 49. Pope agrees with this, saying, “There is, however, nothing to suggest that anyone is asleep and the verb used may denote any kind of arousal, including sexual excitement” (*Anchor Bible*, 665).

naked”<sup>48</sup> The couple is so intimate that they no longer hide anything from each other. The two have become one.

Verse 5 also has some spiritual considerations. Ambrose views this passage through a Christian lens. He writes that “she ascends, leaning on the Word of God. For those who are more perfect recline upon Christ, just as John also was reclining at Jesus’ bosom.”<sup>49</sup> Arminjon also looks at this from a spiritual point of view. He focuses on the term “mother,” writing that “the theme of carnal mother seems to be heard only in counterpoint, so as to enhance that of the new birth, ‘the birth from above.’”<sup>50</sup> The Church as mother gives birth through Baptism. It is easy to find more parallels, since the Song of Songs is so rich in imagery. It is easy to get lost in it.

Verse 6 has some of the strongest imagery in the whole Song. The bride desires to be a seal on her lover’s heart. This refers to a “Mesopotamian practice of wearing apotropaic objects bearing names referring to an associate or friend who thus accompanies and protects the wearer.”<sup>51</sup> The bride wants to be united with her lover at all times. So, “her place will now always be on the very heart of her beloved. And thus he will never be able to cease thinking about her.”<sup>52</sup> Love is so strong that the author writes, “for love is strong as death.”<sup>53</sup> This is incredibly powerful. Augustine comments, “when death comes, it cannot be resisted . . . so against the violence of love the world can do nothing. For from the contrary the similitude is made of death; for as death is most violent to take away, so love is most violent to save.”<sup>54</sup> There is a force contrary to and equal to death. Arminjon adds, “even the powerful one of this world had to bow before it. But the love of the Bridegroom is more powerful than death.”<sup>55</sup> This is beautifully added to by the allusion to fire. Alter argues that “[t]he word ‘flame’ . . . is used here as an intensifier, with no theological implication.”<sup>56</sup> This, however, is a difficult position. Psalm 29 uses the term similarly:

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<sup>48</sup> Pope, *Anchor Bible*, 663.

<sup>49</sup> Wright and Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 363. Cf. John 13:23.

<sup>50</sup> Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*, 342. Cf. John 3:3.

<sup>51</sup> Pope, *Anchor Bible*, 666–67.

<sup>52</sup> Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*, 344. Similarly, Olson has this reflection: “The ‘seal’ the maiden wishes to be placed upon her lover’s heart (v. 6) signals her desire to be inseparably united with the shepherd by a sacred oath” (*New Interpreter’s Bible*, 430).

<sup>53</sup> Song 8:6.

<sup>54</sup> Wright and Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary*, 365.

<sup>55</sup> Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*, 348. Olson adds, “one of the most important lessons of love: Love is possibly the most powerful force on earth. Even chaotic forces (i.e., fire and flood) cannot subdue it” (*New Interpreter’s Bible*, 430).

<sup>56</sup> Alter, *Strong as Death is Love*, 50.

“The voice of the Lord flashes flames of fire.”<sup>57</sup> Arminjon describes the scene beautifully, writing, “But what is now in the mind of the Bride when she talks about ‘flashes of fire’ is the living flame of love of her Bridegroom, which destroys and consumes all around itself, all that might wound and reach her.”<sup>58</sup> There is no doubt as to the intensity of the love shared.

### 3. *Synthesis*

This passage from Song of Songs gives the conclusion and fulfillment of the Song as a whole. The lovers finally find each other and are fulfilled beyond all measure. While this could be specifically applied to Solomon and a Shulamite, it is universal in its application. It describes God’s love for Israel as fulfilled through Jesus Christ. It harkens back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Under the tree the woman roused the man, which led to the mother’s travail in bearing.<sup>59</sup> Equating the strength of love to the strength of death demonstrates the redemptive power of love. Even though death persists in the world, the love that man and woman have for each other allows life to continue. The love of Christ is strong as death. His death was rectified by His love. St. Paul writes, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>60</sup> It’s as if he is saying, “Make Israel Eden again.” Intense desire and love is not in vain. It has fulfillment that not even death can destroy. Life and love continue, despite the forces that seek to make it fail.

### **Concluding Reflection**

“For love is strong as death.” All of us shall die. This is unavoidable. So we seek distractions from this fact. We check our Facebook accounts, plug in our ear buds, and watch the news. We fail to be aware of what really matters. Our culture tells us that “the one” is out there, that we will find fulfillment when we find the person we are supposed to marry and with whom we will live happily ever after. But this is incomplete. Marriage is a beautiful vocation intended for the service of others, but it will not make us happy if it is all we seek.

Yes, we are seeking “the One,” that is, God. You may have heard it a thousand times before and may not have truly understood it. You may have thought it ludicrous. The journey to God through prayer is

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<sup>57</sup> Psalm 29:7.

<sup>58</sup> Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*, 350.

<sup>59</sup> Song 8:5. This parallels Genesis 3.

<sup>60</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:22.

not a boring, static path, but rather an exciting, dynamic relationship. In this passage from Scripture, God shows us how He seeks to reach us. His love is like the love of a man for a woman. Yet there is a time and a place for everything. God grants us consolation in prayer and He allows desolation at times. Such is the journey to God. He works through our thoughts, feelings, and desires because that is how He made us. He made us for Himself, but because of our fallen nature, we find it difficult to be with Him at all times. So, we are blessed to have the opportunity to join Him in this romantic journey. He loves us so much that He took on flesh to be with us and to be close to us. He continues to stay with and be close to us through the Eucharist, which we are about to receive.

# The Efficaciousness and Moral Implications of Tobacco Excise Taxes

Ryan Mattingly

Cigarettes are expensive. In 2012, the national average for a pack of cigarettes was \$5.21, of which \$1.46 was taxes.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, a spate of tax increases have been passed at the federal, state, and local levels. The hope is that increased taxes will discourage smoking and thereby mitigate the costs to both the individual and the society. This belief has become so entrenched that further taxes seem inevitable as the government tries to stamp out smoking. However, taxation as a policy tool to impact smoking rates may be problematic. To determine whether this is so, two distinct yet related questions must be examined: Does the state have a legitimate interest in curbing smoking and, if so, does taxation adhere to social justice guidelines? This paper argues that the state can legitimately take steps to decrease cigarette consumption, but that taxation is both ineffective and harmful to the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Before we can understand whether the state has a legitimate interest in preventing smoking, we must first understand the moral quality of the act of smoking. The Catechism of the Catholic Church declares, “the virtue of temperance disposes us to avoid every kind of excess: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine.”<sup>2</sup> The Compendium of the Catechism uses the same language of avoiding excess, stating, “We must take reasonable care of our own physical health and that of others but avoid the cult of the body and every kind of excess.”<sup>3</sup> Judging from the Church’s treatment, it would appear that the primary moral issue raised by tobacco is intemperance. The implication is that some amount of tobacco usage is morally permissible. What that level is and how it is to be determined are

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Farrelly, James Nonnemaker, and Kimberly Watson, “The Consequences of High Cigarette Excise Taxes for Low-Income Smokers,” *PLoS One* 7, 9 (September 12, 2012): 1. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0043838>.

<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), §2290.

<sup>3</sup> Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), §474.

beyond the scope of the current discussion, but the fact that it exists is very pertinent.

As an in principle moral activity, smoking should not be banned outright by the state. St. Thomas teaches that the state ought not to ban every vice: “human laws do not forbid all vices, from which the virtuous abstain, but only the more grievous vices.”<sup>4</sup> If not all vices are to be forbidden, then surely something that is not properly speaking vicious ought not to be prohibited by law. However, tobacco has an addictive quality to it which encourages intemperance. Intemperate cigarette smoking is morally problematic in the same way gluttony is. The state has a legitimate interest in preventing the practice and development of vice, and thus ought to adopt policies that discourage tobacco consumption, especially in large quantities.

The next logical question is how the state should go about its discouragement. Any government possesses a large collection of public policy tools that it can employ. Restricting sale to minors, advertising bans, required warning labels, public smoking bans, and of course taxation have all been involved in the effort to reduce smoking rates. The pertinent tool for the current discussion is taxation. In recent years, governments at the federal, state, and local levels have imposed large tax increases with the explicit intention of reducing consumption. Between 1998 and 2008, tobacco taxes increased by almost 100%, in addition to an increase of 20% in the previous eight years.<sup>5</sup> If taxes on a pack of cigarettes were \$1 in 1990, they would have risen to almost \$2.40 by 2008. Despite the recent large tax increases, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that excise taxes comprise 70% of the price of a pack of cigarettes, significantly higher than the WHO’s 2015 estimate of 42.54% in America.<sup>6</sup>

However, the efficacy of taxation as a control measure has been called into question by recent research. Prior to the large tax increases, the price elasticity<sup>7</sup> of cigarettes was found to be between -0.25

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia IIae, q. 96, a. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Callison and Robert Kaestner, “Do Higher Tobacco Taxes Reduce Adult Smoking? New Evidence of the Effect of Recent Cigarette Tax Increases on Adult Smoking,” *National Bureau of Economic Research* (August 2012): 1. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18326>.

<sup>6</sup> WHO *Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2015: Raising Taxes on Tobacco* (Geneva: WHO Press, 2015), 23, 135. [apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/178574/1/9789240694606\\_eng.pdf](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/178574/1/9789240694606_eng.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Price elasticity is the percent decrease in consumption that results from a 1% increase in price. As an example, a price elasticity of -0.3 means that cigarette consumption decreases by 0.3% for every 1% increase in price.

and -0.5.<sup>8</sup> Recent research has determined that the current price elasticity is approximately -0.005, or an order of magnitude smaller than it previously was.<sup>9</sup> Even more surprisingly, youth smoking rates are not significantly more price elastic than those of adults, contrary to previous findings.<sup>10</sup> For whatever reason, it appears that the price elasticity of cigarettes has shrunk by an order of magnitude. One possible cause is that as taxes have increased the price of cigarettes, only those with strong preferences for smoking are still smoking. This group would naturally be highly price inelastic. Regardless of the cause, a low price elasticity indicates that taxation is an ineffective method for curtailing cigarette consumption. On that basis alone, raising taxes further would be a poor policy choice if the aim is only or primarily to reduce smoking.

If the only issue with the taxation strategy was efficacy, then the stakes would not be high enough to warrant serious concern. The worst case scenario is that the government collects more taxes on a harmful product. Unfortunately, cigarette taxes are extremely regressive, meaning they disproportionately impact the poor. In 2012, smokers making less than \$30,000 spent a national average of 13% of their income on cigarettes and in New York, which has much higher cigarette taxes than most states, 24% of income was spent on cigarettes.<sup>11</sup> Cigarette spending thus represents a significant portion of all spending for the poor who smoke. Further compounding the problem is the fact that smoking rates are far higher among the poor than among other groups. The Centers for Disease Control's most recent data show that 26.3% of individuals below the poverty line smoke, compared to 15.2% of the rest of the population.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, 22.9% of those with less than a high school education and 43% of those with a GED smoke, compared to 7.9% and 5.4% of undergraduate and postgraduate degree holders, respectively. In America, the poorer and less educated someone is, the more likely that person is to smoke.

Such high smoking rates among the poor could be used to justify increased taxes. After all, the poor are least able to handle the health

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<sup>8</sup> K. Cummings, "Programs and Policies to Discourage the Use of Tobacco Products," *Oncogene* 21, 48 (21 October 2002): 7349–64. [nature.com/onc/journal/v21/n48/full/1205810a.html](http://nature.com/onc/journal/v21/n48/full/1205810a.html).

<sup>9</sup> Callison and Kaestner, "Higher Tobacco Taxes."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Farrelly, Nonnemaker, and Watson, "Consequences."

<sup>12</sup> "Cigarette Smoking in the United States," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/resources/data/cigarette-smoking-in-united-states.html](http://cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/resources/data/cigarette-smoking-in-united-states.html). Last modified December 14, 2015.

complications caused by smoking. Maybe, it is thought, the poor will have a greater price elasticity than the general population due to their more constrained financial resources. Yet data from areas with large tax increases do not support this theory. In New York, smoking in households with income less than \$25,000 did not experience a statistically significant decline between 2003 and 2010, even though the smoking rate of the general population decreased by 20%.<sup>13</sup> Given the data, one must conclude, or at least admit it likely, that increased taxes on cigarettes will not result in fewer poor people smoking. Instead, higher taxes will result in a higher percentage of the poor's income being spent on cigarettes. Between 2003 and 2011, New York's poor smokers doubled the amount of household income spent on cigarettes as a result of tax increases.<sup>14</sup> In a real, measurable, and direct way, cigarette excise taxes are harming the poor.

The factors involved in the poor's continued high rates of smoking are undoubtedly complex and multifaceted. They face a variety of challenges that the better off do not experience and which may make quitting or avoiding smoking more difficult. In short, the poor are the least able to not smoke, as witnessed by the high smoking prevalence they experience. As smoking becomes an increasingly poor activity, higher taxes will only extract more money from a group that can least afford to give it. The addictive quality of cigarettes makes taxation a thorny issue. If a person has lost control of an activity and does not have the means to regain control, is charging a tax really the most effective response? Given such people's vulnerability, taxes can verge into the arena of exploitation.

To make matters worse, the state has a special duty to the poor. The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church clearly teaches that "the principle of the universal destination of goods requires that the poor, the marginalized and in all cases those whose living conditions interfere with their proper growth should be the focus of particular concern," i.e., there exists a preferential option for the poor.<sup>15</sup> Given the harmful health, financial, and moral effects of tobacco addiction, the state has an obligation to assist the poor to stop smoking and to alleviate its effects. The current strategy of ever increasing excise taxes fails to achieve any of these goals. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops applies the preferential option

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<sup>13</sup> Farrelly, Nonnemaker, and Watson, "Consequences."

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), §182.

for the poor specifically to the issue of taxation by teaching that “a system of taxation based on assessment according to ability to pay is a prime necessity for the fulfillment of these social obligations.”<sup>16</sup> Excise taxes on tobacco fail to meet this criterion. As shown before, they place the greatest burden on those who are both unable to pay and unable to avoid doing so. Any further increase would raise significant moral problems as a clear violation of the preferential option for the poor.

Legislators must ensure that attempts to reduce smoking are going to help the poor and certainly not harm them, an effort which will require awareness of the poor’s plight. Pope Francis provides for both the cause of and solution to this problem:

many professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centres of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. . . . This lack of physical contact and encounter, encouraged at times by the disintegration of our cities, can lead to a numbing of conscience and to tendentious analyses which neglect parts of reality.<sup>17</sup>

Francis is speaking with regard to the issue of ecology, but the same principles apply to any issue that affects the poor. Legislators must understand the impacts the decisions they make have on the poor. As has been demonstrated, tobacco excise taxes impose a burden on the poor, and legislators must make attempts to try to understand why this is so and how to alleviate it.

Cigarette smoking in moderation is morally permissible. Determining to what extent smoking in America is moderate or immoderate requires further study. However, even if it is accepted that in the current social context of America most cigarette consumption is intemperate, higher tobacco excise taxes are not appropriate, despite the great costs smoking incurs to both individuals and society in the form of disease and subsequent health care costs. Given the scale and gravity of the problem, the state has an obligation to attempt to reduce cigarette addiction. However, the state must be careful to ensure that solutions to the problem are appropriate and have adequate care for the poor. Increasing cigarette excise taxes fails this test. On an efficacy basis, the evidence suggests that increased taxation will not have any

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<sup>16</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, USCCB Website, November 1986, §76. [www.usccb.org/upload/economic\\_justice\\_for\\_all.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* [On Care for Our Common Home], 2015, §49.

meaningful impact on smoking rates. On a moral basis, increased taxation will violate the fundamental option for the poor. The poor will pay the majority of any tax increases and will not reap the benefits of lower smoking rates. Given all this, tax increases must be ruled out as a public policy option and alternative policies must be explored.

# Liberating Latin America: Striving to Understand the Incarnational Theology behind Francis's and Romero's Lived Faith

*Kathryn Tombs*

In *Oscar Romero*, a short book that reflects upon the life and writings of the twentieth-century revolutionary archbishop and martyr of El Salvador, various quotes and ideas from Romero's life and work may be connected to similar contemporary quotes and actions taken by His Holiness, Pope Francis, the former archbishop (as Jorge Bergoglio) of Buenos Aires, Argentina. For example, a book by Dennis, Golden, and Wright cites Romero's request for prayers from the people,<sup>1</sup> calling to mind some of the very first words that issued forth from the current pontiff's mouth the night of his election<sup>2</sup> and a radical move Bergoglio once made as archbishop when he asked for prayers from evangelical ministers, kneeling down as they laid hands upon him.<sup>3</sup> Analogous language regarding Francis's and Romero's shared vision of the Church as one that must "get dirty" to truly meet the needs of the people can also be found in records of their respective teaching and preaching.<sup>4</sup> Even Pope Francis's decision to go without

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<sup>1</sup> "I want to . . . ask for your prayers that I be faithful to this promise, that I will not abandon my people. Rather, I will run with them all the risks that my ministry demands" (Marie Dennis, Renny Golden, and Scott Wright, *Oscar Romero* [Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000], 29).

<sup>2</sup> "And now I would like to give the blessing. But first I want to ask you a favour. Before the Bishop blesses the people I ask that you would pray to the Lord to bless me—the prayer of the people for their Bishop. Let us say this prayer—your prayer for me—in silence" (Pope Francis, "Pope Francis: His First Words" [Vatican City: Vatican Radio, Mar. 3, 2013], [news.va/en/news/pope-francis-his-first-words](http://news.va/en/news/pope-francis-his-first-words)).

<sup>3</sup> Jeremy Weber, "Argentine Evangelicals Say Bergoglio as Pope Francis Is 'Answer to Our Prayers,'" *Christianity Today*, Mar. 14, 2013, [christianitytoday.com](http://christianitytoday.com).

<sup>4</sup> Romero once stated, "A Church that tries to keep itself pure and uncontaminated would not be a church of God's service to people. The authentic church is one that does not mind conversing with prostitutes and publicans and sinners, as Christ did—and with Marxists and those of various political movements—in order to bring them salvation's true message." And on another occasion he wrote, "I rejoice in the fact that our church is persecuted, precisely for its preferential option for the poor, and for trying to incarnate itself in the interest of the poor" (Dennis, Golden, and Wright, *Romero*, 86). Using strikingly similar imagery, Pope Francis wrote, "I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security" (Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, Vatican City, Nov. 24, 2013, art. 49).

bulletproof windows on the Popemobile mirrors<sup>5</sup> Archbishop Romero's similar decision (also regarding transportation) to be as close to the people as possible, in solidarity with their trials.<sup>6</sup> Is Francis simply a copycat, inspired by Romero's example? Or is there a shared experience particularly distinctive to the practice of Catholicism in Latin America that necessarily calls for a theology that is lived in this way? All the aforementioned similarities, with respect for the fact that there are likely many more, express the common desire held by Pope Francis and Archbishop Romero to be closely united to their people, never distant from their struggles and sufferings in their respective roles as successors of the apostles and representatives of Christ. It may be argued, then, that the Salvadoran archbishop (during his lifetime), through a lived experience of liberation theology, and the Argentinian pope, through his living belief in a "theology of the people," actively preach a similar theology of incarnation as the best way to be Christ for the suffering and to serve Him in the people.

During his time as archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero became a strong believer that the Gospel, and consequently the Christian lifestyle demanded by the Gospel, were tangibly alive in the experience of the suffering Salvadoran people. As one who was to accompany his fellow Salvadorans through years of a bloody and debilitating civil war until his assassination in 1980, Romero sought to reach the people right where they were when he ministered to them: in their poverty and suffering. Their suffering, and all too often their death, he related and united to the suffering and death of Christ, and other stories in Sacred Scripture. Although he had to undergo a significant personal conversion that led him to view the Salvadoran people's affliction in the light of a living Word and to minister to them in this unique way,<sup>7</sup> incarnating the life and Passion of Christ in the violent history of El Salvador was simply a matter of logic for Romero. In his eyes, the lived faith of the Salvadoran people could truly be all that the Gospel demanded only if it permeated every aspect of life,

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<sup>5</sup> Laura Smith-Spark, "Francis Ditches Bulletproof Popemobile, Says 'At My Age I Don't Have Much to Lose,'" CNN, June 14, 2014, [cnn.com](http://cnn.com).

<sup>6</sup> "The subsecretary of the Ministry of Defense . . . told me . . . that they are offering me whatever protection I want, even a bulletproof car. I thanked him . . . saying respectfully that I cannot accept this protection since I want to run the same risks as the people do: that it would be an antipastoral witness were I to ride in such safety while my people are so insecure" (Dennis, Golden, and Wright, *Romero*, 73).

<sup>7</sup> "History rarely mentions, however, the profound metanoia that transformed Romero from a timid advocate of noncontroversial virtues into a towering champion of the faith and of the faithful" (Robert S. Pelton, ed., *Monsignor Romero* [South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004], 4).

including politics and the tragedies occasioned by war.<sup>8</sup> About one month before his assassination, Romero stated,

It is within this world devoid of a human face, in the midst of this contemporary sacrament of the suffering servant of Yahweh, that the Church of my archdiocese has undertaken the task of incarnating herself. . . . [W]e have made the effort not to pass by or to circle around the one lying wounded in the roadway, but to approach him or her as did the Good Samaritan.<sup>9</sup>

And further, “This coming closer to the world of the poor is what we understand both by the incarnation and by conversion.”<sup>10</sup> Be it speaking out against the government and openly praying for the conversion of the oppressive militants, losing friends and fellow citizens, or being so vulnerable as to put himself in constant danger, Romero wished to imitate Christ’s radical life and example so as to exhort the Salvadoran people to liberate themselves from their persecution and find hope in the eschatological now.

However, “liberation theology,” as it is commonly called today, was hardly Romero’s unique creation, although he remains to this day one of the most prominent and positive names associated with the term. A complicated and highly controversial movement, it in fact traces its origin<sup>11</sup> primarily to another Latin American: Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian Dominican priest and theologian. In his book *A Theology of Liberation*, Fr. Gutiérrez writes, “To speak about a theology of liberation is to seek an answer to the following question: what relation is there between salvation and the historical process of human liberation?”<sup>12</sup> In other words, how is the story of salvation still alive and at work in the world today? Archbishop Romero’s life and witness exemplified this worldview, the heart of liberation theology, as he saw

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<sup>8</sup> “. . . the beautiful but harsh truth that the Christian faith does not cut us off from the world but immerses us in it, that the Church is not a fortress set apart from the city. The Church follows Jesus who lived, worked, battled and died in the midst of a city, in the *polis*. It is in this sense that I should like to talk about the political dimension of the Christian faith: in the precise sense of the repercussions of the faith on the world, and also of the repercussions that being in the world has on faith” (Oscar Romero, “The Political Dimension of Faith from the Perspective of the Option for the Poor,” address given at the University of Louvain, Belgium, Feb. 2, 1980, 2).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Typically dated to the second Latin American Bishops’ Conference in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968 and the text produced by Gutiérrez as a result: *Teología de la liberación* (1971) (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v. “Liberation theology,” [britannica.com](http://britannica.com)).

<sup>12</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 29.

salvation history alive before his eyes in the situation of the Salvadoran civil war. He did not believe in the continuation of death for the Salvadoran people by the preaching of an eventual freedom that would come in eternal life; rather, he worked to bring about the Kingdom in the present moment by calling the people to stand up to their oppressors and not settle for compliance with the sinful social structures tearing the country apart. Serving as an archbishop with liberation at the heart of his work brought him to where the Church was very dirty, so to speak; but, for Romero, there was no other way to live out his calling from Christ. Recalling the 1979 Latin American Bishops' Conference at Puebla, he said,

Experiencing these realities, and letting ourselves be affected by them, far from separating us from our faith, has sent us back to the world of the poor as to our true home. It has moved us, as a first basic step, to take the world of the poor upon ourselves.<sup>13</sup>

For Romero, alongside the poor and suffering of El Salvador was exactly where he, archbishop of San Salvador, was called to be.

After drawing some distinctly strong parallels between the life of Oscar Romero and the witness of the current pontiff, Francis, one might naturally be led to wonder if the former Argentine archbishop too could be categorized as a son of the Latin American liberation theology movement. The answer to such a question is both yes and no. The heart of Francis's lived theology is actually something distinctive to Argentina, and is called the "theology of the people."<sup>14</sup> While sharing certain elements central to liberation theology, the "theology of the people" was and is a movement that purposefully diverges from the extremes that liberation theology is often taken to.<sup>15</sup> It is centered upon "the way poor people live their religion in contrast with official religiosity and rites,"<sup>16</sup> acknowledging that such

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<sup>13</sup> "At Puebla we declared, *So we brand the situation of inhuman poverty in which millions of Latin Americans live as the most devastating and humiliating kind of scourge. And this situation finds expression in such things as a high rate of infant mortality, lack of adequate housing, health problems, starvation wages, unemployment and underemployment, malnutrition, job uncertainty, compulsory mass migrations, etc.* (Puebla, #29)" (Romero, "Political Dimension," 3).

<sup>14</sup> The "theology of the people" is also commonly referred to as popular piety (Rafael Luciani and Félix Palazzi, "Pope Francis' Theology Begins with the People's Faith," *America*, April 14, 2016. [americamagazine.org/issue/popular-voice](http://americamagazine.org/issue/popular-voice)).

<sup>15</sup> "While radical liberation theologians looked to Marxist, immanentist interpretations of the Gospel, theology of the people was founded on common peoples' culture and devotion, including their spirituality and sense of justice" (Andrea Gagliarducci, "The 'Theology of the People,' According to Pope Francis," *Catholic News Agency*, Apr. 27, 2015, [catholicnewsagency.com](http://catholicnewsagency.com)).

<sup>16</sup> Luciani and Palazzi, "Francis' Theology."

distinctions are actually a reality. This theology incarnates itself in the lived experience of the people as they are, of the poor and the suffering, and expresses the beliefs and practices of the Faith in a way that is relevant to the people in these situations. When reflecting upon Francis's background as archbishop of Argentina, one can see that he strives to bring to his papacy the "theology of the people" that so deeply permeated his experiences of serving the poor of the Argentine slums<sup>17</sup> through challenges to certain traditional papal customs.<sup>18</sup> In line with this incarnational worldview of the Church, Francis aptly states in *Evangelii gaudium* that "the People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth."<sup>19</sup>

As a more recent historical trend, diverse expressions of incarnational theology as coming from Latin America (and other parts of the globe) are increasingly worth paying attention to. Certainly, there are flaws in the implementation of any ideology, religious or not; but the heart of incarnational theology is a significant response to the "signs of the times" and cannot be ignored. Seeing Christ truly suffering among humanity in the poor and oppressed is something that many Christians in the United States and other flourishing Western nations talk about often enough, but it is not necessarily something that is encountered on a day-to-day basis in the very tangible way that Archbishop Romero did during the Salvadoran civil war, or (then) Archbishop Bergoglio would in the *villas miserias*.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps for those living not just in spiritual poverty but in actual poverty, and not just amid spiritual warfare but amid the reality of a physical war, faith takes on the vividness of the situation in a way that those living removed from such circumstances cannot understand until they themselves experience it too. For those who look with particular skepticism at liberation theology in practice (acknowledging that such skepticism can be justified in cases where that theology is carried to unhealthy extremes), or who feel as though they have been taken out of their comfort zones regarding some of Pope Francis's "radical" decisions as pontiff, one might purposefully shift one's gaze

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> For example, by living outside of the papal palace in community at the papal guesthouse ("Pope of the People: Pope Francis to Live in Vatican Guesthouse, Not Papal Apartments," *The Catholic Telegraph*, March 26, 2013, [thecatholictelegraph.com](http://thecatholictelegraph.com)), refraining from wearing the traditional red shoes as an unnecessary luxury (Nick Squires, "Pope Francis Ditches Red Shoes," *The Telegraph*, March 15, 2013, [telegraph.co.uk](http://telegraph.co.uk)), and, as was mentioned earlier in this paper, traveling in the Popemobile without bulletproof windows.

<sup>19</sup> Art. 115.

<sup>20</sup> Luciani and Palazzi, "Francis' Theology."

southward—to Latin America<sup>21</sup>—and to the common experiences of suffering peoples everywhere around the globe. For those who physically suffer, salvation is now, and Christ’s very life and death in such situations is more palpable than one can begin to imagine, as it gives meaning and purpose to what one is experiencing in a very physical way. Perhaps Francis, and Romero during his time, rightly bring the flavoring of incarnational theology to the Church as a necessary challenge for all Christians to see Christ in a more vivid way, not just in some parts of the world but everywhere and at all times, regardless of who or where one might be, as a realization of salvation history as it is being fulfilled in the eschatological now.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “It seems that my brother Cardinals have gone almost to the ends of the earth to get him . . . but here we are” (Francis, “First Words”).

<sup>22</sup> “Our Salvadoran world is no abstraction. It is not another example of what is understood by world in developed countries such as yours. It is a world made up mostly of men and women who are poor and oppressed. And we say of that world of the poor that it is the key to understanding the Christian faith, to understanding the activity of the Church and the political dimension of her faith and her ecclesial activity. It is the poor who tell us what the world is, and what the Church’s service to the world should be. It is the poor who tell us what the *polis* is, what the city is and what it means for the Church to really live in the world” (Romero, “Political Dimension,” 2).

# For Want of a Nail

*John Owens*

In *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Benjamin Franklin relates an old nursery rhyme wherein the loss of a nail on a horseshoe leads through a series of increasingly disastrous events to a man's untimely death.<sup>1</sup> A small random event leading to disaster makes for a good story, but for Christian thinkers who believe in an all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God, it causes problems. Some would ask why, if God is all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful, bad things would happen at all. In the fifth century A.D., the philosopher and devout Catholic Anisius Manlius Severinus Boethius was condemned to death for a crime he did not commit. He was a good person, but bad things happened to him anyway. To make sense of this injustice, he wrote a book called *The Consolation of Philosophy*. In this book, a thinly-veiled author avatar has a dialogue with Lady Philosophy. Its final goal is to explain why bad things happen to good people. In the end, Boethius reaches the conclusion that bad things happen to good people because God allows them to happen for the greater good of all. Everything is ordered by God for the greater good, even things that appear to be bad or otherwise random at first glance.

The inspiration for Boethius to see that good comes from evil came straight from his own life experiences. He was inspired to get into politics by reading Plato's *Republic*. The message of the state being best off when ruled by philosopher kings resonated with him. Over time, Boethius rose to become a close advisor of king Theodoric the Ostrogoth. For a long while, he was wealthy, respected by the king's court, and feared by the corrupt as a just man who feared nothing. Then it all came crashing down. He was accused of trying to unjustly protect the senate from a charge of collective treason and was sent into exile, where certain death awaited him.<sup>2</sup> At first, he blamed this turn of events on fortune's cruel wheel, but then he learned that this

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanacks* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), 280.

<sup>2</sup> Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 9–18.

was not the case. He knew from the start that there is a God who governs all things. The trouble Boethius had was in understanding how bad things could happen to him when his faith told him a loving Father is ordering everything for the greater good.

Some contemporary thinkers have the same problem with the idea of an all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God. For the moderns as well as Boethius, the key to understanding why bad things happen to good people lies in a correct understanding of divine providence. God orders all things. In Boethius's mind, there are two kinds of order: providence and fate. Providence is defined as the fixed, unchangeable goal God has in mind for all creation. Fate is more malleable. Boethius compares providence and fate to a craftsman envisioning the final shape of an object. Providence is the master plan of what the craftsman wants to make. Fate is composed of the various ways he can get the same result.<sup>3</sup> This is the reason why bad things happen to good people: God lets them happen so a greater good can come out of apparently evil acts. His master plan encompasses every possible turn of fate and uses it for good. He just uses different means to get the same good result. Boethius concludes that fate is the flexibility in God's inflexible master plan that orders all things for the good. This is how the problem of God's letting bad things happen to good people is resolved, not in spite of his being all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful but because of it.

From this it follows that no event is good or bad. If everything is ordered by God for the good, everything that happens to a person is meant either to strengthen an existing virtue or correct a fault.<sup>4</sup> This is clearly illustrated in the case of a criminal who is caught and justly punished. Criminals who are punished are seldom happy about it, instead seeing their capture and punishment as bad fortune. Boethius makes the controversial claim that a criminal receiving a just punishment is happier than a criminal who gets away with a crime. The criminal being punished is receiving a just thing. Everything that is just is also good, so a just punishment is a good thing. People who receive good things are happy. Therefore, a criminal being corrected by a just punishment is not a victim of bad fortune.<sup>5</sup> He or she is receiving a good thing, but it is misinterpreted as bad fortune. God orders things for the good so that the criminal can be corrected, whether he or she realizes it or not.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 141–42.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 122–23.

Similar logic can be applied to Boethius's own fate. He was unjustly imprisoned and died young, but before that happened, he wrote a classic book on the problem of evil that would teach readers for ages to come the hard but valuable lessons Boethius learned at the end of his life. Boethius hardly deserved what happened to him, but God made good out of something bad happening to him by leading him to write *The Consolation of Philosophy*.

In the end, Boethius's book lives up to its name. Indeed, it is consoling to know that even if Socrates's argument that "nothing bad can happen to a good man"<sup>6</sup> is poorly supported, any time something bad happens to someone, it has a higher purpose. Rome fell. The result was the good of Christianity spreading to the conquering Germanic tribes. The bloodletting of the Terror following the French Revolution gave way to the Napoleonic Wars. When the dust settled, Europe enjoyed nearly a century of peace. The horror of two world wars led to the founding of the United Nations to avoid similar future conflicts. All of history is marked with examples like these. Time and time again, good things wait on the other side of a catastrophe. Fortune's wheel may indeed exist; bad things still happen. As the rhyme goes, nails may still go missing. Even kingdoms may fall, but from God's point of view, even the fall of a kingdom happens in the twinkle of an eye. We can be sure that he planned for it, and come what may, God will make good out of even the worst disasters, just as he did with Boethius in the twilight of his life.

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<sup>6</sup> Plato, *Apology*, in *A Plato Reader* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2012), 45.

# Nature as Text: A Secular Application of the Scriptural Senses in *De Tribus Diebus*

Katherine Wu

One of the earliest works of Hugh of St. Victor is *De Tribus Diebus* or *On the Three Days*, dating to sometime before 1120/1121, with a second version released before 1130.<sup>1</sup> The treatise is a meditation on the divine works that takes its inspiration from Romans 1:20: “From the creation of the world the invisible realities of God are beheld through what is understood of the things which are made.”<sup>2</sup> Overshadowed by Hugh’s more famous works, including the *Didascalicon* and *On the Mysteries of the Christian Faith*,<sup>3</sup> *On the Three Days* has received relatively little scholarly attention until recently, yet its complexity—“at once a sermon, a collection of wonders, a theological-philosophical treatise . . . and an account of the mind’s journey to God”<sup>4</sup>—and its originality<sup>5</sup> provide a fascinating object of study, especially for readers interested in the significance of the natural world. Although in some manuscripts it is incorrectly included as the last section of the *Didascalicon*,<sup>6</sup> it has been argued that the treatise is best read in light of Hugh’s later book, as an application of its exegetical principles and even as the “special treatise” on meditation proposed in VI.13.<sup>7</sup> Hugh’s work in *On the Three Days*

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Feiss, O.S.B., Introduction to “On the Three Days,” in *Trinity and Creation: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Richard and Adam of St Victor*, eds. Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coulter (New York: New York City Press, 2011), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Wanda Cizewski, “Reading the World as Scripture: Hugh of St. Victor’s *De Tribus Diebus*,” *Florilegium* 9 (1987): 68.

<sup>3</sup> *De sacramentis christianae fidei*

<sup>4</sup> Feiss, Introduction, 51.

<sup>5</sup> Particularly concerning the triad of power, wisdom, and kindness, both the idea itself and its application to nature. See Constant J. Mews, “The World as Text: The Bible and the Book of Nature in Twelfth-Century Theology,” In *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Thomas J. Heffernana and Thomas E. Burman, eds. (Boston: Brill, 2005), 95–122.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Glynn, “The *De Tribus Diebus*: or, The Seventh Book of the *Didascalicon* of Hugh of St. Victor” (master’s thesis, St. Bonaventure College, 1946), 77.

<sup>7</sup> Cizewski, “Reading the World,” 65; cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), VI.13.

indeed closely follows both his idea and his proposed method of study in the *Didascalicon*, and can best be considered as a meditation structured by the secular, as opposed to the scriptural, application of the three senses of history, allegory, and tropology.

Hugh announces his motivation for *On the Three Days* in the first three lines of the work: “The good Word and wise Life that made the world is perceived when the world is contemplated. The Word itself cannot be seen, but the Word both made what can be seen and is seen through what He made. ‘From the creation of the world the invisible realities of God are beheld through what is understood of the things which are made.’”<sup>8</sup> The passive verbs in the first line, “is perceived,” “is seen,” and “are beheld,”<sup>9</sup> stress the work of the meditator, who must understand what he sees, perceive the invisible things that they signify, and then use that knowledge for sanctification. This threefold process defines the triune structure of the work. In Part I, Hugh describes the immensity, beauty, and utility of the natural world, qualities that he links to God’s power, wisdom, and kindness. In Part II, Hugh moves to an explanation of the “invisible realities” which can be inferred from nature, especially from the nature of the rational creature, supplementing it with an exegesis of Matthew 3:17. Part III uses knowledge gleaned from the works of creation in part II to interpret God’s works of restoration in salvation history, works which are the matter of Scripture and which allow Hugh to draw guidelines for progress in the spiritual life.<sup>10</sup>

Hugh lays emphasis on the work of the meditator in the opening lines, but he is clear that not only does nature reveal its Creator, but its very existence is for the purpose of divine pedagogy. He describes the corporeal world as “a kind of book written by the finger of God . . . and each creature is a kind of figure . . . established by the divine will to manifest and in some way signify the invisible wisdom of God.”<sup>11</sup> The work of meditation is necessary not because God unintentionally left puzzling marks that the Christian must interpret, as an archaeologist might measure marks on a statue to infer

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<sup>8</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, “On the Three Days,” trans. Hugh Feiss, O.S.B., in Coolman and Coulter, eds., *Trinity and Creation*, 1.1.1–2. Quotation from Rom 1:20.

<sup>9</sup> “*conspicitur . . . uisum est . . . conspiciuntur*” (Hugh of St. Victor, *De Tribus Diebus: Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* CLXXVII, ed. Dominique Poirel [Tournhout: Brepols Publishers, 2002], 1.5).

<sup>10</sup> Jerome Taylor, Introduction to *The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 34.

<sup>11</sup> “On the Three Days,” 1.4.3. Compare this to the statement in the *Didascalicon*, where “the significance of things . . . [is] the voice of God speaking to men.” See *Didascalicon*, 5.3.

something about the craftsman, but because one must learn to read the creatures of the sensible world just as one must learn to read the shapes on a page. Just as one can admire the lettering but be unable to read the meaning in the shapes, an observer of nature can admire the wondrous appearance of nature but be unable to read the invisible realities intended therein and to “turn the beauty of physical things to spiritual use.”<sup>12</sup>

The question remains, however: What does it mean to read nature?<sup>13</sup> While the metaphor of a book works up to a point, certainly the universe is not constructed like a text. Is “reading” then simply a useful metaphor, or does Hugh imply a more general meaning? In the *Didascalicon* the study of the arts is practically synonymous with reading, as its Latin title, “On the Study of Reading,” might suggest. The pursuit of Wisdom through the arts concerns ideas experienced through a text rather than the performance or execution of the discipline,<sup>14</sup> and although the descriptions of nature found in *On the Three Days* suggest personal observation, it is clear from references to creatures such as the griffin that Hugh mainly derives his descriptions from texts.<sup>15</sup> After all, meditation is “the consummation of reading,”<sup>16</sup> not its beginning; the sustained study of nature is only possible with the foundation laid by the arts, especially, in this case, physics, the mechanical arts, and the arts of the *quadrivium*, which are dedicated to the study of natural things. However, the “manner of reading”<sup>17</sup> outlined by the *Didascalicon* demands more than the deciphering of letters on a page: “The method of expounding a text [*legendi*] consists in analysis [*diuidendo*]. Every analysis begins from things which are finite or defined, and proceeds in the direction of things which are infinite, or undefined. . . . [S]tudy [*doctrina*], moreover, begins with those things which are better known and . . . works its way to matters which lie hidden.”<sup>18</sup> To read is to investigate, to divide, to define, and

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<sup>12</sup> “On the Three Days,” 1.4.4.

<sup>13</sup> For this section I am in debt to Dominique Poirel, “Lire L’Univers Visible: Le Sens D’Une Métaphore Chez Hugues de Saint-Victor,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 2011/2 (95), 363–82.

<sup>14</sup> *Didascalicon*, 1.4.

<sup>15</sup> At the very least, Hugh’s description of animals derives from the *Physiologus*. See Cizewski, “Reading the World,” 73.

<sup>16</sup> *Didascalicon*, 3.10.

<sup>17</sup> “*modus legendi*?” See Charles H. Buttmer, *Hugonis de Sancto Victore Didascalicon de studio legendi: A Critical Text* (dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1939), quoted in Poirel, “Lire L’Univers Visible,” 374; translation mine.

<sup>18</sup> *Didascalicon*, 3.9. See Buttmer, *Critical Text*, 58, quoted in Poirel, “Lire L’Univers Visible,” 374. While the translation is Taylor’s, I have taken the liberty of translating *doctrina* as “study” rather than “teaching,” following Poirel.

through this process to discover what lies beneath the surface. The “reading” of nature is therefore intended both quite literally, in the reading of the necessary texts, and, more importantly, in the general sense of “to study” or “to learn,” in the manner already outlined in the opening lines of Hugh’s meditation—to move beyond things known to things hidden, from the visible into the invisible realities of God.

In the *Didascalicon*, Hugh outlines a three-step process of reading a text, which involves understanding the construction of the words, the “certain ready and obvious meaning . . . [presented] on the surface,” and “the deeper understanding which can be found only through interpretation and commentary”—that is, letter, sense, and inner meaning.<sup>19</sup> These three are roughly linked with the scriptural senses of history, allegory, and tropology, in which history is the literal, allegory the spiritual, and tropology the moral reading of the sacred text.<sup>20</sup> The three sections of *On the Three Days* can best be understood as divided by the application of these senses to the book of nature, a description that becomes evident once Hugh’s methods in this treatise are compared to the description of their scriptural counterparts in the *Didascalicon*.

## Section I: Exposition and History

Hugh begins by asserting a unified trinity of divine qualities in power, wisdom, and kindness<sup>21</sup> and links them the immensity, beauty, and utility of creation, respectively. He then breaks down the triad of creation into each one’s component parts: immensity into number and size, beauty into structure, movement, appearance, and quality, and utility into the attractive, apt, beneficial, and necessary, with each part further subdivided, defined, and described.<sup>22</sup> This dividing [*dividendo*] which begins his reading, however, is at once scrupulously detailed and frustratingly messy, with components like quality and aptness appearing more than once in the tree.<sup>23</sup> This is not a logical division imposed upon the created order; rather, Hugh’s divisions reflect something of the strangeness and complexity of the sensible realm,<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Didascalicon*, 3.8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.2.

<sup>21</sup> It has been asserted that Hugh derives this triad from Peter Abelard (see “Reading the World,” 84 n. 17), but given the controversy over Abelard’s use of the triad it seems more likely that Hugh was the source, although it has also been proposed as a theme developed by both men in response to William of Champeaux. See Feiss, Introduction, 56 and Mews, “The World as Text,” 115.

<sup>22</sup> “On the Three Days,” 1.1.3.

<sup>23</sup> See the tree of Hugh’s division in Poirel, “Lire L’Univers Visible,” 368.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 369–70.

which, like the monstrous or ridiculous, “are witnesses to the wisdom of God” beyond the comprehension of mortal minds.<sup>25</sup> Indeed the carefulness of Hugh’s descriptions conveys something of his wonder at the power of God in even the most prosaic details of creation: “Look at a leaf, how around the edge it is differentiated by serrated teeth, how the ribs produced inside it are woven in this direction and that. Count one, count another, you will find that all of one kind have the same likeness: as many teeth . . . as many ribs . . . the same form . . . the same color in one as in the other.”<sup>26</sup>

This division, definition, and description would seem to fulfill the definitions of both the letter of nature’s text and the literal sense of history. Hugh leaves no detail unexamined in his overview of the creative order, noting arrangement, emphasizes in the forms of rarity or novelty, and even certain seeming incongruities just as one might examine words arranged, highlighted, or misspelled on a page. Yet this section is not content with description and specifically links these qualities to qualities of God and decisions of His providence, moves which step outside the realm of the purely natural. Even with the understanding that these conclusions, to Hugh, are the “more explicitly and obviously shown,”<sup>27</sup> his explicitly theological assertions would seem to go beyond text into the sense, and at times even into a deeper meaning. For example, when discussing things which are more amazing for their rarity, Hugh informs us that:

The providence of the Creator wished to set these apart so that human society may not be damaged . . . human greed may be tested . . . and human dullness of heart may learn to wonder . . . [and that these] would speak to . . . what great zeal [human beings] should show in fleeing eternal evils and seeking eternal goods, if they undergo such great labors to acquire these temporal goods and to avoid these temporal evils.<sup>28</sup>

If rarities as challenges to society, greed, and dullness of heart could be an “obvious meaning” of sense given by the letter, surely the moral Hugh draws is a deeper meaning requiring some interpretation. Yet it is clear from comparison with sections II and III that this moral is among the most “obvious” theological statements which can be read from natural things. The sense of history as read in nature, then, is not merely classification and description—for then one would simply be

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<sup>25</sup> “On the Three Days,” 1.11.2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.11.4.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.16.1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.10.

studying physics—but the first layer of theological meaning which can be drawn from the sensible realm. “You have in history the means through which to admire God’s deeds,” explains Hugh,<sup>29</sup> but this admiration is inextricably intertwined with and dependent on thorough knowledge of the works of God. Dividing [*diuendo*] and analyzing nature by itself is not enough, for division is only the first step to seeing the ties of God’s providence, which bind each thing together and which are the matter of history.<sup>30</sup> The hidden things of God are yet to come.

## Section II: A Triad of Allegory

Having demonstrated the evidence of God’s power, wisdom, and kindness in creatures, Hugh enters the second layer of theological meaning through his consideration of Wisdom, the most evident representation of God.<sup>31</sup> This quality finds its fullest expression in the rational creature, endowed with the highest movements of creation, as movement itself, an expression of life, has priority among qualities of the beauty which Wisdom creates.<sup>32</sup> The rational creature, “because in one aspect it is visible and in another invisible, becomes a door and path of contemplation.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, section II is devoted to consideration of what can be known of God through the rational creature, including that an eternal Creator and divine providence exists, that God is truly one and immutable, and that the Trinity is mirrored in the mind, understanding, and love of the rational creature.<sup>34</sup> The discussion largely excludes the use of Scripture, instead utilizing the philosophical conception of man as mediator between the visible and invisible; however, Hugh cannot but rely on divine revelation for his discussion of the Trinity, both for the Trinitarian formula and for the possibility that a trinity can be found in man as *imago Dei*.<sup>35</sup>

“In allegory [you have] the means through which to believe [God’s] mysteries,”<sup>36</sup> and this is certainly the case in section II, which is more clearly linked to the allegorical sense than section I was to the historical. This section even contains two of the allegorical “courses,” the first course of the Trinity and the second of creation *ex nihilo*,

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<sup>29</sup> *Didascalicon*, 6.3.

<sup>30</sup> Poirel, “Lire L’Univers Visible,” 375.

<sup>31</sup> “On the Three Days,” 2.16.3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.16.4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.17.1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.17–21.

<sup>35</sup> Glynn, “The Seventh Book,” 86.

<sup>36</sup> *Didascalicon*, 6.3.

outlined in the *Didascalicon*.<sup>37</sup> Just as a superstructure is built upon the foundation and allegory rests on history,<sup>38</sup> the statements regarding the “invisible things” of God in section II rely on the divisions of beauty and its link to wisdom, both of which formed the greater part of section I. Yet even within this allegorical reading there seems to be another division of letter, sense, and deeper meaning, as Hugh describes the letter of the rational creature, reads the sense as containing statements relating essential qualities of God, and concludes the Trinitarian discussion with a relevant moral: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am pleased.”<sup>39</sup> . . . Therefore, if you wish to please [God], be like Him, ‘Listen to Him.’<sup>40</sup> And if by chance you have departed from His likeness by acting badly, return by imitating Him.”<sup>41</sup>

In addition, more time is devoted to the layers of sense and deeper meaning in section II. Descriptions of the rational creature are scarcely less detailed than those of the sensible world in section I; however, whereas Hugh in Section I spends less time drawing conclusions than in classifying and dividing, here Hugh devotes equal, if not more, space to demonstration.<sup>42</sup> For example, three sections (2.21.1–3) are devoted to the rational triad of mind, understanding, and love, while seven sections (2.21.4–24.1) concern what can be learned of the Trinity, and three sections (24.2–24.4) concern the moral drawn from the Trinitarian mysteries. Compare this to section I, where Hugh devotes eleven sections to appearance (1.9.1–12.2) but mostly confines his theological remarks to one section (1.10). Although a moral is given, it is another “obvious” lesson drawn from preceding remarks and supported by Scripture: if, as demonstrated, each Person of the Trinity loves Himself and the same substance in other Persons, and the Trinity is thus united by ties of love as well as by nature, then human beings can join in that union by imitation of God. The tropological reading of nature, however, is reserved for the third section of the treatise.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.4

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Matt. 3:17.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 17:6.

<sup>41</sup> “On the Three Days,” 2.24.1, 3.

<sup>42</sup> The tone is meditative and explorative, not polemical. These are intended in the spirit of “faith seeking understanding” and not as definitive proofs.

### Section III: Meditative Tropology

Although the goal of *On the Three Days* is made clear from the opening lines, it is only in the third section that Hugh provides a complete map of the work for the reader. The path of the meditator takes him through the order of cognition from sensible creation to invisible creation in the rational creature before arriving at the Wisdom of God, but the conditions of earthly life make it necessary to descend through the order of creation back down into the sensible realm.<sup>43</sup> This journey, however, must be fruitful—the meditator must bring back the light that he has experienced that he might be sanctified by it: “If there we saw power, let us bring back the light of the fear of God. If we saw wisdom there, let us bring back the light of truth. If we saw kindness there, let us bring the light of love. Power rouses the sluggish to fear; wisdom illumines those who were blind from the darkness of ignorance; kindness enflames the cold with the warmth of charity.”<sup>44</sup>

It might seem somewhat ironic, then, that the most important section is also the shortest.<sup>45</sup> In contrast to the careful demonstrations of section II, Hugh moves quickly in section III, transforming the three lights into three days illuminated by these lights, each corresponding to a Person of the Trinity, a period of salvation history, a stage in the spiritual life, and finally to a stage of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. The tone is so different, in fact, from the previous sections that section III almost seems like a meditation within the larger meditation. The labor of reading has been done; the activity of meditation can now begin, “bound by none of reading’s rules or precepts . . . [but delighting] to range along open ground . . . leaving nothing doubtful, nothing obscure.”<sup>46</sup> Given the philosophical tone of the first two sections, it may come as a surprise that this section is dominated by the truths of divine revelation. Yet here the truths of nature are finally set in their proper context, within the larger drama of mankind’s restoration. The three days are interpreted in and with Scripture precisely because this layer of tropology is where the two divine books truly intertwine. Tropology, after all, is concerned “more of the meaning of things”<sup>47</sup> as well as “the means through which to

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<sup>43</sup> “On the Three Days,” 3.25.1–3.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.1.

<sup>45</sup> A fact coincidentally mirrored in the *Didascalicon*, 6.5, where Hugh devotes only a short paragraph to tropology.

<sup>46</sup> *Didascalicon*, 3.10.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.5.

imitate [God's] perfection."<sup>48</sup> Applied to nature, the meditator can bring back sanctifying light, and when that light is in turn applied to Scripture, the meditator is shown the means of his sanctification. The two texts work together; neither will—or indeed can—contradict the other.<sup>49</sup>

In the *Didascalicon*, Hugh comments that sacred reading bears twofold fruit: “it either instructs the mind with knowledge or it equips it with morals. It teaches what it delights us to know and what it behooves us to imitate.”<sup>50</sup> *On the Three Days* makes clear that these fruits can also be found in meditation on the natural world, through a similar method of reading. Yet the two texts of Scripture and nature are not rigidly separated, but intertwined: while *On the Three Days* focuses on the book of nature, Scriptural quotations are woven throughout the treatise, sometimes as an authoritative source and sometimes as a poetic expression, sometimes to confirm a point and sometimes to further develop an idea’s implications.<sup>51</sup> Scripture in this treatise seems to serve as a complement and a development of the book of nature to be read in tandem with it, guiding and deepening nature’s interpretation rather than dictating its meaning, and in turn enriched by what is derived from nature. Thus, while Scripture is given precedence, the book of nature does not stand as a mere shadow; rather, used correctly, it is a source equal in dignity, springing as it does from the same divine Author. *On the Three Days* thus stands firm against the two tendencies of the modern era to either insist on Scripture’s absolute dominance or to rigidly separate the two areas into natural and revealed theology. Instead, Hugh reminds us that both can serve as guides to navigate the path back to God, that both are gifts of His providence and goodness, and that the burden is on us, in turn, to learn to read what has been given and to use it for our sanctification.

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.3.

<sup>49</sup> Cizewski, “Reading the World,” 82.

<sup>50</sup> *Didascalicon*, 5.6.

<sup>51</sup> For an example of each, see the use of Rom. 1:20 at “On the Three Days,” 1.1.2; of Ps. 91:5–7 at 1.4.2 (and Hugh’s expressions of awe at 1.11.2, which recall the language of Job 38, albeit in a rather less aggressive manner); of Matt 3:17 at 2.22.2; and of “day” in the quotations of 3.26.4.